

# PSM

PRIMARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

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PAY LATER**  
Is PFI fit for purpose?

**Be Heard**  
How to message parents

## CASH CRISIS?

WHAT TO DO WHEN  
YOU'RE IN DEFICIT

## BIG IDEAS

CREATE A SCHOOL  
VISION THAT  
INSPIRES



**GUY  
CLAXTON**

*"Let's produce  
explorers - not  
test takers"*

**Learning  
TO LET GO**

Stop yourself  
micromanaging

**Staff  
SALARIES**

Why schools are struggling  
with pay grades

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TOGETHER**

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## From the editor



What keeps you in your job? What would cause you to leave? It's not unusual for people to have complicated feelings about their occupation, but chances are good that a big part of your job's appeal (or lack of it) will involve control – specifically, how much you have.

On p74 this issue, former headteacher Colin Tapscott calls on school leaders to relinquish a portion of their control, so that their junior colleagues can enjoy more. It sometimes involves a careful balancing act, but as Colin explains, granting colleagues the freedom to make their own decisions and putting your trust in them can play a huge role in boosting staff retention.

Another important factor in whether employees stay or pack up and go is what they're paid. Here, at least, you might expect a school's governance board to have the freedom to decide what's fair when it comes to staff salaries. Yet as Martin Matthews recounts on p57, even that can't be relied upon any more, with schools increasingly limited in what they can do with the money they have at their disposal.

The pressures may be tough at times, but there's inspiration to be found in the way some leaders have responded to them. Whether it's mapping out the route back from being placed in special measures (p14), devising a vision that their school community can get behind (p16) or coming up with innovative ways of pooling their purchasing power with other schools (p68), there are plenty of groups and individuals out there that are getting on with things and succeeding. And those are ultimately the stories we want to tell.

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser  
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## Our experts this issue



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National leader  
of governance



**Malcolm Drakes**  
Executive  
headteacher



From the  
makers of  
*Teach Primary*

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PUBLISHER: Helen Tudor

PUBLISHED BY: Maze Media (2000) Ltd,  
25 Phoenix Court, Hawkins Rd,  
Colchester, Essex, CO2 8JY.  
TEL: 01206 505900

aceville

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# “Intelligence isn’t some fixed pot of ability”



Professor Guy Claxton tells us why too many schools today are neglecting the teaching that will be most helpful for pupils tomorrow...

## To those unfamiliar with it, how would you summarise the learning power approach?

It’s a deliberate attempt to create a culture in schools with two main objectives. One is to maximise the levels of achievement of all students in the school, and the other is to do that in a way that deliberately and systemically builds their capacity to ‘be their own teachers’. It’s teaching in a way that progressively cultivates students’ ability to organise, manage plan, design and troubleshoot learning for themselves.

That’s different from ‘traditional’ teaching, where the risk has always been that you can get good results, but in a way that builds increasing dependence, rather than *independence*; with a narrow focus on correct answers and test results, and not on building students’ capacity to be more curious, imaginative, resourceful and resilient in their own right.

## Is there a part that parents can play in this?

The first thing they can do is understand and support the schools adopting this kind of approach to education. I previously co-wrote a book [with Bill Lucas] called *Educating Ruby* to help parents identify various unhelpful practices at home which, often without thinking, they can be steering their children towards.

Carol Dweck’s research has shown that children are able to pick up a ‘growth mindset’, whereby they’re less anxious in the face of failure. Parents – and teachers – can communicate a fixed mindset attitude to their kids by the way they react when their children are struggling or frustrated. Parents who react as if that’s the child letting themselves down, that they’ve done something wrong, are more likely to have children who develop an anxious, striving approach to learning.

## You’ve previously talked of teaching children ‘positive habits of mind’ – can you expand on what those are?

We’ve done a lot of work on trying to identify the different ingredients in children’s minds that steer them towards a more positive, optimistic, resilient approach to learning. It’s curiosity, being inquisitive, wondering about things. Resilience, persistence in the face of difficulty and the ability to be both an

effective collaborator and a good solo learner. Then there’s concentration – the ability to stay focused despite distractions, which is a huge asset in the modern world where there are all kinds of things on screens trying to distract you.

The learning power approach is underpinned by a big shift in psychology, which is understanding that what we’ve thought of as ‘intelligence’ isn’t some fixed pot of ability kids are given when



## CAREER TIMELINE

1963

“O Levels surprisingly good. Decided to try to be ‘bright’”

“Oxford doctorate savaged by examiners. Nine months’ rewriting boosted my resilience no end!”

1973

1999

“Published *Teaching to Learn*, the first book about learning power”

“Published *Building Learning Power* and started a new career as an educational consultant”

2002

they're born and which doesn't get any bigger. On the contrary, it's almost like an orchestra of mental abilities, all of which one can learn to 'play' better.

**Is there a way of ensuring teaching standards are being maintained and improved, without enacting punitive measures on the part of teachers and leaders?**

Of course, accountability's important. With whatever we're doing, or intend to do, in schools we need evidence as to whether we're being effective or not. Nothing in the learning power approach is contrary to the need to evidence the progress or development of these mental attributes, but we do need to be careful.

There are many ways of, to use my preferred word, 'evidencing' progression. They include using portfolios or questionnaires, peer reports, teacher judgements or parents' judgements. In business, people are perfectly used to having 360° appraisals once a year in terms of their attitudes and their performance at work. There's no reason why we shouldn't embrace a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods.

If you buy into the rationale of why developing these qualities of mind is so important, then you'll go looking for more effective forms of evidencing and accountability, rather than throw your hands up and say 'It's all too nebulous, we can't measure it'.

**Would it be fair to say you see the 'traditional versus progressive teaching' debate as a 'phoney war'?**

To me, it seems unnecessary to start from an assumption that there's some kind of opposition between the desire to help children develop strong and supple minds that equip them for the 21st century, and the desire to teach them sums, spellings and whatever else. There's no contrast between those two things.

The way we look at it is that every teacher is always in the business of cultivating some kind of attitude towards learning. You can't not be. I tend to see what happens in classrooms as layers of flow in a river. Knowledge is being acquired on the surface; it's fairly visible and quite fast flowing. Skills are lower



down, moving a little more slowly – the development of literacy and numeracy, for example. Down at the bottom of the river is the gradual development of attitudes and habits of mind.

Our argument is simply that we ought to be more conscious and intentional about what's going on at the lowest level and ensuring that it's producing confident explorers, rather than these anxious little test takers.

both psychologically and educationally, to turn out kids who are robust, resilient and unafraid of complexity or difficulty. Kids who know how to talk to each other about the process of learning.

If we could create that mindshift – and I know that's a big thing – then everything else will follow from that.

**In what single way could the primary education system in England, as it currently stands, be improved?**

There are many starting places! I'd want you to give me every primary school headteacher in the country for a day, in a very large room, and get them to the point where they understand what's possible and desirable; where they can see that it really is a living, practical possibility,



**Guy Claxton's latest book, *The Learning Power Approach – Teaching Learners to Teach Themselves* is available now, published by Crown House Publishing**

2008  
"Founded the  
Winchester  
University Centre  
for Real-World  
Learning with my  
friend Bill Lucas"

"Retired –  
and busier  
than ever!"  
2017



# Now FUNDING

If you're looking to tackle a big project or want your learners to experience something new, help may be at hand from the following schemes and grants...



**WHO?** Garfield Weston Foundation

**WHAT?** Regular grants programme

**HOW MUCH?** Up to £100,000

**APPLY BY?** Ongoing

**WHERE?** [garfieldweston.org](http://garfieldweston.org)

**FUNDS?** Capital costs of building works or major repair projects, typically up to 10% of the total capital project cost. Also eligible for funding are the staffing and overhead costs associated with a specific project or activity; potential applicants are advised to have identified at least half of their funding before submitting their applications.



**WHO?** Jack Petchey Foundation

**WHAT?** Educational Visit Grant

**HOW MUCH?** £10 per head, up to a maximum of £300 for 30 young people

**APPLY BY?** Ongoing

**WHERE?** [jackpetcheyfoundation.org.uk](http://jackpetcheyfoundation.org.uk)

**FUNDS?** UK-based trips with an educational benefit organised by schools and educational establishments. Applicants will need to demonstrate how the trip will support their curriculum and enhance their young peoples' learning. To be eligible, applicants must already be running the Jack Petchey Foundation's Achievement Award Scheme (see [tinyurl.com/petchey-awards](http://tinyurl.com/petchey-awards) for more details).



**WHO?** Wellcome Trust / Education Endowment Foundation

**WHAT?** Improving Science Education

**HOW MUCH?** No set minimum or maximum – past grants have ranged from £90,000 to £1.5m

**APPLY BY?** 9th April 2018

**WHERE?** [tinyurl.com/eff-ise](http://tinyurl.com/eff-ise)

**FUNDS?** Interventions or approaches focusing on science attainment and/or progression for pupils aged 5 to 16 in UK schools. Interventions will need to be practical for schools to implement and be delivered by project teams that include relevant expertise. Approaches aimed at improving outcomes for disadvantaged learners will be prioritised, and applicants will be expected to show a willingness to work in challenging schools.



**WHO?** Erasmus+

**WHAT?** School Exchange Partnerships

**HOW MUCH?** Up to €16,500 per school per year of the project

**APPLY BY?** 21st March 2018

**WHERE?** [erasmusplus.org.uk](http://erasmusplus.org.uk)

**FUNDS?** Schools wanting to expand their international outlook and improve their language learning by establishing partnerships with other European schools. Said partnership projects will last from 12 to 24 months, and need to involve a minimum of two and maximum of six schools from at least two programme countries. Projects will need to commence between 1st September and 31st December 2018.





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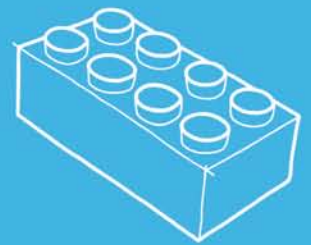
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**education**



# THE **PSM** GUIDE TO... **School improvement**

## HOW SHOULD SCHOOLS RESPOND TO ALLERGIES?

Emma Hammett cuts through the myths to look at what schools should do to support pupils with serious allergies...

**A**llergies affect more than a quarter of all the children across Europe. They can affect a child's quality of life, impair school performance and in severe cases, even present a life-threatening level of risk.

Nuts remain one of the most common allergens, with as many as one in 70 UK children allergic to peanuts. People can react adversely to pretty much anything, so it can be extremely helpful to carry out tests to establish exactly what triggers their symptoms. Sometimes surprising groups of allergens can cluster together. Potatoes and tomatoes for example, belong to the same family of vegetables – if you react to one, you're likely to be sensitive to the other as well. In some instances, a child might be exposed to a known allergen but won't react immediately, with exercise later triggering a delayed response.

Common symptoms of a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis can include flushed skin, a rash or hives

and swelling of the throat and mouth accompanied by difficulty in swallowing or speaking. In some cases the child may experience alterations in heart rate (usually speeding up) and feelings of acute anxiety. Depending on the child's medical background, they might also be affected by a severe asthma attack that isn't relieved by an inhaler, acute abdominal pain, violent nausea and vomiting and potentially unconsciousness

Not everyone will react in the same way, making anaphylactic reactions difficult to diagnose and predict. Individuals may react in different ways to exactly the same allergen when exposed to it on different occasions.

Auto-injectors containing adrenaline are used to treat acute anaphylactic reaction. The sooner they're administered once a reaction has occurred, the more effective they are. Adrenaline reduces the most dangerous symptoms of anaphylaxis – throat swelling, breathing difficulties and low blood pressure. Adrenaline is metabolised quickly; it's important to call an ambulance as soon as an auto-injector has been given, since the effects will wear off within about 10 to 15 minutes. Another injector can be given 5 to 15 minutes after the first, if necessary.

Antihistamines take up to 15 minutes to work, and thus aren't suitable for acute, life-threatening anaphylactic reactions, but can be useful to treat localised, non-life-threatening allergic reaction. After an anaphylactic reaction, always call an ambulance; the casualty will usually be admitted overnight for observation.

**Emma Hammett is a registered general nurse and the founder/CEO of the first aid training provider First Aid for Life**

 @firstaidforlife

 [firstaidforlife.org.uk](http://firstaidforlife.org.uk)

#### DISCLAIMER

First Aid for Life provides this information for guidance only; it is not in any way a substitute for medical advice. First Aid for Life is not responsible or liable for any diagnosis made or actions taken based on this information.



## SHOW YOUR LIBRARY SOME LOVE

Maintaining a good school library will always involve time and effort, but it needn't entail significant spending, writes Sue Bastone...

**T**he simplest way to make sure we raise literate children...is to show them that reading is a pleasurable activity, and that means finding books that they enjoy, giving them access to those books, and letting them read them.  
– Neil Gaiman, 2017

So begins the School Library Association's Primary School Guidelines (see [tinyurl.com/sla-pslg](http://tinyurl.com/sla-pslg)) – the perfect place to start when planning improvements to your primary school library, and full of ideas on making it a vibrant hub of literacy.

In my 14 years at LVS, an independent school for 4 to 18-year-olds, the junior library has been through three inspections, been closed twice for repurposing as a classroom, and been much loved by an army of child and parent volunteers. What's kept me from being downhearted or giving up has been the enthusiasm and passion the children have shown for their library. Top of their wishlist has always been lots of good books, a quiet, bright and welcoming space and time for them to read. That might sound obvious, but what if you have scarcely any budget to spend on improving your library facility? Here are my tips...

#### Create a Reading Culture

Get everyone involved in creating a reading buzz. Organize weekly DEAR time (Drop Everything and Read), and ensure your support staff join in. Take part in a Readathon, run a Book Week or smaller activities based on a particular genre or current topic. Don't forget non-fiction books, which are celebrated in the SLA's annual Information Book Award ([tinyurl.com/sla-iba](http://tinyurl.com/sla-iba)). Take part in Book Awards, particularly the The CILIP Kate Greenaway

Medal. Encourage inter-class storytelling, or hold a 'Dress up as book characters' day with a £1 donation for entry.

#### Resources

Money spent subscribing to a Schools Library Service is worth every penny. Your SLS can provide books and AV resources for your school's library and classrooms, as well as advice and support and much more. Why not organize a Book Swap, whereby people bring in old two books and take a different one home? You also hold a Book Fair with commission in books for the library, or try applying for a school library grant.

#### Manning the library

Ofsted's 2006 'Good School Libraries' report found that the best libraries have student involvement, but there must also be someone to manage and make the most of the available resources. One librarian can work miracles! Parent volunteers can be recruited to open at lunchtimes, and pupils can help with various shelving, tidying and display tasks.

If everyone in the school is invested in and cares about their library, it can become an amazing space. This is possible without spending lots of money, but it does require time, enthusiasm and whole school involvement.

**Sue Bastone is library consultant at LVS Ascot and a board member of the School Libraries Association**

 @uksla

 [sla.org.uk](http://sla.org.uk)



# Every teacher should be a researcher

With educational evidence now so widely shared and readily available, schools shouldn't just be looking to their neighbours for pedagogical inspiration, says Fiona Aubrey-Smith...

As teachers and leaders, it's easy to get caught up in the daily matters of school life and neglect the need to look meaningfully at what, how and why our children are learning. This is why I welcome our profession's gradual shift towards a more research-minded culture and the rise of two trends following the Goldacre Report of 2013 (see [tinyurl.com/bg-report-13](http://tinyurl.com/bg-report-13)), which encouraged the profession to start(!) building evidence into education.

The first of those trends is that teachers across the country are increasingly undertaking their own research as part of professional development and school improvement. These 'teacher researchers' are using critical thinking, having learning-centred discussions with their peers and encouraging dialogue and actions regarding future areas of research.

A teacher who is also a self-directed learner and researcher makes a great role model for children and colleagues. Encouraging a culture of research can create a sense of longevity and investment in the school that feeds into your recruitment and retention activities. Research opportunities will attract bright, passionate and committed candidates who want to be invested in your school long term, on top of simply 'doing the day job'.

The second trend is the increasing role that research findings and evidence play in informing practice and making accountability systems more robust. School improvement plans,

intervention planning and Pupil Premium strategies all now increasingly draw on evidence of what works and what research has to say about proven impact.

One of the most popular resources in this area has been the Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching & Learning Toolkit (see [tinyurl.com/eef-tlt](http://tinyurl.com/eef-tlt)) – simple to access evidence on the basics of what works, which takes into account time, cost and impact on learning. Similar materials are also available for free from Cambridge Assessment ([cambridgeassessment.org.uk](http://cambridgeassessment.org.uk)), the Institute of Education ([ucl.ac.uk/ioe](http://ucl.ac.uk/ioe)) and the National Foundation for Educational Research ([nfer.ac.uk](http://nfer.ac.uk)), to name but a few.

It's important to note that accessing this kind of research needn't be a burden. All of the above let you set up email alerts for research news related to your interests and download PDFs at your leisure, and can provide opportunities to take part in research groups, forums and activities when the time suits you.

We've also seen the emergence in 2013 of researchED ([researched.org.uk](http://researched.org.uk)), which organises low-cost, high quality events involving teachers, researchers and policymakers.

Operating in a way not dissimilar to TeachMeets, these events can be useful in supporting school leaders who want to see more research happening in their schools.

So think about it – what are you currently doing to engage with research findings and evidence? What else can you do to make your school a community where everyone is genuinely learning about learning?

**Fiona Aubrey-Smith is a former school leader, now working as a doctoral researcher holding a number of non-executive board roles at MATs and maintained schools.**





# *“The roadmap, wasn’t there”*

Malcolm Drakes recalls the combination of CPD, vision and modelling that set Bradford Primary School on the road back from special measures...

I was appointed as headteacher of Bradford Primary School in September 2011, after the school had been placed in special measures in October the previous year. One of main issues identified was that only 53% of our pupils were leaving at the expected level of reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2, when the national average at the time was nearer 85%. Progress measures further showed that they hadn't been making progress, even though they were coming in from very low starting points.

It was really a case of needing to improve the quality of teaching, and ensuring that it became much better. The reason it wasn't sufficiently good was because teacher subject knowledge was low, ranging from incorrect understanding of correct grammatical terms, to lack of knowledge regarding specific types of scientific understanding and an inability to explain certain mathematical concepts. This was rooted in a lack of training from the previous leadership team; it wasn't really the fault of the teachers.

## **NO COHESION**

Our response involved putting in place a rigorous programme of CPD, so that staff could be fully equipped to deliver high quality lessons to the children. We found that teachers simply weren't confident using particular strategies, and that there were very few schemes of work in place. What was happening in one class was different from what was happening next door, and there was no cohesion between year groups.

There was also no clear progression laid out for the teachers, so that they could easily see what was supposed to happen in year 1, how that would lead to different understanding in year 2 and ultimately secure understanding by the time the children left in year 6. The roadmap wasn't there. It was simply down to teachers to determine for themselves what they were teaching,

when and how. That made things very inconsistent, and from the children's point of view, quite confusing.

There were some obstacles in the beginning. Having identified the issue as centring around a lack of CPD, little modelling from leadership and no clear vision, we initially gave teachers the benefit of the doubt and started providing them with that. We then had some questions to ask over whether the staff we had actually possessed the capacity to react to that training and improve their lessons accordingly. In some cases they weren't able to and had to move on, which slowed down our initial progression.

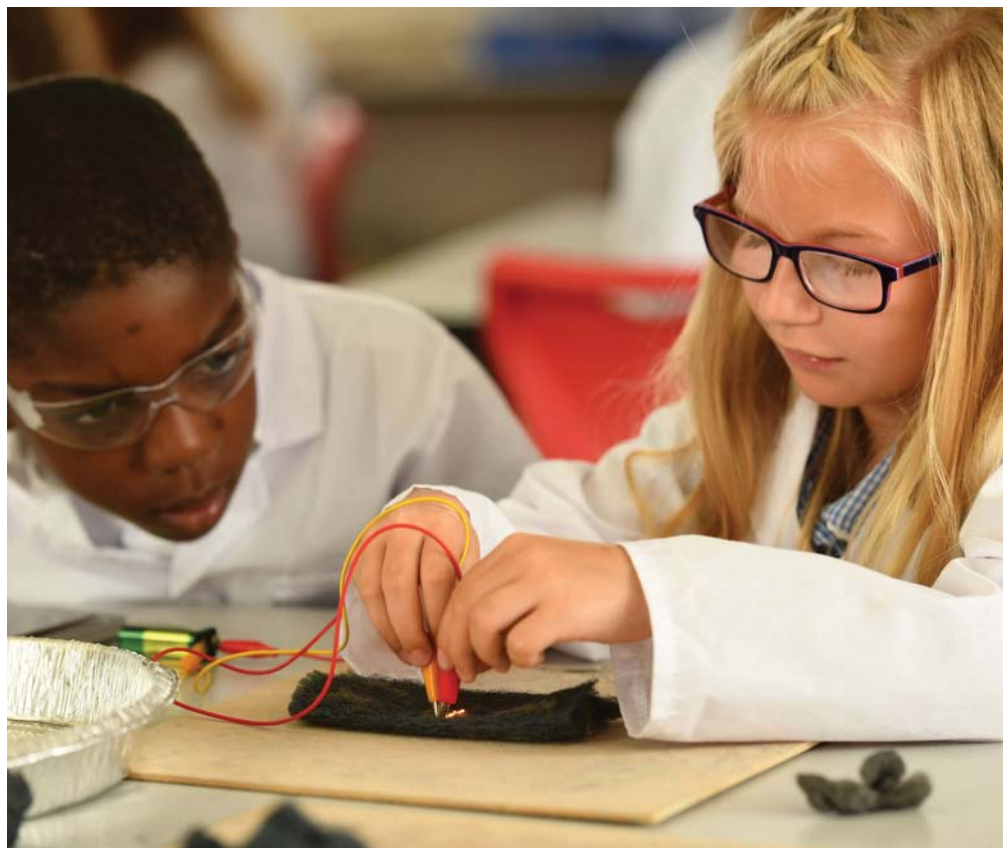
The process required spending a fair amount of time with our teachers,

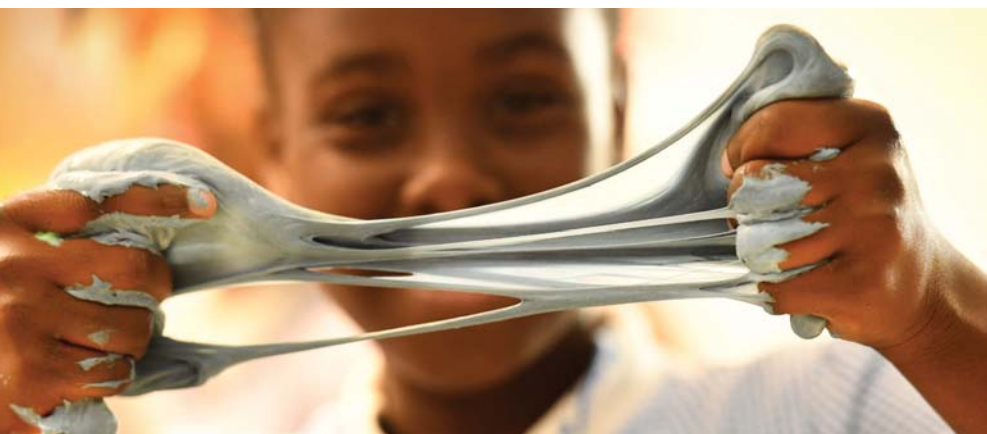
working with them, providing training and identifying any personal issues that were limiting improvements to their quality of provision. Doing something about it was always going to require time.

## **NEWFOUND CONFIDENCE**

When I was appointed, I was the only real member of the SLT – there was no deputy or extended leadership team. We were, however, lucky to have a very supportive HMI, who allowed us to recruit NQTs despite being in special measures, which enabled us to replace staff after some left.

We then looked at how we could provide our staff with schemes of work,





## THE APPLIANCE OF SCIENCE



We were looking for a science scheme of work that we felt was challenging enough for our high expectations, which had resources to go with it and CPD to ensure our teachers were confident in their subject knowledge and able to extend the children's understanding. Empiribox was the only option we found that could deliver all three.



The Empiribox curriculum and resources are based around the notion that the children will be working in pairs and very active during the lesson, which we've found has dramatically improved their engagement with, and enjoyment of science.



It also gives us access to some expensive equipment that we might only need for occasional lessons – such as a Van de Graaff generator, which might be used once to prove a point, and then stay in a store cupboard. The Empiribox scheme delivers equipment like that when you need it and collects it if you don't.

**Further details about Empiribox can be found at [empiribox.org](http://empiribox.org) or by following @empiribox**

alongside a high quality CPD programme, additional resources and ongoing support, so that they could upskill themselves and quickly become more confident in their classroom practice. We were looking for frameworks that would enable them to concentrate first and foremost on simply delivering a great lesson. We found that in the first instance with Read Write Inc. (see [ruthmiskin.com](http://ruthmiskin.com)), which significantly improved the quality of our early literacy teaching.

We then built on that and developed it into a literacy scheme that ran across Key Stage 2, and proceeded to do something similar with maths. Throughout, we examined the impact that we were seeing and considered what we'd need if we were to achieve the same level of success in science. In the end, our teachers required the same things – a cohesive scheme of work across Y1 to Y6, accompanied by high quality CPD that explained the concepts within it.

## FANTASTIC EXPERIENCES

The approach we've taken is a holistic one. You need to have a curriculum that excites your pupils from the moment they walk through the door. They've got to want to come to school each day. They got to be looking forward to the lessons they're going to have, and know that they're going to have fantastic experiences each and every day.

Many of our children come from a deprived background. School is going to be the place where they get those experiences, and where knowledge for them can be imparted. You want to make sure they have science lessons that leave them thinking 'wow'; that they'll have amazing English lessons that are very well taught and well structured.



**Malcolm Drakes is executive headteacher of Broadford Primary School**

In 2011 53% of our children left at the expected level. Within three years, 100% of our children were leaving at the expected level. When the new standards for KS2 were released in 2016, the national standard then was 53%. Broadford retained its level at 80%. In 2017, when the national level was 61%, Broadford was still at 80%, so we've managed to maintain high outcomes.

We now have quite high levels of staff mobility, because of positive stories where staff have begun their training year with us, become an NQT and two years later been promoted to a leadership role. We're proud of that, but it means we keep having new staff join us while we're rapidly expanding as a school. We had 274 children in 2011, and we're up to 620 now.

We have higher levels of achievement, and more pupils getting those higher scores, because of the interest they now have in the curriculum, the challenge they receive and the fact that across all aspects of our curriculum provision, the teachers now have very good subject knowledge, supported by good CPD that ensures they have the skills they need to give amazing lessons.

# IS YOUR SCHOOL VISION PLAIN TO SEE?

Anthony David explains why developing a school vision can be both more simple and more complicated than one might expect...

**T**o be school leaders we have to see. We have to have vision. In my time as a head, I've had many influences crowd in on my vision – some political (always the easiest to spot), some time-sensitive, some from changes in staff. But when all's said and done, and when I can find that quiet spot that forces me to look myself in the eye, I can see what I hold dear, and that those personal values are what ultimately guide my vision-making skills.

It's quite a curious thing to be asked what our vision is when we become heads. Up until that point, we'll likely never have been asked that question. Look at any advert for a headteacher vacancy, and they'll always mention something about 'vision', along with 'enthusiasm' and 'taking us from one Ofsted grade to another'. But what exactly *is* vision?

Well, in my experience I've come to believe that it actually refers to two things – community vision (and ambition) and your own personal vision. When both are working in harmony, wonderful things can happen.

## TIME AND CONVERSATIONS

Understanding a community and getting to grips with what it wants in terms of vision isn't as hard as you think – but it does require time and many conversations. If you're a new head, this will always be time well spent.

The best data can be obtained by asking open-ended questions of co-ordinated groups – 'What do you want this school to be known for?' 'What do you want your child to look like when they leave?' 'What type of learning experience and/or teacher do you want?'

Those questions will provide you with general observations and specific quotes. I once ran an exercise with parents and pupils where we wrote said questions on large sheets of sugar paper, upon which people could then write some thoughts of their own. We could see that certain words were beginning to be repeated, and it soon became clear that the range of characteristics families were looking for included 'curiosity', 'creativity', 'communication' and 'encouragement'.

When I sat down with individual families and started asking deeper questions, it quickly emerged that the type of learner they wanted was an adaptable one who was well-grounded in our locality, with a healthy, global understanding. Success and wellbeing were largely seen as natural by-products of this healthy perspective, feeding in to the school's quote that 'We are all international Londoners and learners.'

## THE PRIMARY FILTER

Understanding your own vision is another matter. My own embryonic concept of 'vision' when I first became a head 11 years ago was similar to the one I hold today, but not as defined or rich. It goes without saying that your understanding of what 'vision' is will mature with experience – probably because what you value evolves over time as well.

I give more weight to

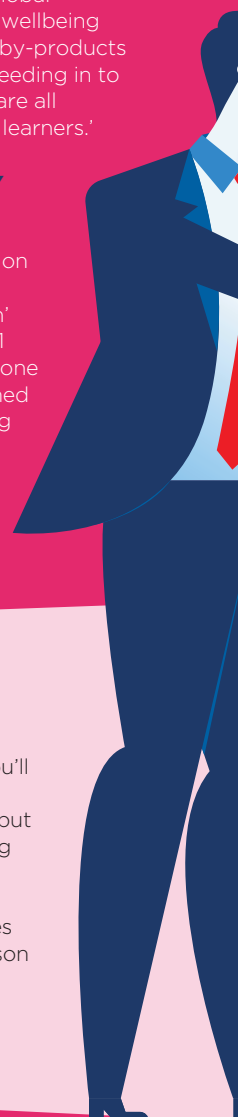
## HOW LONG UNTIL WE GET TO THE FUTURE?

**Vision is all about timing. There's a tension between speed and keeping the community on board. If you're leading a faith school, chances are it's your personal faith that makes up a good chunk of your core belief, and that this would be reflected in the community's expectations.**

I'd argue that starting from scratch, embedding an agreed vision and seeing it bear fruit should take a total of three years. It takes that long because:

- You have to get the vision right
- You have to get the staff and community on board
- You have to find or create the right resources to support it

All of this is complex, and you'll have the weight of political change on your shoulders – but once consolidated, explaining a vision and how that vision will be obtained within your learning community becomes much easier. It's for that reason that you'll then stand out.





mental well-being today than in the past, for example, as my understanding of how it impacts on school life (and indeed life generally) has continued to deepen. Maybe this is why fewer people now apply for headships. If you can't encapsulate what drives you forward as a leader, you're going to struggle to do that in a larger forum.

What do you do with your vision once you have it? This is the exciting part. A well thought-out vision will become the primary filter for your school, whether that be in relation to your curriculum, assessment, well-being or long-term ambition. What you'll find is that when one piece of the jigsaw falls into place, others soon start to slot in and complement each other.

The two schools I run both have significantly diverse ethnic groups (with over 40 different languages in each school), so moving to the International

didn't follow the National Literacy Strategy. I recall one particular case where a head stuck to her vision, deviating from the NLS in the process. Interestingly, the school's academic levels didn't drop, and the school remains as popular today as it ever was.

Developing your school vision is easiest when you're doing it for the first time. But what do you do when you've been in the same school for a long time? Maybe it's become an outstanding school? How do you 're-vision'?

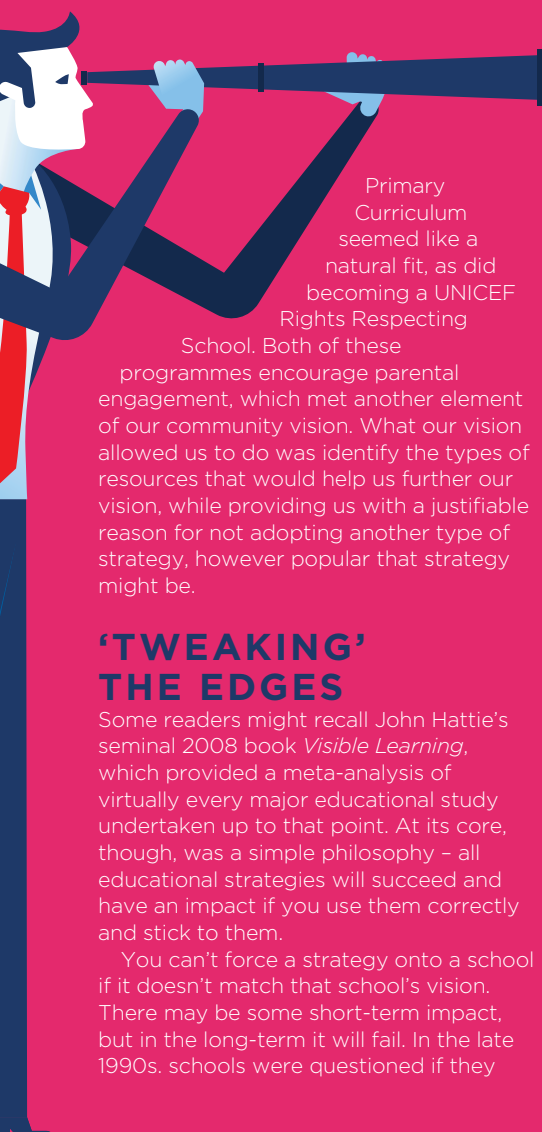
Being rated outstanding requires headteachers to look closely at how they move forward, as the school's existing vision will clearly be one that's of the highest calibre. A head in this position doesn't have to completely review what their vision is, but rather 'tweak' the

edges. Their responsibility is to build and consolidate the school's reputation – something that will require as much stamina as it does vision.

Ultimately, seeing clearly and using your vision as your moral filter and the school's compass is what will help you make those decisions – however difficult – that are in the school's best interests. For that reason, spending time building your vision will be critical in helping you sleep easy at night.



**Anthony David is an executive headteacher of two North London schools**



Primary Curriculum seemed like a natural fit, as did becoming a UNICEF Rights Respecting School. Both of these

programmes encourage parental engagement, which met another element of our community vision. What our vision allowed us to do was identify the types of resources that would help us further our vision, while providing us with a justifiable reason for not adopting another type of strategy, however popular that strategy might be.

## 'TWEAKING' THE EDGES

Some readers might recall John Hattie's seminal 2008 book *Visible Learning*, which provided a meta-analysis of virtually every major educational study undertaken up to that point. At its core, though, was a simple philosophy – all educational strategies will succeed and have an impact if you use them correctly and stick to them.

You can't force a strategy onto a school if it doesn't match that school's vision. There may be some short-term impact, but in the long-term it will fail. In the late 1990s, schools were questioned if they





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# Ask the Expert

Anne Kispal introduces NFER tests for Y1 and 2 and explains what makes them a reliable complement to national testing



Throughout her 30 year career in assessment, **Anne Kispal** has developed materials both commercially and for national KS1 and KS2 assessments.

## How do these KS1 materials complement NFER's existing range of tests?

Thousands of schools have already used our termly paper-based tests in mathematics, reading, spelling, and grammar and punctuation for Y3-5. The introduction of KS1 assessments extends our range to include all years from 1-5, helping teachers to reliably monitor attainment and progress across the two Key Stages.

## How and when should these KS1 assessments be used?

These new Y1 assessments are intended for use in the summer term, providing a measure of attainment midway through the Key Stage. We are currently developing another set of materials for use in the autumn term of Y2. These will identify areas for development well in advance of the end of Key Stage national tests.

## How do these KS1 assessments differ from NFER's KS2 tests?

In order to build familiarity and confidence with assessment in young children, we have departed from our KS2 model. Our KS1 assessment consists of two reading and two mathematics booklets per year group. For reading there is a booklet for all pupils which is accompanied by substantial teacher support and mediation, as well as an additional booklet for pupils who can work more independently. In mathematics all pupils complete both booklets, although (as for reading) the difficulty of the booklet and the support provided differ.

## How much teacher support is provided?

Given the age of the target population, and the fact that this may be a child's first formal assessment, we have incorporated much more teacher support than in national testing or in NFER's KS2 tests. Y1 pupils are led through the tasks page by page at their own pace. This support is particularly important for maths tests, as it reduces the amount of reading pupils need to do.

In the higher level booklets, pupils work more independently. For reading, this is reflected in a booklet layout that mirrors the KS1 national tests, while for mathematics, the support provided by pictures and number lines is reduced.

## What makes NFER's KS1 tests a reliable choice?

NFER has been developing assessments for almost 70 years, and following our best practice, these tests undergo a rigorous standardisation process. The Y1 summer tests were standardised on over 3,500 pupils in summer 2017 and the autumn tests will be standardised in autumn 2018. A teachers' script is provided for both subjects to safeguard the reliability of the results, by ensuring that the degree of support is the same in all schools.

## Why did NFER choose to develop assessments for KS1?

Schools using our KS2 tests frequently told us they would welcome a linked set of materials for KS1. Traditionally, NFER publications include limited assessment material for KS1. However, given this feedback, we came to the conclusion that as long as the resulting materials balanced test reliability and validity with sensitivity to the age group, then we should extend our range to cover KS1 too. Our primary aim was that the end product should be engaging and appealing to pupils, while also producing useful data for teachers.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more, call 01753 637 007 or visit [nfer.ac.uk](http://nfer.ac.uk)





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# Buildings & Facilities

## CLEAR AWAY THE CLUTTER

Struggling to keep your corridors tidy and free from pupils' scattered possessions? It might be time for you to look into lockers...



**C**luttered corridors have always been a problem for primary schools. Pegs will often get overloaded with coats, rucksacks, book bags and lunch boxes, and it won't take much for said items to end up on the floor.

Teachers often tell us that one of their pet hates is having to pick coats and bags off the floor and identify who they belong to. More than that, there are safety concerns at play here too, with schools having failed fire audits due to inadequate room for escape in an emergency. So what's the answer?

Lockers are a solution that's worth considering, since they'll certainly make things tidier and help eliminate most of the above problems – but it's worth knowing a few things going in.

When measuring for a set of new lockers, make sure you check that any pipework or radiators won't prevent stop you from fixing your lockers to the wall, and that any nearby light switches or vents won't be covered up. If your walls have skirting boards or coving, you'll need to either mount the lockers on stands with the rear legs inset, or fix them to the wall with timber batons. Alternatively, ask your locker supplier to come and measure up for you – any decent supplier should be prepared to do so free of charge.



It's important to order lockers that are the correct height for each key stage, and which have enough capacity to store everything the children bring to school. The lockers you order should be robust enough to cope with a school environment; those that feature welded, rather than riveted frames are best, since they're able to resist impact damage much more effectively. We'd additionally recommend that your locker units have easy turn handles, rather than locks and keys, as younger children will be more likely to misplace keys.

Many primary schools were never originally designed to take lockers, with the result that their corridors often seem at first too narrow to accommodate them. After working with hundreds of schools, however, we've found that a depth option of 380mm allows for ample storage capacity without taking up too much corridor space.

If, like us, you think primary lockers should be fun, why not specify your lockers in multiple colours? This shouldn't involve any extra costs from a reputable supplier.

We'd further advise going for three-compartment locker units – these offer ideal amounts of space, and 10 units will suit a class of 30 perfectly (with the option to add units if your class sizes increase).

Of course, a degree of ongoing maintenance is essential for keeping your lockers looking their best. We'd recommend carrying out checks every three months, ensuring that handles are tight and spraying hinges with WD40 or similar. Doors can be cleaned with a damp cloth and a non-abrasive cleaning agent. Damaged doors can easily be replaced by drilling out door rivets and replacing them.

*Lake Chamberlen is a project specialist at Lockertek – the first company to design and build a locker specifically tailored for use in primary settings*

 @lockertek

 lockertek.co.uk



## IS YOUR MINIBUS ROADWORTHY?

Like any vehicle, minibuses require ongoing care if they're to continue performing at their best. John Couppleditch highlights the areas many schools tend to overlook...

**P** rimary schools can derive extraordinary benefit from using minibuses, but they don't always have the in-house expertise and resources needed to effectively manage running of their minibus on a long-term basis. Below are some of the areas that are most commonly missed, alongside some general recommendations you'll hopefully find helpful.

### A MINIBUS MOT LASTS ONE YEAR

I've visited a number of schools who think they're not due an MOT until their minibus is three years old. In fact, a Class 5 minibus MOT is due from the vehicle's first anniversary. Schools that run a 9-seater minibus won't need an MOT until year three, but we'd still recommend carrying out safety checks at least annually for the first three years until the MOT is due.

### CARRY OUT REGULAR CHECKS

School minibuses are typically operated by multiple drivers, which makes it not uncommon for daily and weekly checks to be missed. We'd recommend putting in a robust system of daily and weekly checks that include oil and fluid levels, seatbelts and lights. Equally important is to ensure you have a system in place for your driver(s) when signing the vehicle in and out, and for reporting any damage or faults swiftly so they can be rectified.

### DIFFERENT DRIVERS = MORE WEAR

If your minibus is regularly driven by different people, it follows that they'll each have their own driving style – some might be heavier on the brake and clutch

than others, for example. This can often lead to a higher rate of 'attritional' wear due to variation in how the minibus is handled. A simple solution is to employ the services of a qualified driving assessor, who can help iron out any major differences between your drivers and train them to drive in a smooth, safe and consistent way, thus reducing wear on the vehicle.

### DON'T LET IT LANGUISH

It's widely understood that high mileage and heavy use can lead to issues with the running of a vehicle, but infrequent use can give rise to a whole other set of problems. Make sure your minibus is started at least weekly and given a good run to get the engine up to a good working temperature. This will keep the battery in good condition, while also helping to keep the exhaust and emission management systems clean and free from blockage.

### CARE FOR THE INTERIOR

Pay attention to the vehicle's door and window operation. Regular use, cleaning and appropriate lubrication will prevent them from seizing up and causing problems during school trips. If your minibus is fitted with retractable side steps, see that these are kept clean and follow the manufacturer's advice for how to lubricate them. I've seen many get covered in grit and mud and then seize up.

**John Couppleditch is sales director at Education Vehicle Alliance**

 @evaminibus

 evaminibus.co.uk



# Keep the lights on (and your budget in check)

Luke Czerpak explains how energy saving initiatives can not only save schools money, but also bring about better learning environments...

**R**educing energy usage should be a priority for every user of a domestic or commercial property. Being energy efficient reduces costs, is socially responsible and helps the environment – and being hubs of activity (almost) all year round, schools are no different.

Government statistics show that school energy costs amount to more than £600 million per year, equating to an annual cost of £27,000 per school. With education budgets as stretched as they are, it's a good area for schools to save money in.

A school's energy consumption will vary depending on the age of its building(s), age, occupancy hours, what features it has and the amount and type of electrical

equipment used. Generally speaking, schools' two main energy costs will be heating (typically 45% of its utilities spending) and lighting (20%) – though there are some easily implementable ways in which schools can reduce said costs.

An effective teaching and learning environment needs well-lit areas, but there's the potential for energy to be wasted through lighting unused classrooms, corridors and storage areas. Measures for addressing this include:

- **Switching off** – An obvious recommendation, but saving energy starts with switching lights off when they're not in use. Consider placing stickers and posters near to switches and raising awareness in assembly.
- **Install low energy lighting** – LED lights require around 75% less energy than halogen bulbs, and yet last over 40,000 hours longer.
- **Use dimmer switches** – These will not only allow for custom light levels, but also save energy by reducing the flow of electricity to the luminaire.
- **Let the daylight in** – Given schools' daytime opening hours, there are plenty of opportunities to use daylight. By installing daylight blinds, light can be redirected onto ceilings to reduce glare.

## Heating

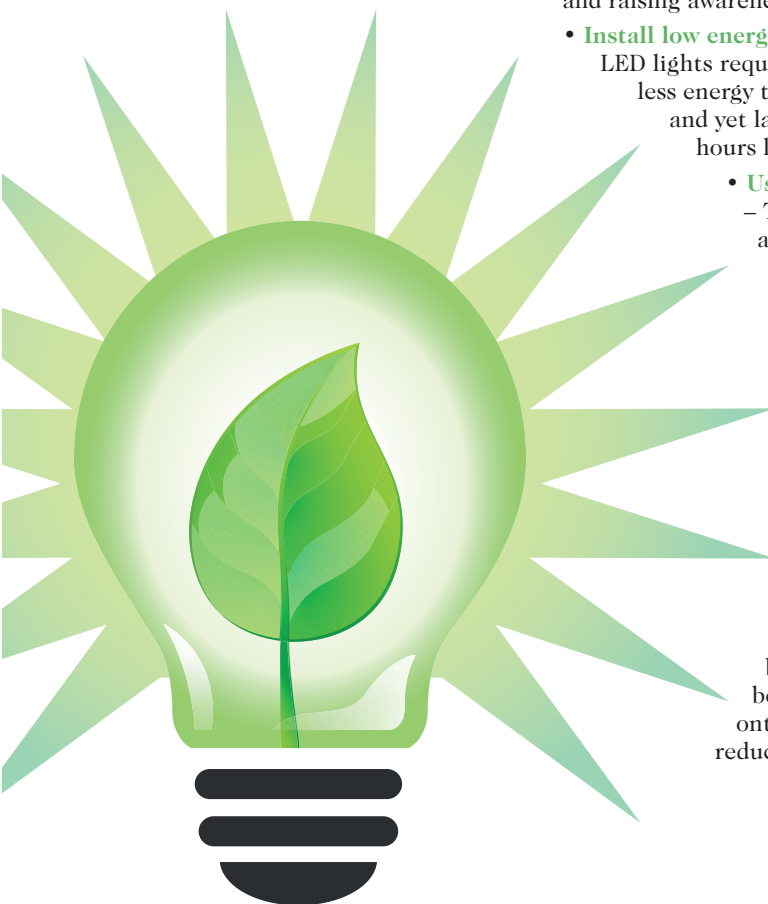
Heating is often the most expensive energy cost a school will have. Unbeknownst to many, children are actually more comfortable than adults at lower temperatures because of their higher metabolic rates. As such, recommended temperatures for classrooms and corridors/circulation spaces are 18°C and 15°C respectively. Heating every classroom can be expensive, especially through winter, but again, there are ways of reducing costs:

- Around two-thirds of the heat from a typical school building will be lost through the building fabric. Double or triple glazing for north-facing or exposed windows is a must. Consider also adding extra insulation to roofing and walls when the opportunity arises during refurbishments.
- Don't obstruct radiators. With the frequent rearranging that classrooms go through, desks, cupboards and other furniture can end up getting in the way.
- Adjust your timer controls so that the school reaches ideal temperature when the children and teachers arrive, and have it start to cool down as people leave. Adjust it daily until you find the right timings.

The money you save can be spent on learning resources and facilities. Involve the students in your energy saving efforts, and inspire them to care about how energy usage affects the planet.

**Luke Czerpak is compliance manager at Eaton Electrical – a provider of detailed lighting and heating energy audits aimed at identifying energy wastage**

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# KEEPING CALM, CARRYING ON

As building projects go, Turnham Primary Foundation School's recently completed second floor extension involved more challenges than most...



It's one thing to construct a major extension on top of an existing, mid 20th century-era school building. It's quite another to do so with pupils continuing to attend lessons while the building work goes on above them.

Yet for just over two years, that was the situation at Turnham Primary Foundation School, following Lewisham Council's decision to expand its premises. According to executive headteacher John Halliwell, "They were aware that the pupil population was increasing and that there needed to be more space. The challenge with the site was that there wasn't much space outside. We're essentially surrounded by an estate of flats – I know that a number of different options were looked at."

Halliwell is a fairly recent arrival at the school, having only been appointed as executive head in January this year – just in

time to preside over the final stages of what had been quite a protracted build process that saw initial site works commence in October 2015. While not there at the time, Halliwell's understanding is that where the planning was concerned, "There was a very clear view of what could happen and how, due to the age of the building and its location, which the school was consulted on. But then the building work was delayed, due a range of factors."

## UNFORESEEN COMPLICATIONS

Edward Williams, managing director of the appointed architect, Edward Williams Architects, picks up the story: "There had been a great deal of discussion between Lewisham Council, the school and external advisors concerning the need for adding an





additional floor.

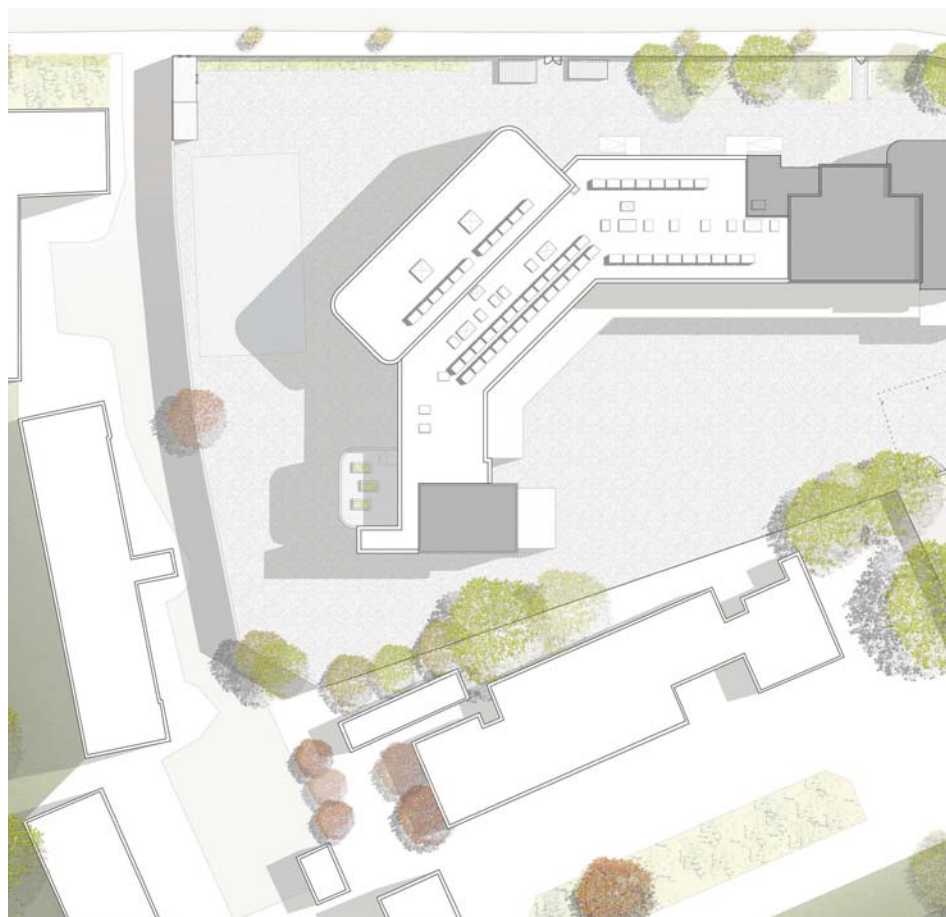
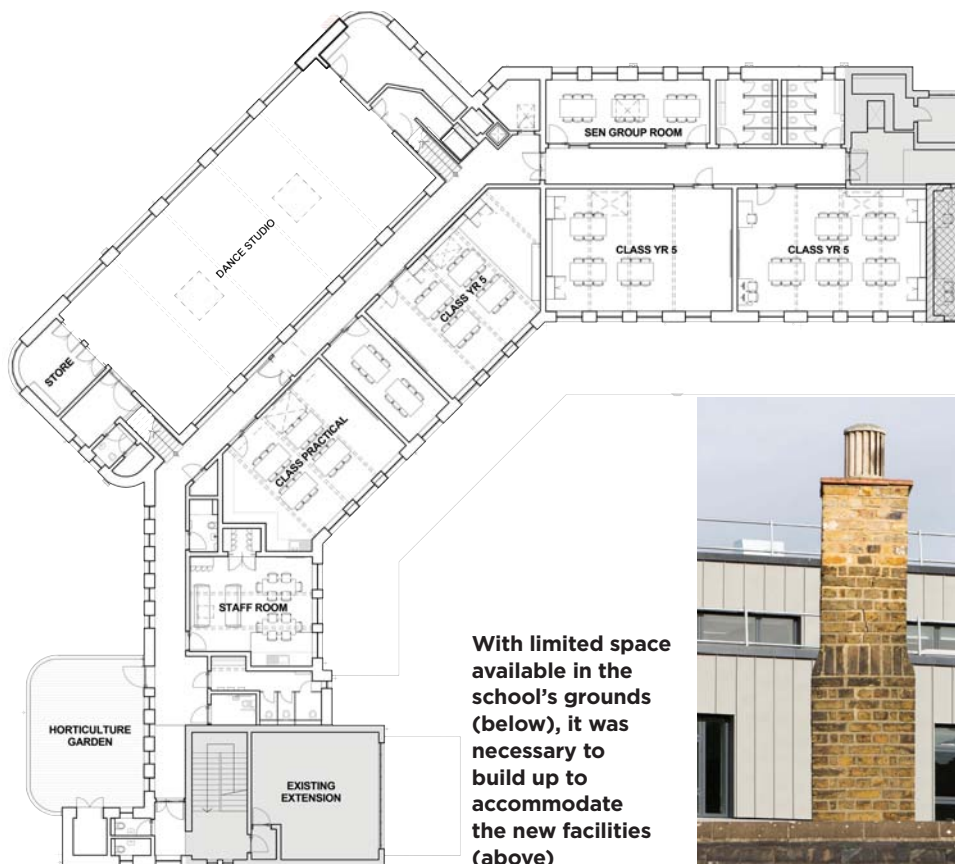
"After we became involved, there followed a stand-down period while investigative work was carried out on the school's foundations to ensure they could take the extra load. We discovered some rusting steel lintels and other elements, which is one of those problems you often get when dealing with existing buildings – you don't necessarily know what's there until you start opening it up."

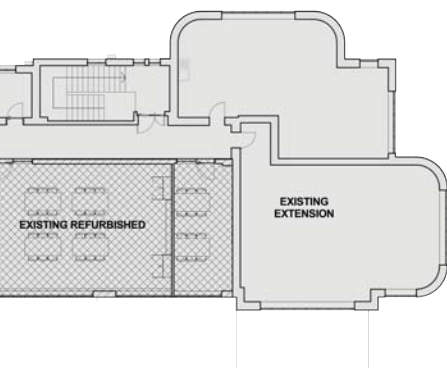
With these unforeseen additional works eventually resolved, work resumed in earnest. The school's new second floor extension was to feature extra classrooms, a dance hall and a dedicated SEN space – the latter originally envisaged as two separate rooms, but later combined into one at the school's request.

On the whole, matters proceeded relatively smoothly thereafter. "There was the question of what to do with the school's flat roof," recalls Williams. "We looked at whether we could support the structure by making holes in the existing roofing system, but in the end decided that was too risky, so we took the whole flat roof off. We were able to develop a

*We're very pleased with the dance hall and the classrooms. The dance hall has a natural birch-laced ply lining to the room, with all of the services concealed. We like this, because it's a robust finish that won't need to be repainted and won't attract footmarks. The room's exposed timber structure creates this fabulous environment, which we feel is something very special. The way we've designed it lets the children to see how it's all put together, so that the school building itself starts to become an educational device.*

**- EDWARD WILLIAMS,  
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF  
EDWARD WILLIAMS ARCHITECTS**





lightweight timber solution that enabled a very speedy construction and avoided the need to put a roof over the entire building, which would have been prohibitively expensive."

## THE RIGHT PEOPLE

One issue that did need careful managing, however, was how to keep the school open while the works were in progress, without too much disruption to the teachers' and pupils' daily routines. "From the outset, it was a case of looking at how the school ran on a day-to-day basis, what space we were able to have, and in particular, at maintaining the children's safety and access to the school," says Halliwell.

"With children in the lower floors of the main building, managing routes and areas the children could access safely was very important," remembers Williams. "We also had to ensure that periods of noisy building work were co-ordinated with the school's activities, planned around exams and carried out in holiday periods wherever possible."

Happily for the school, the personnel involved in these efforts were more than up to the task. "You've got to have the right people working alongside you," observes Halliwell. "We appointed a site manager who had an extensive understanding of building and construction, and was sensitive to the various demands of the contractors when they were on site. Having that link enabled the school to function well and organise things in a timely manner with the contractor. The relationship we had with them was very strong."

## ENTHUSIASM AND VIGOUR

Having successfully negotiated the hidden complexities of an ageing building and the logistical challenges of keeping the school

functioning, however, there was a further obstacle to overcome – the reputational hit that perhaps inevitably follows from having a school clad in scaffolding for an extended length of time.

"Pupil numbers have deteriorated over the duration of the build," concedes Halliwell. "If you're a parent choosing a local school for your child, and one of them's a building site with the children largely in temporary facilities, that obviously doesn't look good."

With the building works finally completed in February this year, however, the Turnham community is now very much looking to the future. "Moving back into the building has been a unifying experience for the team," Halliwell says. "We were virtually two separate schools throughout the duration of the build. Now that we're all back under one roof, it's created a renewed sense of enthusiasm and vigour."

So what aspect of the school's new building is Halliwell most pleased with? "The dance studio right at the top is an amazing space for a number of reasons. It's allowed us to specialise in creative provision for dance, but has also meant that for the first time in the school's history, we're able to hold whole school assemblies. Seeing that is amazing."

"I also think the quality of the actual build itself is really high. I've worked in a number of new build schools, and I haven't seen a spec as strong as the one I've seen here."

**Turnham Primary Foundation School**

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 [turnhamprimaryfoundation.school.co.uk](https://turnhamprimaryfoundation.school.co.uk)

**Edward Williams Architects**

 [@EWAarchitects](https://twitter.com/EWAarchitects)

 [edwardwilliamsarchitects.com](https://edwardwilliamsarchitects.com)

# WHAT'S THE FUTURE FOR PFI?

Once heralded as the answer to the country's infrastructure woes, PFI funding is now seen by many as tainted. What went wrong?

**F**or those in the business of public sector construction and service management, the first weeks of 2018 were gloomy indeed.

Carillion had been among a select group of large firms frequently called upon by the government to handle building and outsourcing for a host of different projects across a range of sectors. Before January was over, the company had collapsed in the wake of three profit warnings, mounting debts and non-payments to sub-contractors.

The pertinent part of the tale for *PSM* readers is the extent of Carillion's involvement in schools, which at the time of its liquidation was reported to include daily deliveries of 32,000 school meals, facilities management and cleaning services for numerous schools across the country, sponsorship of an academies trust and Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements.

The latter has repeatedly come up in recent discussions of school underfunding, with many pointing to the exorbitant contract payments being made to PFI firms by schools and LAs. With Carillion's collapse prompting much soul searching over the future of outsourcing, and school funding likely to remain a hot button issue for the foreseeable future, just how bad is the PFI situation? And is it a funding model with any kind of future?

## ADDRESSING THE MYTHS

The PFI funding model was introduced by the Major government in the early 90s, and enthusiastically taken up by New Labour towards the decade's end. What made PFI

attractive was the way in which it allowed the upfront costs of expensive public infrastructure – chiefly hospitals, schools and public highways – to be moved off the government's balance book. Instead, private investors would build, maintain and manage said infrastructure, in return for regular payments by state authorities over an agreed contract period.

The model began to fall out of vogue with the arrival of the coalition government. Prior to 2010, Labour had signed 620 PFI contracts; between 2010 and now, only 80 have been signed.

Jonathan Hart is a partner at international law firm Pinsent Masons. A self-described defender of sorts for the PFI model, he's worked on various projects since its very inception. "Without it, we'd have seen far fewer new schools being built in the last 15 to 20 years," he reasons. While he recognises the concerns that have been raised over the expense of PFI contracts, he's also keen to address a persistent myth.





“I know of one school that was putting aside around 10% of their annual budget to support PFI contributions five years ago. In 2017 they were having to put aside over 17%.”

- Julia Harnden, ASCL funding specialist

“They’re seen as significantly more expensive than other types of contract – where government provides the funding and school is built – but you’re not necessarily comparing like with like,” he says. “A typical PFI project won’t just involve building a school; it’s also about maintaining and looking after that school for the next 25 years. That’s everything, from replacing boilers to re-roofing and re-glazing. Even reactive maintenance – if a ball smashes a window, it’s the PFI contractor’s job to send somebody out to fix it.”

## LOCK IN

Julia Harnden is funding specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL). “Schools are increasingly having to take a more businesslike approach to their operations,” she says. “What a PFI contract does is take away the financial risk that a school might otherwise have to take on in terms of building and maintenance costs. When it works well, it means schools don’t need to worry about what happens if their boiler breaks.”

As Harnden goes on to explain, however, “There are two clear issues. One is the impact of schools’ annual PFI contributions on squeezed budgets. The second is that they’re unable to effectively hold contracted parties to account. PFI contracts are usually watertight and will be index linked in terms of the annual contributions for the life of the contract.

“For example, there’s a school I know of that was putting aside around 10% of their annual budget to support PFI

contributions five years ago. In 2017 they were expecting to have to put aside over 17%.”

This cuts to the nub of the issue many have with PFI – that schools are essentially locked in to contracts that don’t take account of wider changes that affect education funding, be it the rise in demand for specialist support, the apprenticeship levy or any other developments that put pressure on school finances.

Jonathan Hart notes that only around a dozen of all the PFI contracts signed to date have ended early, and that premature termination is only possible in a handful of scenarios. One would be ‘project company default’. “That’s what was breathing down Carillion’s neck up until its liquidation,” he explains. “It’s when there’s been a serious delay in construction, to the point where children might be waiting 12 to 18 months before moving into their shiny new school. Under those circumstances, an LA can terminate the contract.”

Another scenario is where a change in government policy results in PFI arrangements being brought back under government control – as pledged by shadow chancellor John McDonnell at last year’s Labour Party conference.

## NEXT STEPS

So, where should PFI projects go from here? “Going forward, we’d like to see a benchmarking process that allows annual contributions to be renegotiated so that they reflect changes affecting a school’s funding – changes which will often be out of their control,” says Julia Harnden. “There’s the lifecycle pot, into

which all the money for required improvements and maintenance is collected over the life of the contract. If schools could be more involved in agreements over what should happen and when in terms of spending that money, it would be enormously helpful.”

As far as Jonathan Hart is concerned, “It still costs a lot of money to set up public sector projects in the first instance. If you look at the capital budgets of what the DfE has been wanting to spend on building schools, it’s been really slimmed and slashed back. Unless there’s a rethink, I can’t see them doing much to increase the building of new schools, to be frank – with or without the PFI model.”

## PFI STEP-BY-STEP

**1. A PFI contract is agreed between an LA and a special purpose company (SPC) set up specifically for the project. The SPC’s shareholders will usually include representatives of the constructor and service provider, alongside a financier or PFI specialist.**

**2. Construction commences. During this period (which typically lasts 18 months to two years) the SPC pays itself using money borrowed from a bank or bondholder and builds the school. The LA pays nothing (for now).**

**3. Once the school is built, the arrangement changes and the LA starts making monthly payments to the SPC. These payments will be used by the SPC to pay off the debt incurred by building the school and cover the costs of maintaining the school – while also enabling the SPC to make a profit.**

**4. Over the next 25 to 30 years, the LA continues to make monthly payments until the debt is paid off and the contract comes to an end.**

# What makes a GREAT PLAY SPACE?

Ali Wood explains why improving a school's play area involves standing back and letting your pupils take the lead...

1

## REMEMBER

What did you do, and how did you feel when you played as a child? It's important to try and see through the eyes of children, because they perceive things very differently to adults. As an adult, recalling those memories of the places where you played and who you played with is key to understanding children's feelings and perceptions.

2

## UNDERSTAND PLAY

Play is the primary means by which children learn about themselves and the world around them. That's obvious to us when we witness a baby's behaviour, but a child's inherent curiosity and impulse to find things out will continue throughout the rest of their childhood – which is something we all need to remember and act upon.

3

## VALUE PLAY

Recognise how essential play is for a good childhood, and how vital it is that your school promotes children's development in different areas. Children themselves value eating, family and security, but once those are in place, it's important to appreciate how they value play above everything else.

4

## TRAIN

Invest in training about play for all members of staff at your school – and that includes your site manager. A whole school approach needs to involve everyone, though if you want to create a space where children can be themselves and play freely, it doesn't suddenly 'happen' after training – it's an ongoing process.

5

## EMBRACE RISK

People are wary of being sued, and children do need safeguards – but taking risks when playing and managing them for themselves is an important part of how children gain resilience. Children are actually at their most capable and competent when playing. We don't have to control or manage as much as we think we do.

6

## ECONOMISE

You don't need to spend lots of money on quick fixes. Good play spaces need ongoing investment, but not necessarily in the financial sense – more in terms of time, attention and focus. A school might invest in a large climbing frame and think that's it, but actually, when children are playing, novelty is all.

7

## GATHER

Collect loose parts from lofts, garages and similar locations (avoiding anything poisonous or sharp). Items such as crates, tires and ropes cost virtually nothing. If they're regularly swapped out and added to over time, children can use them in almost infinite combinations to experiment with and work things out for themselves.

8

## DON'T OVER-SUPERVISE

Stand back and give children room to play their way. This is hard to do, but you'll soon see how self-sufficient children actually are. Intervene only when it's really necessary, because children need freedom to learn things for themselves. In your own happiest play memories, were there any adults around?

9

## OPEN GROUNDS

Let children explore your school grounds, especially wooded areas. The natural inclination in some schools is to place these off limits, but children gravitate towards natural spaces. They want to climb trees, go in bushes, dig in the earth. If you're concerned about mud, collect some wellies that you can keep on hand. Adopt a 'can do' approach.

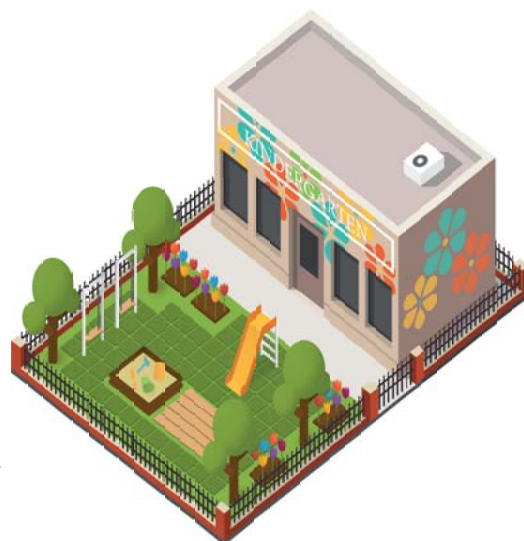
10

## TAKE CUES FROM THE KIDS

Play spaces should always keep evolving, and children will let you know what they need. If you make an effort to listen and observe unobtrusively, you'll soon start to notice what the children are trying to do and experiment with, and quickly recognise what kind of tools and items will support their play most effectively.



**Ali Wood M. Ed. is a freelance playwork consultant and the co-author, with Jacky Kilvington, of *Reflective Playwork*, published by Bloomsbury**





Pupils at St Teresa of Lisieux Catholic Primary School, Liverpool make use of their Edible Playground – a dedicated space for growing fruit and vegetables

## “SPENDING TIME OUTDOORS, SOAKING IN NATURE, HAS A SOOTHING EFFECT”

THE CHARITY TREES FOR CITIES IS OFFERING SCHOOLS IN MERSEYSIDE THE OPPORTUNITY HARNESS THEIR CHILDREN'S SENSE OF WONDER FOR THE GREAT OUTDOORS, WHILE ALSO TEACHING THEM SOME VALUABLE LESSONS ABOUT HEALTH AND NUTRITION IN THE PROCESS. HERE, GURNAM BUBBER OUTLINES THE CHARITY'S 'EDIBLE PLAYGROUNDS' INITIATIVE...

Few things are more amazing than planting tiny seeds with your own hands, watching the shoots and buds grow before your eyes. Sadly, many children miss out on this experience and don't understand where their food comes from. Edible Playgrounds give children the chance to learn about the true origins of the food they eat, while also providing a different, deeper thrill to what speedy modern life has to offer...

### HEALTHIER LIFESTYLES

Children are busier and more stressed than ever before. Anxiety is more common, and attention spans are getting shorter. Studies show that spending time outdoors, soaking in nature, not only improves attention, but also has a soothing effect on children's mental health. What's more, research by the Royal Horticultural Society has found that gardening in schools can help children to develop 'A more resilient, confident and responsible approach to life'. This shines through with Edible Playgrounds. 70% of the schools we surveyed said the immersive and fun outdoor spaces have supported their work with students who have SEN and challenging behaviour.

### MAKING LEARNING FUN

Playing outside and getting muddy is fun! With urban life leaving us cocooned in concrete, today's children often miss out on the freedom to roam around their natural environment. Edible Playgrounds give children the chance to enjoy all that the outdoors has to offer, whilst learning about the world around them in a fun, engaging way. Beyond the teaching of gardening and healthy eating, teachers have used them as a backdrop to maths, English, science and art lessons. Headteachers have also observed Edible Playgrounds leading to shifts in behaviours, resulting in more positive attitudes towards healthy eating and improvements in social skills.

### BRIGHTER FUTURES

Edible Playgrounds have given children a chance to work together in a fresh and exciting environment. The natural surroundings have enabled many children to develop their confidence, communicate more effectively and improve their teambuilding skills. This can not only help set them on the right path for their future careers, but also help them to become happy, productive members of society who enjoy building relationships with other people. 56% of teachers at participating schools have noticed increased confidence in children's behaviour after participating in activities held within an Edible Playground.

For more information about Trees for Cities' Edible Playgrounds initiative, visit [edibleplaygrounds.org](http://edibleplaygrounds.org)

## LET'S GO!

If you've set aside some spending for your play area, here are some suppliers you might want to explore further...



Specialising in sensory and nature products, Playspaces can cater to the needs of schools, nurseries and pre-schools – even those where space is at a premium, via their bespoke designs. The pictured Willow Igloo is just the thing for creating a nature-inspired den for breaktimes or an outdoor quiet area; Playspaces recommend that its living willow structures be planted between November and March. [playspaces.co.uk](http://playspaces.co.uk)



Originally a one-man operation founded in 2000, Hand Made Places is now a respected supplier of play equipment to education settings across the country. If you're in the market for an imaginative centrepiece to complete your play area, the company's Nautilus Play Boat features rock hold walls, a fireman's pole and a 'below deck' enclosed space, complete with portholes. [handmadeplaces.co.uk](http://handmadeplaces.co.uk)

Combining imaginative possibilities with engaging physical challenges, this Log Labyrinth from Pentagon



is built around an interlinking log climbing frame, upon which your intrepid pupils will also find a climbing net, climbing wall and a rope ladder. The central scramble net will help to develop children's strength and balance, making it an effective tool for encouraging social play and teamwork. [pentagonplay.co.uk](http://pentagonplay.co.uk)



# What should you do for your post-SATS trip?

We look at some of options available when it comes to rewarding your Year 6s for their efforts during the assessment season...



## ANTHONY DAVID

**Executive headteacher at  
St Paul's C of E Primary School  
and Millbrook Park C of  
E Primary School**

There's a keen drive towards SATs in Y6, and like many things with a long run-up, they're inevitably followed by a slump. What transpires afterwards can make for a very long half term – I'm sure I'm not the only head who would rather the tests took place in June, since the amount of bridge-burning that can take place can spoil a child's time at school.

Foolishly – or wisely – we vary our timetable radically to include end of year shows, trips and the standard week away. In my view it's not really the location that matters, but more the relationships that are created. I always try to book trips as early as possible (I've even booked in October!), as the class dynamics always change for the better.

Yes, some organisations are better than others (and I've tried most over the last 23 years!) but what I always look for are full, long days that seek to build the group as well as the child. If you have that, then it scarcely matters when or where you book.

 [stpaulsnw7.barnet.sch.uk](http://stpaulsnw7.barnet.sch.uk)



## EMILY FULDER

**Education Services Coordinator,  
Canal & River Trust**

Whether you agree with the idea of SATs or not, there's no denying that pupils and teachers alike breathe a sigh of relief once the tests have finished. This is a great time to treat your class to something fun! After being cooped up with endless sheets of paper, for me, the best kind of post-SATS reward trip would have to involve the great outdoors; the perfect antidote.

The benefits of learning outside the classroom are numerous and well-documented, and include improved attention spans and development of confidence. All too often, emphasis is placed on *what* a child should learn, rather than where or how they learn it. Outdoor learning tackles this by offering hands-on learning experiences in the real world, rather than behind a desk.

The Canal & River Trust provides free, cross-curricular school trips to waterside destinations across England and Wales. Spending time by water is a powerful way to unwind, especially after the stress of SATs, and the stories our waterways hold are just itching to be discovered by curious young minds.

 [@canalrivertrust](https://twitter.com/canalrivertrust)  
 [canalrivertrust.org.uk/explorers](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/explorers)



## TREV HAINES

**Sales Director, iFLY**

SATs week is a critical time in the school calendar for pupils and teachers alike. Many schools will have prepared their pupils for weeks or months to ensure the school's excellence is reflected in those final grades. It's important, then, for teachers to acknowledge all the hard work that's been put in once the tests are over.

A fun school trip is the perfect opportunity to remind pupils that hard work will always reap rewards. As a teacher, you can offer these rewards through a trip that will help pupils celebrate the end of exams and start of the summer, while also providing educational benefits that students can apply to the next phase of their school career.

At iFLY, we offer Wind Workshops for ages 5 to 11 that enable pupils to experience forces first-hand during a one-on-one indoor skydiving session in one of our vertical wind tunnels. It's a thrilling, hands-on experience of forces at play, a memorable way of engaging your pupils in STEM topics and a great way to say 'thank you' for all their hard work throughout the year.

 [@iFLY\\_UK](https://twitter.com/iFLY_UK)  
 [iflyworld.co.uk](http://iflyworld.co.uk)



## BUILDING LEARNING

Jamie Lawrence,  
schools executive  
at LEGOLAND  
Windsor Resort

The LEGOLAND® Windsor Resort is a unique and exciting venue for learning outside the classroom. Schools can use our National Curriculum Map to navigate their way around the Resort, making sure their visit ties in to all of their learning objectives, whilst enjoying our 55 fantastic rides and attractions, including the new LEGO® Ninjago® World and LEGO® Ninjago® the Ride.

The Resort is best suited to pupils from KS1 to KS4, though we're also able to offer experiences for pre-school and younger school pupils, particularly in our DUPLO® Valley area. Here, children can enjoy Brickville – a space where the landscape is designed for exploring and imaginative play.

Students visiting the park can also partake in one of our 12 curriculum-focused workshops, where hands-on learning is key! All of the workshops are led by LEGOLAND's knowledgeable (and fun) education team, who receive training



and support from LEGO Education. This means that our workshops are finely tuned to complement the National Curriculum, with a LEGO twist. Over the course of the workshops, pupils can learn about STEM, English, art, geography and even history.

We also provide a range of school resources via our website to help teachers prepare for their trip, including downloadable permission slips for sending home to parents and a risk assessment form. Teachers can also

access information regarding recommended teacher-to-student ratios and ride height and age restrictions to assist in the pre-planning ahead of the day.

**Further details and booking information can be found at [LEGOLAND.co.uk/education](http://LEGOLAND.co.uk/education). For advice and enquiries, contact the LEGOLAND Windsor Resort education team on 01753 626 236 or email [activelearning@legoland.co.uk](mailto:activelearning@legoland.co.uk)**

# £101 to £200

THE MOST POPULAR UPPER LIMIT PARENTS WOULD BE WILLING TO PAY TOWARDS A SCHOOL TRIP IN THE UK

Source: December 2017 survey of 1,697 parents carried out by Oxford Home Schooling

# 21%

OF THE SCHOOL PUPIL POPULATION ARE ESTIMATED TO PARTICIPATE IN RESIDENTIAL TRIPS EACH YEAR

Source: Learning Away: The state of school residentials in England 2017; report by LKMCo (see [tinyurl.com/lkmco-rt-17](http://tinyurl.com/lkmco-rt-17))



How much should schools be concerned about health and safety issues during school trips? The existing guidance from the Health and Safety Executive states in no uncertain terms that, "Well-managed school trips and outdoor activities are great for children. Children won't learn about risk if they're wrapped in cotton wool." It goes on to note that "Accidents and mistakes may happen on school trips – but fear of prosecution has been blown out of all proportion." Read the rest at [tinyurl.com/hse-edu-visits](http://tinyurl.com/hse-edu-visits)

## Brilliant Residentials

Run by the Learning Away Consortium, the 'Brilliant Residentials' campaign is calling on schools, teachers and residential trip providers to offer more, and better, residential trips for young people. Using evidence compiled since 2009, Learning Away has developed a criteria for 'brilliant residentials' capable of delivering numerous benefits for pupils, and created a set of resources that aim to help schools deliver similarly effective residentials of their own. Find out more at [learningaway.org.uk](http://learningaway.org.uk)

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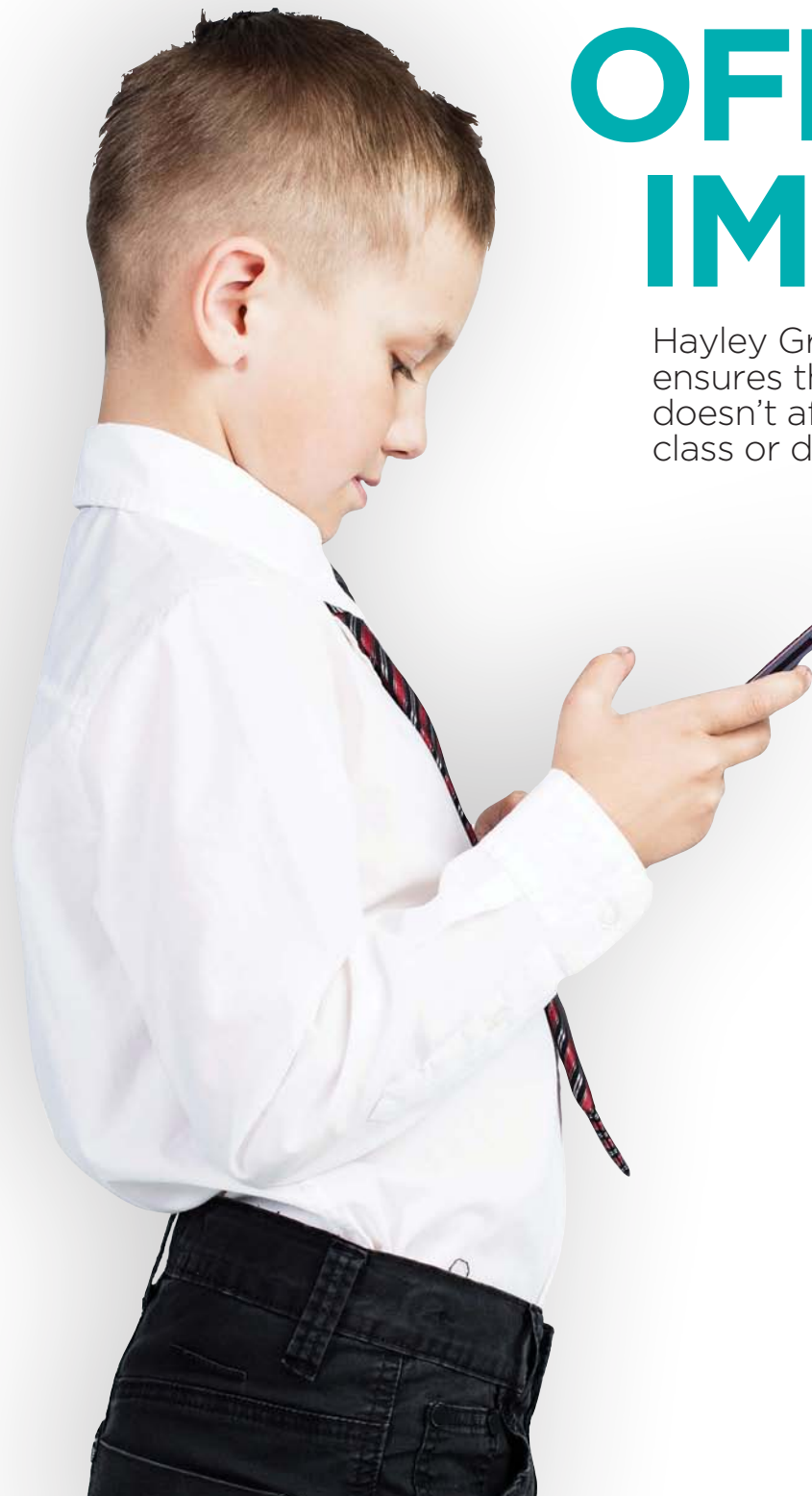


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**www.lockertek.co.uk**



## ONLINE GAMES, OFFLINE IMPACT

Hayley Grier tells us how her school ensures that pupils' online activity doesn't affect them negatively in class or during break time...



As our pupils have come to communicate with each other more and more online when they're at home, we've needed to develop a reliable system of reporting the issues those interactions can cause. Previously, we'd ask parents to take screenshots and give us printouts to use as evidence. We now use a system called Tootoot ([tootoot.co.uk](http://tootoot.co.uk)), which lets pupils and parents report any concerns they have in an easy and confidential way. Pupils can attach screenshots and photos themselves, and submit them to us through the app anonymously, which helps us to quickly and effectively resolve issues around online arguments and cyberbullying.

When problems arise, the sanctions we use depend on the nature of the issue and the ages of the pupils involved. There was one incident several years ago involving racist comments that one pupil made online against another. In that case, the pupil at fault was in Year 6, able to tell right from wrong, and was suspended for three days.

With cameras now a standard feature of mobile phones we don't allow any in school, with only rare exceptions. Where a pupil's phone must be available on site, the parent can bring it in and leave it in the school safe. We'll sometimes revise that policy as technology changes, as we did after

Christmas last year when pupils began bringing smartwatches into school. We sent a message to parents explaining that because these devices have a 'photograph' function, they weren't allowed on school property.

We also use a service called ParentZone (parentzone.me) to give our parents information on which internet services and games are suitable for children and which aren't. Some services and games already have clear age restrictions, but we've still seen pupils acting out scenes from games such as *Grand Theft Auto* and *Bad Neighbours* in the playground, having played them the night before, which can cause the children's play to be rough and potentially cause injuries.

We can also help parents set up and configure their children's phones and iPads. Parents often won't know how a mobile device works and what can be put on it, so they'll bring them in and we'll talk them through it all. We also have pupils volunteer as 'eCadets' and 'Mentors' who other pupils can approach and talk to about any problems they've been having with other children online or in the playground.

Our parents are generally on board with our policies. Occasionally I'll contact a parent about an incident that's occurred when pupils have been playing a game, and they may feel that as it happened at home, it's not the school's problem. But when a child is worried about something that's happened online, and knows they'll see the pupil who's been mean to them in school the next day, it becomes a safeguarding issue. All children need to feel safe coming into school, which makes it a school issue that we can help to resolve.

*Hayley Grier is pastoral care manager and deputy safeguarding lead at St Matthew's Catholic Primary School, Liverpool*



## ENCOURAGE YOUR PUPILS' ASPIRATIONS

After school ICT clubs can help children form powerful links between their enthusiasm for technology and their future career ambitions, says Jade Parkinson-Hill

If kids are expert consumers of tech, and with a bit of direction, that can translate into being expert creators of tech, in a way that helps them to take hold of their own careers.

I have a background in tech and have worked in schools for over 10 years. In that time I've been part of leadership teams, helped set up one of the country's first 'geek schools' for young coders and kids wanting to get into developing video games, and established a number of community programs for primary and secondary age students, in the form of Saturday 'coder dojos' and summer 'hackathons'.

I created STEAM School to address a specific problem. I've worked with schools for over 10 years, setting up visits with exciting speakers, devising great projects and doing wonderful things with the kids – but I'm increasingly aware that what I do is becoming a 'luxury' that schools can't afford.

There's a real need for primary and secondary schools to better prepare kids for digital and tech careers. Teachers are often too busy keeping up with curriculum changes to keep abreast of – never mind incorporate into lessons – the latest developments happening in the tech world. Our belief is that primary and secondary kids should be able to have meaningful engagement with inspirational people from that world.

STEAM School after school sessions go live at 3.45pm on Thursdays, giving most schools 15 minutes or so to get the kids taking part prepared and settled. We begin with a private live YouTube broadcast of an

interview with an inspirational figure working within the ICT industry that runs for around 25 minutes, followed by a 15-minute mini challenge relating to the topics discussed, which schools can either complete during the session or assign as homework. The remaining portion then focuses on the following week's broadcast – we provide schools with a guest pack containing a biography, suggested links and everything else they need to come up with some questions for the next session's speaker.

One of the first guests we had was Holly Patterson, who was hugely into video games as a teenager and in her mid 20s now works for a video games publisher. She's somebody who developed a passion when she was young and persisted until she managed to turn that passion into a job. Part of the challenge we did around her interview was asking the students to think about what their passion was, what they could do to nurture it and how that passion could be turned into a career.

The challenges don't require specific technologies, primarily for practical reasons, but if you've ever sat in on any creative brainstorming sessions in the tech world, you'll see that what they do is less about the technology itself, and more about drawing on their critical thinking skills and creativity – which is what all children should have the opportunity to develop.

**Jade Parkinson-Hill is the founder of STEAM School**

 [steam-school.com](https://steam-school.com)

# Is ICT spending turning a corner?



Schools' budgets for resources and ICT are in something of a dip, but things might be on the up soon, says Cleo Fatoorehchi...

Each January, education suppliers eagerly await the latest report on resources spending in schools commissioned and published by the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA), to help them gauge their activity over the next financial year.

Following a two-year decline in school spending that was starting to deeply affect the market, the 2018 report has brought some relief to the education supply sector with its finding that headteachers are planning to increase their ICT spending in 2018/19. It may be that we're finally looking at a reverse trend in schools' resource budgets.

This year's research was undertaken by the National Educational Research Panel (NERP), and involved 557 primary schools and 366 secondary schools. It seems that after low growth in schools' resource funding throughout 2015/16, resource budgets contracted in 2016/17 – despite primary school budgets overall expanding by 2.4% in cash terms – down to an average of £35,480 per primary school.

In the short term, this contraction is projected to extend into 2017/18 and amount to an average decrease of 3.5%. Once per-pupil allocations are taken into account, the 2017/18 reductions in per-school resource budgets appear

more pronounced. The high pupil numbers recorded by schools result in allocations for each pupil declining by nearly 6% across the primary sector.

What's more encouraging, however, is that according to the report, school leaders are anticipating a degree of expansion in their resource budgets for 2018/19 – an increase of around 3.2% – reflecting a 2.1% rise in per-pupil allocations.

The same trend appears to be replicated in ICT spending. This expanded in the primary sector by 3.6% in 2015/16, before immediately contracting by the same amount in 2016/17. Taking into account the drop in spending from capital allocations, the indications are that spending on ICT across the primary sector fell by nearly £13 million by 2016/17.

ICT spending is similarly set to contract during 2017/18, marking a further market loss of £15 million – yet primary schools are projected to expand their spending on ICT during 2018/19.

That increase will likely be an average of £400 per primary school, and have an overall market impact around +£7 million.

This additional funding will most likely be used to enhance schools' capacity in networking and for peripheral items, but many schools are also planning to continue spending a

significant proportion (over 30%) of their ICT allocation on devices. Indeed, the report finds that more than 40% of primary schools still consider themselves to be insufficiently equipped in terms of the ICT infrastructure and devices they require.

This slight increase in ICT spending is certainly a step in the right direction of ensuring that every child has equal access to digital technologies in their classrooms. According to Caroline Wright, Director General of BESA, "Seeing schools ready to increase their spending on ICT in 2018/19 is an encouraging sign that schools are increasingly recognising the positive impact educational technology has – when applied well – on pupil performance."

**Cleo Fatoorehchi is communications coordinator at BESA**

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 [educate.london](http://educate.london)



With most EdTech devices capable of supporting video conversations, schools have a powerful means of forging international learning partnerships right at their fingertips, writes Terry Freedman...

Video conferencing brings the world into your classroom in real time. It can give children in different parts of the world to a glimpse of what life is like elsewhere, or facilitate collaboration on research projects with children thousands of miles away. Alternatively, it can be used to organise lively conversations with authors, where they can chat to the children about his or her latest book, and answer questions.

If you believe that video conferencing would be beneficial for your school, then before getting down to the specifics of what equipment to use, you should first build it into your school's education technology strategy by addressing the following questions:

- How might video-conferencing enable us to achieve our vision for the children?
- How can we embed it into our curriculum? (It'll likely never take off if it's just seen as a 'bolt-on')
- How can we make it straightforward for everyone to use?

Ideas for inter-class conversations can include even seemingly mundane topics, such as having the children tell each other about their everyday lives. In one example we came across, the children in a school hundreds of miles from the sea were spellbound by the other class telling them about a beached whale they saw on their way to school.

from a different perspective. Older children can collaborate with their distant classmates on mini research projects.

Still not convinced? Then check out the case studies of how thoughtful video conferencing benefited an elementary school in Texas ([bit.ly/psmVCTexas](http://bit.ly/psmVCTexas)) and St Coleman's Primary School in Northern Ireland ([bit.ly/psmVCStColmans](http://bit.ly/psmVCStColmans)), or the work undertaken in this area by Rotherham CLC and its local authority ([tinyurl.com/roth-clc](http://tinyurl.com/roth-clc)).

You could, if you wish, simply set up a computer or laptop with a webcam and a built-in or connected microphone, and access one of the communication services discussed below. This sort of arrangement is fine for one-to-one conversations and at a pinch, workable for limited one-to-many conversations – if you've asked a poet to address a small group of children, for example.

However, if you want to create an experience whereby the children get to collectively ask questions from peers in a remote classroom, while ensuring the members of both classes can see everyone, then you'll need to look into other solutions.



If you're looking for something considerably more 'high-end', there are some wonderful possibilities out there. There's Nureva ([nureva.com](http://nureva.com)), for example, which sells a speaker and microphone bar that can be used in conjunction with whiteboards and webcams to provide a very rich video conferencing experience. Why? Because the bar contains over 8,000 virtual microphones, enabling it to pick up sound from anywhere in the classroom. That way, even the children right at the back of the room will be able to contribute to the discussion.



Alternatively, there are the TruTouch screens produced by Genee World ([geneeworld.com](http://geneeworld.com)), which come with two wide-angle, high definition cameras that allow everyone in the classroom to be seen. The screens also feature a built-in omnidirectional microphone and front-facing speaker, and can be supplied with a pre-configured Genee PICO Mini PC to help you get up and running quickly. While all this comes at a price, it does provide you with a solution that should work out of the box and deliver great results.

Alternatively, if you belong to an organisation such as the London Grid for Learning, you'll already have access to technical advice and supporting resources to help with video conferencing projects. It might also be worth checking with your LA or MAT to see what support they can provide.

## WHICH PLATFORM?

You can use whichever video conferencing application you wish, of course, but non-educational platforms and applications tend to be costly, lack a community of educators who can help you, or both. Here are what will probably be the most practical choices:

**SKYPE** Skype's owner, Microsoft, maintains a thriving online community of educators dubbed 'Skype in the Classroom' – see [bit.ly/psmVCSkype](http://bit.ly/psmVCSkype) for more details. You can find some interesting ideas for using Skype in your classroom at [bit.ly/psmVCSkypeIdeas](http://bit.ly/psmVCSkypeIdeas) – some of the links may no longer work, but the ideas themselves are still valid.

 [@terryfreedman](https://twitter.com/terryfreedman)  
 [ictineducation.org](http://ictineducation.org)

**GOOGLE HANGOUTS** A free video conferencing tool from Google that's a good choice if your school uses Chromebooks, and one used by many educators looking to partner up with others. Look out for the Mystery Hangout community ([tinyurl.com/mystery-hangout](http://tinyurl.com/mystery-hangout)), where you can organise fun 'guess where we are' games that play in a similar way to Battleships.

**FACETIME** If you're an Apple school, and if your video conferencing partner is an Apple school too, then the iMac/iPad/iPhone-supporting Facetime will likely be your best means of connecting with them.

**FACEBOOK LIVE** If your school allows Facebook to be used, then the social media service's Facebook Live video facility is very good. There's a helpful post on using it in the classroom at Neil Jarrett's EdTech 4 Beginners blog – [bit.ly/psmVCFacebookHow2](http://bit.ly/psmVCFacebookHow2).

When it comes to finding partner schools, you have several options. The easiest way is to join an educational community associated with your platform of choice, such as the one at [bit.ly/psmVCHangouts](http://bit.ly/psmVCHangouts) in the case of Google Hangouts. Alternatively, you can try getting in touch with online education organisations such as iEarn ([iearn.org](http://iearn.org)).

## "HELLO, CAN YOU HEAR US?"

**Make the most of your school's video conferencing with these guides, ideas and activities**

- Redbridge Networked Learning Communities has developed a useful 'video conferencing for learning' matrix that can be downloaded as a PDF [bit.ly/2psmVCmatrix](http://bit.ly/2psmVCmatrix)
- A productive class video conferencing session will involve more than simply pointing a camera at your pupils and hoping for the best. This guide to classroom layouts from Jisc is worth a read. [bit.ly/psmVClayouts](http://bit.ly/psmVClayouts)
- Why not organise a game of charades, or even mount your own theatrical production? You'll find details of these and plenty of other ideas in this list of engaging video-conferencing activities. [bit.ly/psmVCideas](http://bit.ly/psmVCideas)



**Terry Freedman is an independent education technology consultant and writer**

# CREATE AN ONLINE POLICY THAT WORKS

MODERN COMMUNICATIONS TECH MOVES FAST. IS YOUR ONLINE SAFETY POLICY DOING ENOUGH TO HELP YOU KEEP UP?

**O**nline safety is a significant component of a school's safeguarding obligations, yet the education professionals tasked with implementing an appropriate online safety strategy will often find it hard to know which areas they ought to focus on.

The DfE's 2016 statutory safeguarding guidance for schools, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (see [tinyurl.com/dfe-safe-16](https://tinyurl.com/dfe-safe-16)) dedicates the whole of its Annex C to online safety, highlighting in particular the need for effective staff training, filtering and monitoring. Mirroring that is an increase in the number of Ofsted inspections that cover online safety when assessing a school's safeguarding.

But there must be more to it than that, surely? What should schools be looking to do in practice that will result the best outcomes? What are those elements of online safeguarding that make a real, tangible difference?

The following list is drawn from the South West Grid for Learning's free online safety planning tool, 360 Degree Safe ([360safe.org.uk](https://360safe.org.uk)), which sets out the forms of effective practice most commonly used by schools found to have successful online safety strategies in place.

## THINK 'WHOLE SCHOOL'

Appointing an online safety champion is fine, but this can risk devolving too much influence and expertise into a single role for what's a complex area. A more sustainable strategy is draw on a wider body of knowledge from a group of appointees who are responsible for your school's online safety implementation and reviewing your policies.

This group could include teachers, leaders, technical staff, parents and

especially students. This approach will help to encourage wider ownership and result in your strategy having a better chance of working.

## OFFER REPORTING ROUTES

This is the crux of it all – how can you keep your children safe if you don't know what's going on? How should you go about acquiring safeguarding intelligence?

Many schools have nominated staff that children can report issues to, but research suggests that the older a child gets, the less likely they are to report to a trusted adult. As time goes by, they're more likely to turn to their friends, which makes developing peer mentoring routes for support and escalation a valuable strategy.

You can also make use of online reporting routes – particularly online anonymous reporting mechanisms like SWGfL Whisper ([swgflwhisper.org.uk](https://swgflwhisper.org.uk)). Services such as these will provide channels through which the wider student body and community can bring issues to your attention without compromising their own identity and safety.

Very often, the wider social dynamics around online issues is complex. There will be many individuals who want to report those negatively contributing to online abuse, but can't. Standing up to bullying is hard – even more so if you've not been given the right strategies or mechanisms to do so. When rolled out well, reporting routes that users are able to rely on can be highly effective.



## PRIORITISE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The aforementioned 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance requires schools to undertake annual safeguarding training that includes online safety. General awareness raising is certainly helpful for creating a consistent approach, but it needs to be undertaken by all staff.







## FOSTER A SAFE SPACE

It's vitally important that your school is seen as a trusted safe space in which children can learn and engage with their peers, and time spent online at school is no exception.

Schools are thus required to implement appropriate filtering and monitoring to ensure that happens. If you're unsure of what 'appropriate' might mean in this context, the UK Safer Internet Centre can provide you with advice and support – see [tinyurl.com/uksic-filtering](http://tinyurl.com/uksic-filtering) for more details.

## MAKE SURE IT'S ALL WORKING

It's important to regularly evidence whether the policies you've implemented are actually succeeding in what they're meant to be doing. If your overall strategy is having no discernible impact, then it obviously needs to be changed.

Many schools will canvass their staff, students and the wider school community on whether their strategy is seen as being effective. Common means of doing this include short paper surveys, questions in newsletters or online surveys using sites such as SurveyMonkey. Your regular strategy reviews and evaluations should be shaped by the feedback you receive, and informed by assessments of how particular incidents were dealt with, what was learned and how this was fed back into actions for improvement.

The journey ahead might be long, but it's possible to map out the road you need to follow if your online safeguarding practice is to be truly effective. After all, everyone needs a little help from time to time.



**Ken Corish is online safety director at the South West Grid for Learning**

 @SWGfL\_Official

 [swgfl.org.uk](http://swgfl.org.uk)



A weighty online safety policy document may very well contain all the detail and measures you need (and more besides), but how quickly are its messages going to filter through to the rest of the school? Extract the key salient points, present them as a short series of bullet points and then drip-feed these into the culture. Display them in areas where technology is used. Feature them in newsletters. Write them on to splashscreens, into school diaries and perhaps even into events programmes, if you have any concerns regarding parental photography.

## LINK POLICY AND CURRICULUM

The resilience that allows children to flourish in their use of technology won't necessarily develop on its own; it needs to be taught, and taught well. Thread opportunities for developing that resilience through your curriculum, and devise plans with a sense of scope and sequence that will have better outcomes than a disparate online safety education that consists of little more than the odd assembly and Safer Internet Day project.

Doing this is a challenge, but you can find a series of free resources developed by SWGfL to help you on your way at [digital-literacy.org.uk](http://digital-literacy.org.uk).

Think about the routes through which disclosures of online safeguarding incidents might come. Certain members of key staff may find that their role leads to them dealing with such issues more often than some of their colleagues, in which case you'll want to develop their expertise further. Invest in ensuring their role is supported with relevant and regular expert training.

## SPREAD THE MESSAGE

A policy of any kind is chiefly a communication of expectations. While it's important to define what those expectations are, it's equally important to *communicate* them well, so that they become part of your school's standard daily practice.



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# Community Engagement

## GIVE YOUR CHILDREN BREATHING SPACE

Schools and parents should be made aware of the harm air pollution can do to their children's lungs and start taking action, says Dr Paul Byrne...

**S**tatistically, about one in eight children at primary school will develop a lifelong respiratory illness such as asthma. There's a strong correlation between air pollution and the incidence of such illnesses, largely because air pollution activates the immune system, which in turn inflames the airways – analogous to sunburn.

If children's airways are exposed to this 'sunburn', their immune system can remain affected for the rest of their lives. Children growing up in a 'healthy' area will have healthy lungs that can ventilate and diffuse gas properly. Those growing up in polluted areas risk having their lungs stunted, therefore not achieving their full capacity or full sporting potential and having less





respiratory reserve, which may be critical later in life.

In several cities and in parts of towns across the UK, pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and microscopic particles emitted from vehicle exhausts are regularly exceeded. However, these 'legal levels' are arbitrary figures that have been set because they're politically expedient. It might be possible to achieve those levels, but biologically, *there is no safe level*. All airborne pollutants are dangerous.

Schools can assess their local levels of air pollution by applying to their council and volunteering to become a site where nitrogen oxides are measured monthly (with the aid of a tube fitted with filter paper that's typically mounted to a nearby lamppost). This could form part of a school project to educate pupils about air pollution and its significance, and help raise wider awareness.

Headteachers can implement 'anti-idling' policies that forbid parents from keeping their engines running during car drop-offs and pick ups. This is already happening in some London boroughs. Some schools are quite proactive in encouraging children to walk and cycle to school. Pressing for 20mph zones in roads near schools is a easy win that results in both reduced air pollution and improved road safety. Parents would help everyone if they got rid of their diesel cars and drove smaller, cleaner vehicles to and from school.

Parents buy fresh food to feed their children. They wouldn't dream of feeding them rotten food and wouldn't want them drinking dirty, polluted water. They do so because they want to protect their kids' gastrointestinal systems. They should want to protect their children's lungs as well. Polluted air can give their children lifelong problems. They should take more interest in it.

The data is unequivocal. We need more action now. Once people are better informed, they'll begin to demand changes. If parents start raising their concerns to headmasters, councillors and MPs, then they will help their children and others.

**Dr Paul Byrne is a consultant rheumatologist at Colchester General Hospital. The 'Every Breath We Take' report on air pollution by the Royal College of Physicians can be found at [tinyurl.com/rcp-breath](http://tinyurl.com/rcp-breath)**

# WELCOME YOUR PARENTS' VIEWS



Lesley Smeardon explains how schools are engaging parents in education and making a difference in the classroom and at home.

**A**s schools nationwide continue to grapple with the pressures of stretched budgets, teacher recruitment/retention and ongoing assessment, many have now come to recognise and embrace how powerful parental engagement can be in helping every child to achieve their potential.

PTA UK's review of the available evidence (see [tinyurl.com/PTAUK-ER](http://tinyurl.com/PTAUK-ER)) backs this up, showing how the active involvement of parents can deliver positive academic, emotional and behavioural outcomes. A supportive parent body can engender a strong sense of community, and help build momentum around any issues or projects a school might be facing or undertaking.

Leadership teams, governors and trustees are increasingly aware that establishing good home-school relations is fundamental to delivering good educational outcomes. Many have further seen how increased parental engagement and involvement can even help to reduce teacher workload and support overall school improvement.

So how have schools gone about doing this? Many have worked hard to provide opportunities for parents' voices to be heard, giving schools a greater understanding of issues where parents have a genuine interest. Indeed, parents' views can and should be sought on a range of issues, such as homework arrangements, behaviour policies, wellbeing initiatives, school improvement objectives, the prospect of academy conversion and more besides.

Parents can be given a platform via consultation exercises, surveys and focus groups, as well as through more formal structures and bodies, such as parent forums, parent councils, or an existing PTA.

So what should schools do to kick-start their efforts at developing better parental

engagement? The following tips can get you started.

- Get buy-in from your governors or SLT and encourage them to champion parental involvement in school
- Get to know what issues matter to parents, and identify opportunities to gather this feedback either on paper or more informally at school events
- Work with an existing PTA to encourage those who rarely (or never) share their views to get more involved, so that your parental opinion can be as representative as possible
- Provide parents with the results of any parental surveys or initiatives you undertake, while at the same time giving them information on how they can become more involved in future.
- Work hard to implement positive suggestions in a way that demonstrates your school's commitment to listening; celebrate your wins as a school community!
- Consider setting up a parent council that operates within a set of ground rules and includes participants representing different parts of your parent community; see that their views are listened to by the school's SLT, governors and trustees.

**Lesley Smeardon is school programmes manager at Parentkind, previously known as PTA UK, which provides support and training for schools to set up consultative parent bodies**

 @parentkind

 [parentkind.org.uk](http://parentkind.org.uk)

# Body image is a primary concern

Body image issues might have once been the preserve of adolescents, but they're increasingly starting to affect younger children too, explain Nicky Hutchinson and Chris Calland

**W**he all want our children to be happy and resilient, confident in their own skin and positive about who they are. Sadly, however, we're seeing a shift in how children view themselves. Body image concerns have traditionally been associated with teenagers, but nowadays many children are worrying about their looks from a much earlier stage.

We're now noticing that even really young children in nursery and reception are showing signs of body anxiety, with PACEY finding in a recent survey that 24% of childcare professionals have seen body confidence issues in children aged 3 to 5.

Why is this happening? Children soak up the messages that surround them, and early experiences are crucial to their development. Today, children are growing up in an image-based culture filled with Photoshopped celebrities, 'perfect' selfies and social media, which encourages people to attain a certain kind of look. Even children's superhero costumes now include a padded 6-pack.

Society is currently broadcasting a message that children are hearing loud and clear: *'What you look like is the most important thing about you.'* And it's hard to protect our children from it.

Body image matters, because self-acceptance is a central building block of our self-esteem. Having a healthy body image has a positive influence on our emotional, physical and social wellbeing.

We know that our children are beginning to feel self-critical and anxious. Mental health concerns are becoming increasingly commonplace in schools, and it's our duty to help children build their emotional resilience so that they're less influenced by the pressures around them.

Early support has a long-lasting positive effect. Research tells us that a child's self-esteem at the age

of eight is the most significant factor in whether they'll go on to develop eating disorders during adolescence. Does your school build body confidence in pupils of every age? Do you:

- Actively celebrate diversity and difference?
- Teach children to question what they see in the media?
- Focus on what bodies can do and how to look after them, rather than what they look like?

Moreover, are you starting this work as early as possible?

We recently wrote a story in order to reach younger pupils. The resulting book, *Minnie and Max are OK!*, is intended to help 3 to 7-year-olds build self-esteem and a healthy body image, and is based on research into what actually helps children to feel body positive. It follows the journey of a small girl and her dog who begin to recognise their own qualities and appreciate how important it is that we all look different. The story can provide a starting point for parents and teachers to talk about this important issue with young children – because in our view, the earlier we can start, the better.

**Nicky Hutchinson and Chris Calland are both former teachers, now working as education consultants providing training and advice on behaviour, emotional health and wellbeing**

 @youngbodyimage

 [notjustbehaviour.co.uk](http://notjustbehaviour.co.uk)



# CAN YOUR PARENTS HEAR WHAT YOU'RE TELLING THEM?

Are your messages actually getting through to parents? If not, it might be time to rethink your preferred methods of communication...

**W**hen looking at how best to communicate with parents, it's useful to start by considering the difference between the seemingly similar concepts of 'communication' and 'information'. The American journalist Sydney J. Harris once described the distinction thusly: "The two words 'information' and 'communication' are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. 'Information' is giving out; 'communication' is getting through".

In our busy and complex school lives it's easy to fall into the trap of simply 'informing', rather than ensuring our messages have actually got through and been understood, with recipients feeling duly empowered to react, respond and reply accordingly. Communication is a great tool for empowering parents, helping them to feel engaged and better able to support their children. Communication is also invaluable for bringing parents on board with what the school is trying to achieve, thus helping to avoid much unnecessary misunderstanding and conflict.

## HANDLE WITH CARE

Ideally, your communication policies should form part of your wider school development, with particular consideration given to the *who* and *why* of communication. As well as the strategic elements of communication, there are many operational decisions to be made on how best to communicate with stakeholders, and especially parents.

After recently conducting a small poll, I discovered that more than two thirds of school business managers believed text messages to be the best way of communicating with parents. Text messages are indeed useful for quick, short,

messages, but with no opportunity for reply, they technically inform rather than communicate. An extensive communication study carried out by Professor Albert Mehrabian at UCLA found that just 7% of our communication happens through the words we use. 38% of communication is down to the way we say those words, while a significant 55% takes place through facial expression and body language.

Shortened messages sent out via an SMS service provide little opportunity for explanation, and carry a high risk of misinterpretation. Add to the mix the growing number of parents with EAL or literacy difficulties, and communication for schools becomes ever more challenging.

Even email, which provides far more flexibility when it comes to cautiously couching messages, should be used with care. Whatever form that message home might take, invest time in ensuring that it's:

- Unambiguous and jargon-free
- Accurate in terms of its content, with correct spelling, punctuation and grammar
- Necessary for each recipient (and not just thoughtlessly dispatched via a 'send all')

An SBM should recommend that all messages are handled centrally, in order to rationalise the number

of messages that parents receive, avoid duplication and ensure consistency of style. If one were to go by the conclusions of Professor Mehrabian's

research, then the most effective way of communicating with parents is face-to-face. That might not always be practical, but it's useful to know when you have particularly difficult, or potentially contentious messages to communicate.





## FLIP YOUR THINKING

To improve their parental communication, schools might need to flip their thinking. The traditional business prerogative will often be based on affordability and functionality, but that misses the very essence of communication – how to get through to people.

It makes sense for schools to ask parents how they would prefer the school to communicate with them, but at the same time they should be careful of going with the majority or consensus view. Schools are most likely to hear from those parents who will readily engage with the school irrespective of whatever communication system the school ends up going with. Communicating successfully with hard to reach parents will require a more careful



consideration of their particular needs.

One of a school's most important communication tools is its website. As well as providing statutory information it effectively serves as the school's 'shop window', so keep it fresh, up to date, exciting and clutter-free. Use it to show the school in the best possible light, perhaps by including pictures of children's work; photos taken during group trips or short news bites. You might even be able to post special offers from local traders.

Many schools now use app platforms that send out notifications containing hyperlinks to school news and messages in the website direct to parents' smartphones, at no cost to the end user. According to the provider of one such system, ContactGroup (the-contactgroup.com), "61% of UK adults have a smartphone, and the average smartphone user picks up their device 221 times a day."

That sounds compelling – but if your school is tempted to rely entirely on apps for sending out important messages to parents, note that the aforementioned quote suggests around 39% of adults do *not* have a smartphone. In some areas, that figure may be even higher, so do your own research among your school's parents first to find out what will work best for them.



## GET SOCIAL

Even now, many schools still shy away from communicating regularly via social media. This reticence is understandable, but should be placed within the context of your parents' demographic profile. The majority of parents nowadays regularly use some combination of Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram, plus other services; using these services will allow schools to go to where the parents are, rather than the other way around.

There are risks with doing this, of course – especially when you inevitably encounter that particularly vociferous and difficult parent getting their teeth into something. Yet as one SBM once told me, "At least I can see what parents are saying. If they really have a beef about something, I'd prefer to know so I can try to do something to resolve it. For our school, the benefits outweigh the risks."

When communicating with parents there's a choice to be made: 'don't communicate'; 'communicate badly'; or 'communicate well'.

If, like most schools, you have hard to reach parents, you'll need to find a communication method that suits them, rather than you or the majority.

While recognising the benefits of good communication, it's important to also understand the risks posed by failing to communicate properly. As the naval historian C. Northcote Parkinson once observed, "The void created by the failure to communicate is soon filled with poison, drivell and misrepresentation."

## FROM THE INBOX

### WHAT SBMS SAY

#### *We like:*

- Text messaging (closely followed by email)
- Parentmail (which brands itself as the 'UK's Best Parental Engagement System' – see [parentmail.co.uk](http://parentmail.co.uk))
- Weduc – a system that can combine texts and email notifications with website updates – see [weduc.co.uk](http://weduc.co.uk)

#### *We don't like:*

- Companies that won't adapt their software to the school's requirements
- Systems where staff can individually messages parents – there needs to be centralised control

### WHAT PARENTS SAY

#### *We like:*

- Messages that are short, to the point and relevant to us
- Facebook
- Hyperlinks to website notices
- Emails (a popular view among working parents)
- ClassDojo ([classdojo.com](http://classdojo.com)) – an app that lets us see what our children are doing in school

#### *We don't like:*

- Jargon
- Information overload – lengthy emails, too many texts



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# DESIGN A GREAT SCHOOL WEBSITE

**B**efore a parent or student physically sets a foot in a school building, there's an opportunity for them to make a 'virtual visit'. A school's website provides a window into that school, and that window can leave a unique and lasting impression.

This first impression offers an opportunity to highlight the school's best qualities and to show how welcoming the school community is to all stakeholders, be they parents, students, business leaders or members of the local community. A shop front to the world, the school website will be the first port of call for prospective parents and Ofsted inspectors. It's also a communication tool for informing parents of upcoming events, school improvements and students' achievements. As such, it's the most important communication and marketing tool a school can have.

Once a positive impression has been made, the website can provide a wide variety of information, from exam schedules to announcements of early dismissal because of inclement weather. The website can also communicate the school's vision, mission qualities and offerings to all stakeholders. In effect, the school website presents the personality of the school.

But what separates a decidedly average school website from an award-winning and highly engaging one that actively inspires its visitors, motivating them to learn more?

For an insight into what the very best websites can do and the value they can add to their respective schools, it's worth looking website design awards such as the Communicator Awards ([communicatorawards.com](http://communicatorawards.com)), the Summit Creative Awards ([summitawards.com](http://summitawards.com)) and dotCOMM Awards ([dotcommawards.com](http://dotcommawards.com)). When a school website receives an award in one of these competitions, it's a very high honour indeed – the entries are judged by industry professionals from multinational corporations such as Google and Disney, and are drawn from a talent pool comprising hundreds of companies and organisations from around the world.

So, taking our lead from those award winners, here's my advice for creating a truly great school website...

Your school's website is a showroom, reception area and office, all rolled into one – so it's important to get the essentials right, says Justin Smith...

## UNDERSTAND YOUR PURPOSE

Successful schools understand their purpose, brand, core values, messages and audience – all of which should be reflected on the website. Make sure the key messages and values are personal and placed upfront. Defining your website's purpose is vital – is it an archive or repository? Should it store your historical newsletters and other materials for evermore?

## KEEP THINGS UP TO DATE

It's all well and good starting out with the best intentions, but outstanding school websites are constantly updated with new and engaging content on a regular basis. The key is to be consistent, informative and engaging, and it's important to make sure that all of your content can be found by the target audience quickly and simply. Parents will baulk at having to trawl through your website for 10 minutes trying to find where you've placed the PE fixtures, for example.

The best way of ensuring the site remains true to its original purpose is to assign one individual whose role is to maintain and update content. That way, your website is far more likely to remain relevant, consistent and accurate. Some content will be required to meet Ofsted's statutory obligations, so it's vital that routine audits or healthchecks are carried out to ensure compliance.

## ADOPT A UNIQUE STYLE

Grabbing and maintaining the attention of time-poor parents is the holy grail of web design. One way of achieving this is to take risks and dare to be different.

A website that doesn't follow a conventional panel design, which uses white space effectively and puts the school message(s) front and centre is far more likely to encourage interest and interaction.

### SEGMENT YOUR CONTENT

Segmented content provides a more personalised journey for visitors. Rather than providing standard navigation, segmented content prompts visitors to identify with a particular interest. For example, your home page could be presented as a collage of photos, enticing visitors to click each photo to learn more, with the different photos directing them to an appropriate landing page. By presenting its website content in this way, a school can control the journey its website visitors take and increase the chance of a conversion — which is always the end goal.

### ENSURE YOUR SITE IS FUTURE-PROOFED

With over half of all web browsing now carried out using mobile devices, your school website must employ a responsive design that displays well on smartphones, tablets and desktop computers. Integrated social media is hugely important too — over 60% of schools use Facebook, and Twitter offers a terrific way of engaging with potential business sponsors.

### BRING YOUR SITE TO LIFE

Pages of text are a big turn off for visitors. It's unrealistic to expect that potential new staff recruit or parent to wade through a two-page mission statement from the headteacher. A 60-second video introduction from your head boy and/or girl will be far more effective. Digital video clips featuring student-led school tours (especially effective at boarding schools) and short 'talking heads' clips from members of

staff will be far more appealing to new recruits, new students and parents.

In 2016, the large state boarding school Wymondham College redefined its core values and integrated them into all of its promotional materials, including the school website (see [wymondhamcollege.org](http://wymondhamcollege.org)). A three-minute video featuring a new student 'Facetime' her parents provided the centrepiece for the home page, replacing pages of text-heavy content.



**Justin Smith is an ISBL fellow and founder of Chameleon Training & Consultancy**

 [@jus\\_chameleon](https://twitter.com/jus_chameleon)

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# Are you raising a disabled child or young person?

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# A letter to...

## My child's sexist headteacher

One concerned parent explains why words and actions regarding gender can have far greater impact than some of us might imagine...

I am a feminist. We can all get drawn into an argument about the nuances of that word, but I'm going to use my eight-year-old daughter's wise-beyond-her-years definition: 'It means that I can do everything boys can do, and no one should be able to tell me that I can't. And the same the other way around.'

I talk to my daughter about feminism all the time, and now I want to talk to you. You see, we talk about being 'woke', about noticing things, and I can't help but realise your words and actions in the classroom are often at odds with the significant lessons I'm trying to teach my daughter.

I don't blame you for this. I've been supremely ignorant about these issues too, but I want to help. I used to be a primary teacher, which means I have some insights from both sides of the table, and I'd like to share them with you, if you'll listen.

Firstly, please try not to assume boys and girls should and do play separately. When we recently talked about my daughter's friendship worries, you went through every female member of the class as a possible playmate but left the boys out of the conversation. Why? She confessed to me that she wants to play football, but other people's expectations are keeping her away. A few words of encouragement from you would do the world of good – she idolises you.

We've also been talking about consent a lot at home. When my daughter tells me that she gets grabbed, or tickled, or lifted up at school and it's not deemed important enough for teachers to intervene, it's hard for me to keep reinforcing that her body is under her control.

I know this is hard to police, and that it adds one more thing into your busy school life to deal with, but it couldn't be more important. Without you telling her that

she gets final say over her own body, we're sowing the seeds for some darkly sinister assumptions that feed into rape culture for all genders later on. Please, take the time to talk to pupils about their (lack of) right to touch anyone else without their permission, and model it scrupulously. Thank you.

### GENDER EXPECTATIONS

My daughter came home the other day with a burning question. "Mummy," she said slowly, "is my school uniform sexist?" There's no honest answer here except an unequivocal yes. What pupils wear at school is dictated by a binary idea of gender that has far-reaching effects. You have the power to change this, and to show pupils that your expectations of them aren't based on their gender.

The tide is turning on uniform, and I couldn't be happier to see outdated policies that make unnecessary distinctions (and don't account for trans pupils' needs) being thrown out. But it takes courage to put your head above the parapet.

Lastly, I want to talk about language and implicit bias. "I need two strong boys to carry this table!" I heard you say the other day. Research tells us that teachers use certain adjectives much more often with certain genders, and that they call on boys more often in class than girls without knowing it. Please help me tell my daughter, both explicitly and implicitly, that she can be strong and articulate too.



**The author is a former primary teacher, currently working in STEM education**



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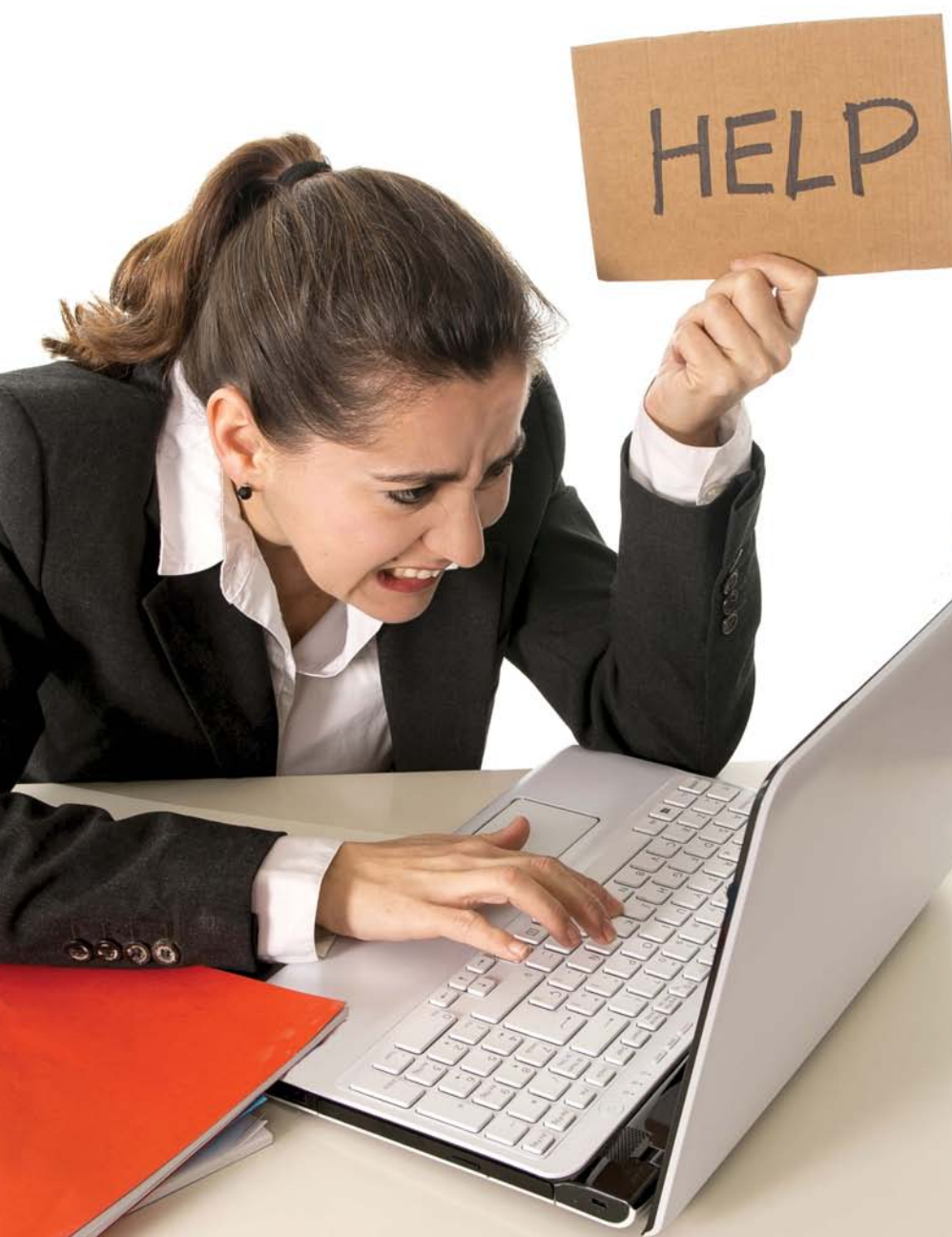
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## RETHINK HOW YOU TACKLE **STAFF STRESS**



If you lack the in-house expertise needed to support staff-related mental health issues, could an employee assistance programme be the answer?

**I**n a recent survey carried out among teachers by Leeds Beckett University (see [tinyurl.com/lbu-mhs-tw](http://tinyurl.com/lbu-mhs-tw)), 77% of those questioned said that poor teacher mental health was having a detrimental impact on pupil progress. According to one respondent, “So much of teaching is about relationships and patience, so this has a human impact.”

By adopting a proactive approach to supporting mental health, schools can improve the attendance and retention of their staff, while at the same time maintaining performance and reducing supply costs – but it’s

important to bear in mind that schools don’t have to do this alone.

Through an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) schools can give their staff confidential access to a number of qualified professionals, including counsellors and occupational therapists, as well as specialist helplines and online courses. An EAP will typically be flexible in terms of pricing, enabling schools to avail themselves of a personalised service while closely managing the attendant costs, and also offer additional training for managers in resolving workplace issues.

Even if the source of your colleagues’ stress isn’t directly attributable to the workplace itself, that stress can still be exacerbated by your working environment. Employers therefore have a duty to take ‘reasonable care’ in ensuring the

health and safety of their employees. If such issues aren't properly addressed there can be an adverse impact on staff performance, absence, turnover and retention, resulting in increased costs for the school. It can also lead to significant increases in the workload of managers, particularly if a matter can't be resolved and proceeds to a formal hearing.

Managers are well-placed to directly address key workplace stressors such as workload, but they often won't be sufficiently equipped to support staff who are dealing with external personal pressures or broader mental health issues. It's not unusual for workplace and personal matters to become intertwined, making it harder to get to the bottom of the issue. Staff are also less likely to discuss personal issues with their manager, due to embarrassment or fear of judgement.

The type of support that staff need in such cases will typically be beyond the skillset of their line manager, but with an EAP in place, staff can get to benefit from a completely confidential forum in which they can discuss the issues involved.

The access to 24/7 support provided by an EAP can also mean that staff won't have to wait for a referral through their GP. Depending on the package your school chooses, they can be assessed, supported and/or signposted to other organisations before the problem escalates into something more serious.

Adopting an EAP is an investment. By engaging with the needs of your staff, your staff are more likely to engage with you and your school, ultimately resulting in a happier workforce, increased productivity and improved performance.

*Laura Williams is a former MAT chief operations officer and school business manager, and the founder of LJ Business Consultancy*

 @lauraljbusiness

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## HOW TO MANAGE YOUR SUPPORT STAFF

Your teachers aren't the only ones who can benefit from the help and guidance of a good performance review, says Caroline Collins...

**I**n many organisations – and schools aren't excluded – there tends to be some division amongst the workforce.

It's the responsibility of the school's leadership team to do whatever they can to minimise that and create a culture of inclusivity. If teachers are required to undertake performance reviews, then so should all members of the workforce.

Most members of support staff will be restricted in terms of pay increments because they're paid under the National Joint Council (NJC) agreement, which means they can't simply be awarded grade increments to reflect how well the school feels they've done.

It's important that the school and its workforce understand that performance management isn't just a method of achieving a pay increase; that it's actually an opportunity to look at performance, achievements, areas for improvement, career prospects and CPD needs. CPD is a positive alternative to the elusive pay rise – supporting staff members in undertaking relevant training will benefit the school while also contributing to the employee's sense of inclusion and value.

Make sure your performance management and pay policies are clearly outlined and disseminated to all staff. SLT should determine when support staff reviews will take place, though often they'll be done after the teachers' reviews to allow appropriate objectives to be considered. The reviews will usually be conducted by a class teacher or phase leader; staff should be informed beforehand as to who the reviewer will be.

Reviewees must be given at least seven days' notice to prepare for the review. If your school uses self-review assessment documents so that employees can reflect on their performance over the past year and aspirations for the future, ask the support staff member to bring it with them to the review and use it as a prompt for discussion.

Your reviewers should have been given sufficient training to allow them to carry out the performance management review. Ensure the review itself is held in a suitable location where interruptions won't occur, and bear mind that some people can find performance reviews to be unnerving. The reviewer should do all they can to put the staff member at ease.

The review should then proceed as a two-way conversation; it shouldn't be an opportunity for extensive criticism. The employee must be able to ask questions and challenge statements, and the review should conclude with an action plan containing some clearly defined objectives agreed between both parties.

In terms of follow-up, it's advisable to hold a mid-year interim review so that the reviewer and reviewee can assess whether the employee is on target and re-evaluate the objectives set if needed. The PM cycle should then conclude with the reviewer and reviewee meeting again to analyse the reviewee's performance and initiate a new cycle.

*Caroline Collins is head of school business strategy and resources at Miles Coverdale Primary School*

 @caroline\_261

# Focus on the fire – not the drill

Your fire drills may be orderly, but if they're to save lives, they also need to simulate the reality of what an emergency will entail...

**M**ost schools practise termly fire evacuations to train students in how to respond when the fire alarm sounds, and to ensure staff can promptly clear the building and register students. However, actual fire situations are very different from our planned and orderly drills. Designated fire officers should therefore consider factoring in some real-life variables...

## Fear Factor

Children will be scared, looking for friends and siblings, trying to see what's going on, taking photos and calling their parents. Think through how you'd manage this scale of panic in a real situation. Give staff specific responsibilities for pastoral care and support, think through your social media strategy and have a rapid response ready, as the news will break very fast.

## Casualties

There will be a high risk of smoke inhalation and potential burns, so until the emergency services arrive, there may be immediate casualties. Ensure you've allocated a first aid station away from the building, with access to running water and away from the eyes of other students. Appoint a medical lead who will carry a medical emergency kit with them, and who can radio for extra support when needed.

## Timing

Don't always plan your fire drills so they cause minimal lesson disruption. Plan

them for the most inconvenient times of day when everyone's in the wrong place, and remember that school fires often start at break or lunchtimes. Hold a drill before registration, or on a day when schools trips are out to test your reporting when key staff are absent.

## Arson

40% of all school fires are started deliberately. Staff should be kept at the school gates to stop people entering, but also to prevent people leaving. If arson is suspected, your school will become a crime scene and the culprit shouldn't be allowed to leave. Also, don't assume that there's only one fire; a determined arsonist will set multiple fires. Have your

fire wardens sweep the entire building, even after the initial fire has been located.

## Safe Routes

Block main thoroughfares and stairways during drills to simulate the effects of fire, smoke or an explosion cutting off your standard exit routes. Fire marshals should be prepared to divert staff and students away from a fire if radioed to do so.

## And Finally...

The aim of a fire drill is to train a school community in safely making its way out of danger – not to demonstrate how neatly a class can line up. Silence is essential not for discipline, but so the Emergency

Services can communicate clearly to a large crowd. Registers are to locate the missing, not to register the present, and staff must follow instructions from marshals and wardens. In an emergency, the usual hierarchies don't apply – your site and support staff will usually be the ones taking command.

*Hilary Goldsmith  
is director of finance  
at a secondary school  
in Brighton*

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# DO PRIMARY SCHOOLS HAVE A SALARY PROBLEM?

Schools decide how much to pay their staff, writes Martin Matthews – but how meaningful can those decisions be, when they're so restricted in how much they can spend?

**T**eachers have a physically and emotionally demanding job – no one can deny that's true. The stresses and strains of daily life combined with teaching often require a superhuman effort to keep body and soul together.

Job security with enough money to pay the bills goes a long way with employees, and teachers are no different. I firmly believe that when staff are happy in their role they can focus more on educating children. That's why governors and school leaders have to square the issue of fair pay and current funding.

We've all been told that schools 'are being funded to a higher level than ever before', while at the same time 'schools don't have enough funding'. The politics surrounding school funding has been a hot topic for a while now – there may well be more cash in the system than ever before, but perhaps not enough to cover what schools are now expected to do.

I don't intend to rehearse here the pros and cons of specific government policies, but the broader issue of school funding matters to me a great deal. I care about this stuff, and have done for some time – I'm old enough to have seen first-hand the budget squeeze schools went through in the 1990s. That's the backdrop against which primary school salaries have to be examined, since budgets and salaries are inextricably linked.

## RUNNING LEAN

Schools generally run lean, getting maximum value for money from their service level agreements and contracts. Most schools won't have substantial reserves, unless they're saving up for a new roof, boiler or other major expense. This is where a good school business manager is

worth their weight in gold – every penny saved on that contract can be used to directly fund school resources and staff salaries.

When money becomes tight, the first area to be reviewed is always resources – even though this usually accounts for just 10% of a school's overall budget. Teachers will complain to the ends of the earth about their lack of glue sticks and similar items, but consumables like that will always be reduced first because the amount a school spends on them makes a difference, and can be addressed quickly. The problem, however, is that saving money on resources can only have a marginal impact when salaries form the vast majority of a school's expenditure.

Primary schools generally spend between 80% to 90% of their budget on staff salaries, and that's the right thing to do. Investing in the best quality staff to deliver fantastic education is what schools ought to be about. Yet schools also need a range of staff at different points in their career. It's just as difficult to be a successful school with a teaching team composed entirely of NQTs as it is for them to all be experienced teachers. Both extremes will have education and budget implications.

Teachers have a pay system that directly links their achievements to increments and pay rises, and the same applies to headteachers and the SLT. Done fairly and openly, this system lets



teachers know where they stand, and it's important that this link between performance and pay be maintained.

Teachers work hard, and should therefore continue to be awarded pay increments, even when budgets are tight. Yes, I've seen teachers move from MPS5 up to UPS1, which is only fair since that's what was agreed when their pay structure was introduced.

## BIG QUESTIONS

This has, however, led to some well-publicised cases where teachers are either paid '0.9' of their salary and work full time, or the school reduces the working week to 0.9 (four and a half days). Both approaches will reduce a school's overall wage bill by 10%, but I very much doubt whether those teachers' workload will reduce by a similar amount.

I've also heard of schools asking their staff to trade a 10% pay reduction in return for no redundancies. Are these ethical or moral ways to reduce budget shortfalls? Or are they relying on staff goodwill to plug gaps that should have been met by central government funding? These are big questions that call for a national conversation about what schools can realistically deliver within a given budget.

Many schools have seen an increase in the size of their SLTs over the last

few years. People look at those teams and typically assume their members receive increased pay for the amount of extra responsibility they have. That used to be so, but it's less the case today. Teachers will now often take on senior leadership roles in order to facilitate their career progression, with no accompanying pay increase.

In one sense, a flatter leadership structure like this could actually have benefits for all concerned, but it has to be both meaningful and fair. Simply shifting an unrealistic workload from the headteacher to other staff in order to spread the burden won't work in the long term. Having said that, people often point to the rise of executive headteachers and the pay they receive. Indeed, many EHTs will be paid more than the headteacher of single school, but proportionately, an EHT's pay will be spread across a number of different schools, resulting in a lower salary cost per school.

## NO BENCHMARKS

One of the most hotly debated topics around primary school salaries at the moment is MAT CEO pay. It's a thorny issue, and the salaries concerned span a huge range that stretches from £60,000 to £400,000. The problem here is that there's no benchmarking guidance for the MAT boards who decide what a MAT CEO's pay should be, and no formulae to help determine a CEO salary range.

The upshot of that has been a free-for-all when it comes to CEO pay negotiations, with gifted and effective negotiators doing extremely well. The situation has recently come under some scrutiny, however – especially in cases where a MAT has given significant pay rises to its CEO while making other staff redundant. Is that moral? Is that the educational outcome we want to see?

So, do primary schools have a 'salary problem'? No, but they do have issues with *funding*. That's not a political jibe, but rather the opening for what should be a wider debate on what we can do with the money we're given.

## MONEY TALKS

We need to start a national conversation, so that everyone can understand what schools are able to provide given the money they have. By asking ourselves the questions below, we can perhaps begin resetting the nation's expectations.

- Is there a moral dimension to how school budgets should be spent?
- Can we reconcile the 'staff' versus 'stuff' equation?
- Should we explore ways of reducing schools' salary costs?
- How can we maintain the quality of education we deliver?

We can only do so much with what we're given, but there are questions here that we need to explore.



Martin Matthews is a chair of governors and national leader

of governance

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# What NQTs need from leaders

School leaders know how hard the process of settling into a new school can be – so make sure your NQTs make it through their first few years, writes Tim Nelson

**B**eginning a career in teaching can be a daunting prospect for an NQT. Schools, MATs and leadership teams therefore have a significant responsibility to ensure their induction programmes are both comprehensive and supportive.

With almost a third of NQTs leaving the profession within five years of completing their training, it's fair to say that a vacuum is being created in the education sector – one which has resulted in a recruitment crisis.

While the government can put measures in place to try and prevent the situation from worsening, there are actions and support systems that middle leaders within schools can implement to help ensure that NQTs are able to thrive and pursue long-lasting and fulfilling careers in education.

## Link development to pupil outcomes

Professional development for NQTs should always have a clear purpose and be linked to pupil outcomes. Teachers enter the profession because they want to make a difference. To that end, it's important that NQTs can identify the needs of individual pupils, and that they feel their professional learning is both relevant and pertinent to the specific pupils they teach.

Middle leaders should use aggregated student data to inform their decisions over where the focus for NQTs' professional development should be.





Another way of facilitating this within departments could be to bring student' work or data to meetings and explore it together, thus opening up a rich dialogue and providing opportunities to reflect on shared teacher impact.

### Organise regular support meetings

The power of talking should never be overestimated; regular meetings will help ensure that your NQTs always feel supported. As well as carrying out formal reviews, try to also build in more regular discussions about how things are going, the progress being made by the pupils of the NQTs you line manage, and any other forms of holistic support they might need. CPD should always be sustained over time, rather than be seen as an occasional 'add-on'.

### Carry out regular and varied observations

It's good practice to observe NQTs at least once per half term to ensure they're making satisfactory progress towards the Teachers' Standards necessary for them to pass their NQT year. Lesson observations should be unannounced, and ought to vary with regards to the day of the week and specific time. If possible, try to observe NQTs once a month, and bear in mind that the main purpose of the exercise is not to simply judge the NQT, but rather to inform the mentoring process. In short, *evaluate less, develop more.*

### Prioritise CPD

A fundamental driver of NQT development stems from the attitude and actions that are demonstrated by the school's senior leaders. The most effective schools will view professional development as a key leadership priority, and have in place a CPD programme that balances clear alignment to the school development plan with the needs of individual members of staff.

### Allocate your time wisely

Ensure that your school makes sensible use of INSET days, disaggregating these to twilight sessions where required, while also setting aside additional time for development. How this time is used is crucial. Successful schools will foster a carefully structured culture of collaboration, in which groups of teachers (and often other staff too) will work together to improve those student outcomes that are important to them.

### Use positive reinforcement

Give praise where praise is due. A teacher who feels good at their job will have a strong sense of self-efficacy, which means they're more likely to be motivated and successful in meeting attainment targets. They'll also be more resilient and able to demonstrate flexibility when faced with change. Above all, they'll be better able to develop the confidence and ability to choose which approach in the classroom will best meet the needs of their learners.

### Empower middle leaders

Middle leaders could be described as a school's engine room. Particularly in a large school, their's is a real lynchpin role within a large school. In learning environments where middle leaders are granted the freedom and resources to proactively support and develop their NQTs, we can see real transformation and impact for both NQTs and pupils.

## HOW TO SET CLEAR OBJECTIVES

Effective objective setting isn't an end in itself; it should form part of an overall professional development process that includes review, planning and action.

Appropriate objectives provide a basis for reviewing an NQT's progress. These enable the NQT and induction tutor to identify those aspects of the induction programme that are effectively supporting development, and any areas in which improvements may need to be made. These objectives must be:

- Challenging and realistic
- Precise and focused
- Framed in a way that leads to clear statements about achievement
- Limited in number and balanced against other professional demands
- Set within clear time frames
- Linked to a programme of monitoring



Tim Nelson is a former headteacher with over 25 years' experience in primary education,

and has previously worked as a local leader of education, an Ofsted inspector and mentor for trainee inspectors. He is currently a full-time consultant for Focus Education

 @focusededucation1

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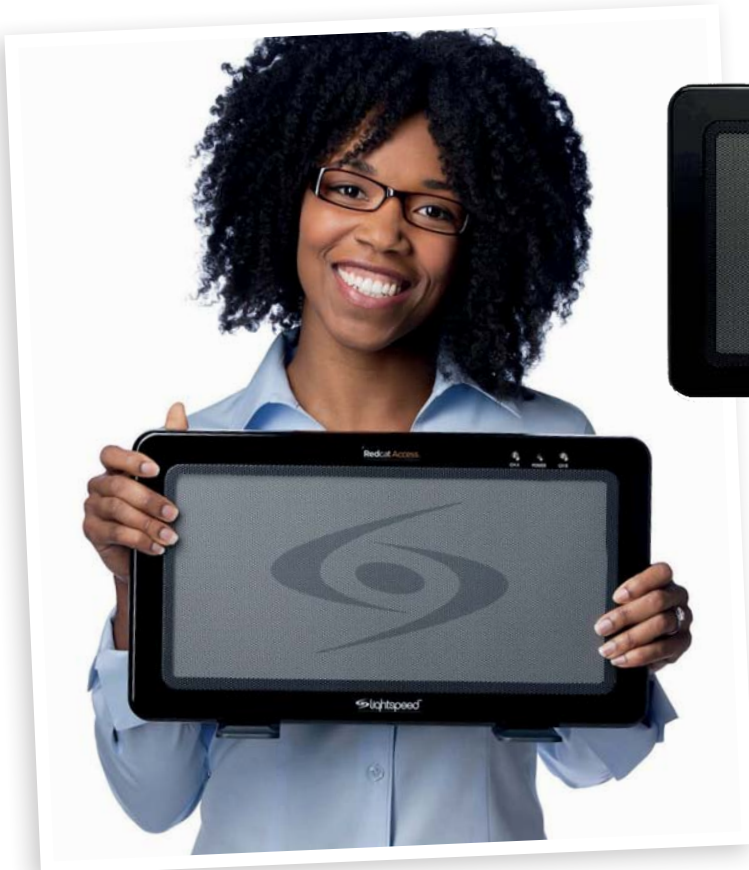
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## ARE YOU READY FOR YOUR NEXT AUDIT?

By making the right preparations ahead of time, you can ensure that your next audit is a painless one, says Su Johal...

**F**inancial audits may be daunting, but they're vital for revealing important information about an organisation's financial position.

Maintained schools aren't obliged to publish accounts, but they are required to submit returns to their LA. This information is used to populate the government's 'Schools financial benchmarking' website (see [tinyurl.com/dfe-sfb](http://tinyurl.com/dfe-sfb)), following a 2011 decision by the DfE to begin publishing financial data from all schools in England as part of the coalition government's broader data transparency agenda.

Academies, on the other hand, are run by charitable trusts and companies limited by guarantee. As such, they're required to submit audited annual financial statements to Companies House and report to a 31st August academic year-end.

The first priority ahead of an audit should be to find out what information the auditors need to see and ensure that both electronic and paper copies are readily available. Ensure that your income and expenditure is coded to the correct financial year, and see to it that staff will be on hand to support the auditors and respond to any requests.

Many schools present simple income and expenditure accounts generated from computerised accounting packages, with the 'income' side recording the school's sources of funding, and the 'expenditure' side providing



a breakdown of what the school spends that income on.

For academies, it's very different. As per the 'Academies Financial Handbook' (see [tinyurl.com/dfe-afhbook](http://tinyurl.com/dfe-afhbook)), their financial management and control requirements include preparing financial statements each year that give a 'true and fair' view of the academy's financial position, and providing details of their financial activities and cash flows. Academies that operate subsidiaries to generate extra revenue – by renting out school facilities after hours, for example – also need to produce consolidated accounts outlining the subsidiary's results.

All academies and MATs are required to abide by the Companies Act, which each year involves conducting and submitting the following:

**Governors' report** This describes the academy's objectives for the year ahead and future plans, and how it intends to achieve them.

**Independent auditors' report** An outline of whether or not an auditor believes the academy's financial statements give a true, fair view of its finances.

**Statements of financial performance** These include a statement of financial activities, a summary income and expenditure account and statement of total recognised gains and losses.

**Balance sheets** Shows the financial position of an academy, covering assets, liabilities and ownership interest.

**Cash flow statements** A report on the academy's financial performance in cash terms – ie. all funding entering the school via bank transfers.

Accounting is a precise activity, but there can still be a significant degree of judgement involved. Figures in reports may be affected by an academy's preferred accounting policies and techniques for estimating, making it important for academies to provide notes and details of their working.

*Su Johal is the founder and director of SAAF Education, a provider of financial management services to schools, academies and MATs*

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## CAN THE DFE HELP YOU?

The DfE has launched a new School Buying Hub initiative – and if you happen to be situated in the north west or south west, you can be among the first to try it...

**T**he Department for Education, under its Schools' buying strategy (see [tinyurl.com/dfe-buying-strategy](http://tinyurl.com/dfe-buying-strategy)), wants to help schools save over a billion pounds a year on their non-staff costs by 2020. Last month it announced further details of what one of its key initiatives, School Buying Hubs, are going to look like, and that schools in the north west and south west can apply to join the recently launched Hubs pilot.

The purpose of a School Buying Hub is to help schools make savings when making purchases that are complex, relatively infrequent high in value, and/or which have the potential to be purchased on a regional basis – think catering, cleaning and premises maintenance services.

Once they're up and running, School Buying Hubs across the country will appear to involve something of a community element, aiming to bring together school business professionals in mutually helpful networks and strengthening local service provision to better address the needs of specific areas. The hope is that these Hubs will also be able to guide schools through the process of finding school-friendly deals and frameworks, while at the same time identifying new deals and frameworks themselves, based on what schools appear to need either locally or nationally. Additionally, they will have a role to play in 'enhancing communications between schools and the department', which might make their Twitter accounts worth keeping an eye on.

Contacting your local Hub should, in theory, give you access to buying guidance

and advice, help with managing contracts and opportunities to form purchasing collaborations with local partners, as well as market intelligence.


If that sounds appealing, and if you can call the north west or south west home, then you're potentially in luck. Open as of last month and running until January 2019, the DfE's Hubs pilot is giving eligible schools the chance to experience what School Buying Hubs have to offer, free of charge. At the time of writing, the applications hadn't been open long, but with only 900 places available in each region awarded on a first come, first served basis, schools might want to look into filling out the application form sooner rather than later.

Delivering these two initial School Buying Hubs will be 2Buy2.com Limited (2buy2.com) in the north west and Schools' Buying Club ([schoolsbuyingclub.com](http://schoolsbuyingclub.com)) in the south west. The plan is to test how the Hubs work in practice, assess which of their intended functions schools find most valuable and use the findings to shape what form the Hubs will take once they're rolled out across the rest of the country.

Everyone else outside of the pilot areas might be in for a bit of a wait, but it will be interesting to see how the project unfolds – and to what extent the help promised will make a difference to schools' ongoing budgetary struggles...

**Schools can apply for the Hubs pilot at [tinyurl.com/dfe-hubs-pilot](http://tinyurl.com/dfe-hubs-pilot); the final closing date is 1st June 2018**





## You're facing a deficit – so what now?

'Budget deficit' – two words guaranteed to frighten even the most seasoned heads and managers. Why do they happen, and how can you tackle them?

**B**udget deficits can stem from a number of factors, including drops in pupil numbers. With the age-weighted pupil unit (AWPU) being schools' primary source of revenue, a loss of students will result in not just a lower basic income, but also reductions in areas such as your Pupil Premium and Primary PE and Sport Premium.

Poor financial management can also play a factor, maybe due to a lack of forecasting or decisions made without consideration of the financial impact. The school might have experienced a significant change in circumstances, such as a reduction in funding from an LA, MAT or central government. Staffing changes, particularly at senior levels, can have a significant impact on budgets. An incoming SBM inheriting a budget from their predecessor, for example, can result in a period of uncertainty, due to

their lack of knowledge.

So what can prevent schools from falling into deficit? The most effective budgets are created through shared ownership. The school's staff and governors all have a responsibility to consider value for money and best value when using the school budget, so it's good practice to gather information about the school's spending from every available source. This might involve asking the staff in question to look at last years' spend, evaluate its impact and assess how their spend can then change moving into next year and beyond.

But what if, despite your best efforts, a deficit has either happened or been forecast for the coming years? The first thing to do is share this information. It might be tempting to try and manage the situation 'in-house' without admitting that you have a problem, but that's a risky strategy. The old adage 'A

problem shared...' applies here – it's not a personal failure, and the sooner all stakeholders are made aware, the easier it will be to get a recovery strategy in place.

Assemble a working party to look at the school budget. Ensure that this includes both senior and teaching staff, any governors with financial responsibility and representatives from your LA or MAT. That way, the resulting deficit recovery plan will have broader buy-in and a greater chance of success.

With a working party in place, your key tasks will then include comparing staffing spend against curriculum need and reviewing your existing contracts – evaluating how they're used and the value for money they deliver. Cancel any you don't need and start a contracts register.

Use benchmarking data to analyse and measure your spend over time. If you can't obtain this from your LA or MAT, you can find it at [schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk](https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk). Use SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) and gap analysis to scrutinise your financial decisions to date, and provide justifications for any changes in strategy that might be needed.

As someone who has been in this situation before – more than once – my advice would be to communicate, share and plan ahead. And above all else, don't panic!

**Sue Birchall is a consultant, speaker, writer and business manager at The Malling School, Kent**



# ASSUME FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP

Your SBL might have the financial expertise, but heads have the authority. Combine the two and the benefits can be huge, argue Julie Cordiner and Nikola Flint...

**W**e believe that finance is an integral part of school leadership, sufficiently important to be considered in a category of its own – school financial leadership. At the highest level, strategic financial leadership involves creating a vision for how the available resources will be used to achieve your school's aims in the longer term, and then implementing that vision in a way that creates the conditions for sustainable improvement.

Curriculum, staffing and school development plans must be linked to the budget to create an interwoven, mutually compatible set of planning documents. Together, these form a blueprint to drive the school forward.

## SETTING AN EXAMPLE

Leaders also need to model behaviours in relation to finances. This means taking a responsible approach to the use of public money and ensuring proper accountability through compliance with legal requirements. Unfortunately, however, there have been examples of schools and academies making illegal transactions and disregarding conflicts of interest when awarding contracts to people connected to leaders, trustees or governors.

This sort of behaviour undermines the whole education system, and causes significant concern among the majority of school leaders who are upright and honest. Published reports provide some salutary lessons about the ease with which financial regulations can be

ignored if governors and senior or middle leaders aren't watchful enough.

Financial leadership also involves translating the vision into reality, coordinating all the different strands of financial decision-making to achieve value for money across the whole school. That means making sure that when spending the school's money you're eliminating waste, being as efficient as possible and targeting resources to activities that have the greatest impact on outcomes. Any comparisons with similar schools should include checks on what they're spending to achieve their results. If they're spending less and achieving more for a similar profile of pupils, it's worth exploring further.

But financial leadership isn't the sole preserve of headteachers. They undoubtedly set the tone, but it needs a team effort across the whole school, with each member of staff playing their part to create a unified approach. If the team is the orchestra, then the headteacher is the conductor – prompting the different sections when they need to come to the fore, and adjusting the volume to create the right blend.

## PROVIDING CERTAINTY

Financial leadership is crucial in times of uncertainty. It gives confidence to staff, leaders, governors, parents, and funding bodies that the school has a robust approach and is in control of its finances.

Staff will be looking for reassurance that their employment isn't at risk. Whilst no school leader can give a cast iron

guarantee of how many staff their school will need in future, strong financial leadership will give staff confidence that the school's stability is being maintained through forward financial planning and effective use of resources, and that any decisions made are in the best interests of the pupils to meet their changing needs. Maintaining confidence in a school's viability is also essential for retaining high quality staff.

The budget is the means by which you deliver your vision. If you don't make provision for the cost of initiatives, they're unlikely to happen. You'll also be judged on your ability to achieve expenditure and income broadly in line with the plans outlined in your budget. This is an important measure of accountability to both your governors and the organisation that provides your funding, be that your LA or central government.

Once you've mastered the skill of reading a budget you can quickly develop the ability to analyse what's going on in your school.

## BEING REALISTIC

If you're going to set a realistic budget and keep to it, then you'll need to promote a greater understanding of budget planning and monitoring throughout the school. You might think the budget is only relevant to senior leaders and those with financial responsibilities, but there's a need for a wider section of the school community to understand it.

The level of information you give to governors and staff – from classroom



teachers and TAs through to administrative staff – will depend on their role, but everyone can contribute towards the school achieving a sustainable budget. Whether they're budget holders or not, all staff are paid from the budget, so the way in which they spend their time can have a big influence on whether value for money is being achieved.

Consider how much of your budget is spent on staff. How you use them is crucial; everyone needs to work at maximum efficiency. Do you, your leadership team and governors know how much it costs per day to run the school? The average cost per hour of all teachers across the school? How much it costs to deliver the average lesson, including classroom support?

Making this sort of cost information widely known among senior colleagues can have quite an impact. Once everyone understands the true cost of staff meetings, it's surprising how quickly ways can be found to run them more efficiently and allow everyone time to spend on work that has a more direct impact in the classroom.

## GETTING CREATIVE

Engage your senior leaders in creative thinking. They should be advocates for a

value for money mindset, encouraging other staff to find ways of achieving savings with the lowest possible negative impact on school improvement. They may be able to act as champions for particular areas of expenditure, tasked with making resources go further. Asking them to record savings achieved on an ongoing basis can be a great motivator.

If every member of staff understands the broad approach being taken to guarantee that the school's finances are being used wisely, they'll all be able to work together efficiently and effectively to achieve the school's aims. Everyone will understand the importance of achieving value for money and can share the responsibility for keeping within budget. Staff should be encouraged to look on the school's budget as if it's their own money. In fact, it *is* their own money, since the funding the school receives is generated from the taxes they pay.

Succession planning for leadership is another reason to raise awareness of finance, not just for your school, but for the education system as a whole. Many



Julie Cordiner is an education funding specialist; Nikola Flint is a school business leader. This

article is based on an extract from their book *School Budget Mastery – The Basics and Beyond*, available to order from [amzn.to/2ExLVCI](http://amzn.to/2ExLVCI)

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aspiring headteachers don't receive enough financial training before taking up headship and inheriting a multi-million-pound budget.

With the prospect of continuing unfunded cost pressures for many schools over the coming years, it's essential that future leaders are equipped with the skills they need to ensure that a school stays afloat financially. Existing headteachers will also benefit from taking a fresh look at strategies for financial sustainability. A different leadership toolkit is needed to survive the choppy waters we're likely to be sailing into.



# COMBINE YOUR PURCHASING POWER



Partnering with other schools to get better deals from suppliers isn't always easy, but the potential savings can make it worthwhile for some, says Stephen Morales...

If your school belongs to a MAT or diocese, you'll be part of a formal structure that has an imperative to ensure that areas such as procurement and site management work across a group of schools.

Those schools that aren't already in a formal collaborative arrangement of some kind can use a commercial framework, whereby a broker assembles a group of providers and uses scale as leverage, by in turn bringing together a group of schools in need of specific services.

An obvious example is energy. A broker might bring five schools together and present them to a number of different energy suppliers. The latter may then enter into a competition on price, resulting in cost benefits for the schools.

Outside of that, another route schools can take is to come together in a soft arrangement and create a memorandum of understanding between themselves. Somebody will need to be appointed as a 'procurement hub lead' or similar to manage the relationship, after which representatives of the group can make contact with providers and attempt to drive down the group's costs.

We've worked with some schools that have seen this as a great idea, and welcomed the savings that they stand to make. In practice, however, we've often seen that mobilising a school to take the lead in such situations is very challenging.

## SOFT VERSUS SPECIFIC

That said, there are some examples across the country of school groups that

have made this approach work. There's one such group in the South Lakes, where the geography has effectively forced several schools into working closely together and forming connections with local business, with the result that they've driven down their procurement spend.

The schools in this case were very isolated, to the extent that without coming together, they wouldn't have been able to benefit from national procurement opportunities. The challenges they faced, common to many rural schools, meant they had to be innovative in order to remain sustainable.

“Any school seeking to be efficient should explore opportunities for local collaboration.”

If you wish to join with other schools to get a better deal from service providers, there are two ways of going about it. There's the 'soft approach' described above, or alternatively, schools can create a trading vehicle designed to serve the specific purpose of collaborative procurement. It might even be possible to collectively devise some kind of administrative and management structure to run the vehicle on behalf of a consortium of schools.

While we at the ISBL would be wary of prescribing a particular route, we're of the view that any school seeking to be as efficient as possible should explore what opportunities there are for local collaboration. For example, you could approach five local primary schools and enquire about the possibility of you collectively procuring grounds maintenance services together – though if the grounds maintenance your school requires is particularly complex, you might find the other schools reluctant to, in their view, take on the burden of contributing to the upkeep of a difficult site. If, on the other hand, your site mirrors those of your partners, then there may well be potential opportunities for sensible savings.

## FROM ONE TO 10

There's one example we're aware of, where a secondary school in Herfordshire provides facilities management services for 10 primary schools. Because the secondary has the capacity, staff and machinery, they've been able to take on the human resources risk and investment in heavy plant machinery that would otherwise have fallen on the primary schools.

Moreover, the secondary school's offer to its partners isn't simply 'Here's a person who will carry out caretaking duties for your school.' Instead, it's 'Here's a *service* – even if a caretaker is off sick, we'll always deploy somebody to your school. And we can do that at a fraction of what it would cost you to do internally.'

In these sorts of cases, schools will be looking at significant savings. Rather than employing 10 grounds



maintenance staff at £20,000 each, the schools can be looking at a combined contract valued at between £30,000 to £40,000 – that’s a potential saving of £160,000.

Schools in this type of arrangement can therefore certainly benefit from working with each other, but things start to fall down when a tipping point is reached. In the previous example, if five out of the 10 schools in that partnership decide they don’t want to participate any more then the arrangement becomes considerably less robust, since it relies on an agreement across all 10 schools to continue using the service. From the secondary’s point of view, the value of providing the service will only be realised if there are enough schools participating.

## STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Working arrangements like this are quite unique, in that there aren’t many schools currently using them. We hear about the success stories, because the people involved tend to shout about what they’re doing, but it’s not indicative of an emerging trend.

It’s schools with ample leadership capacity that are best placed to innovate in this area. Schools with existing leadership pressures typically lack the resources and emotional energy needed to do it. That’s unfortunate, because the schools that could that potentially benefit the most from such arrangements will likely struggle to step back from their day-to-day operations and set something up.

If a school wishes to embark on an initiative like those discussed here, then the starting point is to examine the strengths and weaknesses of your organisation and reflect on what you can and can’t do. The ISBL has a capacity audit tool that assesses leadership capacity across three pillars of leadership – governance, business and pedagogy. With procurement, for example, you would look at where in your leadership the relevant expertise and capacity resides. If you’ve established that this is lacking, you can address it by outsourcing – paying a consultant or auditor to help you, or possibly another school.

Alternatively, you can propose working collaboratively with another school and trading your expertise with them: ‘We lack expertise in this area, but we have

expertise in that area – if you can help us here, we could help you there.’ That’s an approach some schools have taken and have found works really well. It’s largely cost neutral, since they’re providing capacity and expertise to each other.

Of course, the role of LAs in all of this shouldn’t be underestimated. Certainly, some LAs have plenty of capacity to support their primary schools, enjoy a healthy relationship with them and provide a very good service. If that’s the case, there’s no reason for schools to step away.

Increasingly, however, LA-provided services are being diluted, and in some cases dismantled altogether. You ultimately have to look at your own context and decide on what path is right for you.



**Stephen Morales is chief executive of the Institute of School Business Leadership**

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## COUNTDOWN TO GDPR

Sara Martin of The Key highlights those important areas of the incoming General Data Protection Regulation that school leaders might have missed



**M**any readers will have already started preparing for the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which comes into effect this May. You may have assigned responsibility to key people and be in the process of appointing a data protection officer (as the GDPR now requires), if you haven't done so already.

Assessing your data processing procedures is one of the key steps in your journey to compliance, so here's a brief overview of important areas to check before the GDPR is introduced...

### *Subject access requests*

In most cases, the new rules won't allow you to charge for complying with subject access requests

(occasions when individuals want to know what personal data you hold about them).

You'll only have one month to comply, except when requests are complex or numerous. Ensure your school therefore has the staff, time and understanding of its data systems to comply with subject access requests within a month.

### *Managing consent*

You won't need to get consent every time you process personal data; most of your processing can be justified on the basis that it's necessary for carrying out your functions as a school. In situations where consent is required, you'll need to check that your systems for obtaining consent involve a positive opt-in, are clear and specific as to what the consent is

for, and make it easy to withdraw consent. If your consent form currently states “If you don’t respond, we will assume permission”, then you’ll have to ask again.

### Protecting children’s data

The GDPR brings in special protections for children’s data. Your privacy notice and any requests for consent – especially those concerning children’s data – must be written in a way that a child can easily understand.

### Data breaches

Put in place procedures to detect, report and investigate personal data breaches, such as the theft of a school laptop containing non-encrypted personal data about a pupil. Assess and report any breaches to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) within 72 hours if the individual is likely to suffer some kind of damage. Where appropriate, the affected individuals should be informed of the breach.

### Data protection policies

Check that your processes cover the new rules by looking through your data protection policy and asking yourself questions for each new GDPR requirement. If someone asked for their data to be deleted, for example, would your systems currently allow you to do this easily?

### Privacy notice

Presently, your privacy notice likely states who you are, why you process information and what you do with it. The GDPR mandates that this be written in clear, plain and child-friendly language and provide additional information. That includes your legal basis for processing the data, and an explanation of individuals’ rights (to, for example, access their data or file a complaint with the ICO).

**Sara Martin is a specialist content editor at The Key; you can find further advice at The Key’s GDPR resource hub (see [tinyurl.com/key-gdpr](https://tinyurl.com/key-gdpr)).**

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When the pressure’s on, sometimes the most important thing you can do as a school leader is remember how not to be one...

**T**here are many things that we, as school leaders, can do to help with workload, but it’s especially important, I think, that all of us have an ‘off switch’; a time when being the teacher stops and being the dad/partner/friend/son/brother starts.

If I’m honest, this is something that I’ve recently struggled with myself. Ofsted was due, we had a growing number of vulnerable students struggling to get up to speed with the new exam expectations and I could feel the anxiety building within me. It’s hard to switch off when you know there’s still so much to do to support your staff and the young people in our care.

Yet finding that downtime is vital. I was very thankful for the last series of *I’m A Celebrity Get Me Out of Here*. Don’t shake your head at me! It let me sit with my family, at home, happily making sweeping generalisations about people we’d never met – crucially, without looking at my iPad or phone.

It doesn’t matter what causes you to stop and spend some time doing something that’s purely about escapism and entertainment. You may well be much more cultured than I am and attend a classical music concert – but however you manage it, I think it’s vital for all of us to have these moments when our work at school isn’t at the forefront of our minds.

I spent a long time talking recently with a colleague about how they could find a better balance. We created a checklist

of things to try, which I’ll share with you here:

- 1** Turn off emails after a certain time.
- 2** Be efficient with the time you have – the ultimate goal is to not have to complete any work at home.
- 3** Stop thinking that everything has to be done now. If necessary, use your line manager to help prioritise the work you have to do and set yourself reasonable expectations for completion.
- 4** Get out of your workwear when you get home; the shift in mindset after having a shower and changing clothes can be surprisingly significant.
- 5** Stop the journey to martyrdom and say ‘no’. If you’re asked to pick up yet another task when you’re already flat out, say so. You’ll be surprised at how accepting people are.
- 6** Use the Pareto Principle. Find the 20% of your day when you’re at your most efficient and plan to complete 80% of what needs to be done then. The flip of this is to not try completing high intensity/importance tasks when your energy levels are low.
- 7** There’s no one way to get a balance that works for everyone; you need to find the way that works for you.

**Vic Goddard is headteacher at Passmores Academy**

 @vicgoddard



# How should heads stay informed?

Headteachers need to make decisions based on good information, but that information has to come from somewhere...

**W**hen you become a head, especially in a new school, you need to listen and learn about your new context and team. Your steep learning curve will begin from the time of your appointment. The 'lead-in' period between you securing the post and formally stepping into the role is key in terms of the opportunity it allows you to begin to know, and to begin to be known.

Obviously, the better informed you are, the more positive your leadership journey is likely to be. That said, we all meet difficulties from time to time which often test our mettle, and give us the chance to prove (to ourselves and others) that we're capable of leadership. 'Rough seas make the best sailors' – when tested, you learn even more.

## Structure

When I was a new head, I met with all the teaching staff and many of the support staff for individual 20-minute discussions during my first term. To help structure the conversations, I asked everyone to tell me one thing about the school they hoped would never change, and one thing they hoped would change. The information gleaned from these conversations was invaluable.

One thing I learnt is that when a helpful member of staff comes to your door and says, "I think you need to know that all the staff think that...", you should smile and thank them,

while privately recognising that it's highly unlikely 'all' the staff think any such thing. In my experience, it's highly improbable that the staff will be completely of one mind on any single issue!

## Trust

Recognise that all leaders need challengers, as

well as champions. The most dangerous thing for any leader is to surround themselves with those who only ever agree with them. Encourage frankness and openness, but ensure it's privately, positively and professionally articulated. Your senior team, in particular, should be a source of wise counsel. I also found my PA invaluable – brilliant at telling me what she thought I should know, after which it was my responsibility to make decisions about next steps.

Assume you can trust people until you have evidence to the contrary. Be alert, and show insight and discrimination. You have senior staff, teaching and support staff, governors, parents, pupils and members of the wider community to draw on.

## Learn

Try not to get trapped in your office. Talk to people. Listen to them. Use more questions than statements. Process and reflect on what you're hearing. Learn from the experience of being out and about within the school and your community. You'll build your knowledge over time, and find it to be of great support as you fulfil the role of school leader.

**Jill Berry is a leadership consultant and former headteacher; her book *Making the Leap – Moving from Deputy to Head* is available now, published by Crown House**





# DON'T BE A MICROMANAGER

Stop obsessing over the minutiae of what your staff are doing and start letting them grow, says Colin Tapscott...

**L**isa was buzzing. Despite the usual frustrations of the day, the school's 'writing challenge' project – where teachers were invited to develop and share best practice – had invigorated her. The flip chart paper and big pens activity she'd done that afternoon had really engaged the children, particularly the boys. Her previous school had dictated the teaching approach you needed to follow; no straying, or you were scored down in observations.

Back then, she'd felt educationally strangled and her passion had dwindled. But here was different. There were no micromanaged diktats in her new school. Just a clear challenge for teachers to improve pupils' writing, while being allowed to try out their own different methods.

Elsewhere, at another school, Ibrahim gently placed the envelope on the desk. He'd initially loved his role as maths leader, but lately he'd been feeling frustrated. His ideas for how to develop the children's concrete understanding of maths were always being greeted with "We don't take that approach at St James." It wasn't a change-adverse member of staff telling him that. It was the headteacher.

Despite giving him the job of maths lead, she had insisted on meeting every week to tell him how he should be doing it. He had ended up simply administrating the subject, rather than growing it. It was time for him to move to a school that actually allowed him to try out his ideas.

## 'I'M A REAL BOY!'

Education is now a high stakes profession. School leaders are under constant pressure to meet demanding targets on pupil and school performance. Fear can tempt us to micromanage down to the fine details, driving people towards 'what we know that works'. We assign staff simple tasks to follow and then spend our time overseeing team projects, all the while insisting on how they're run and taking those projects over at the first

sign of trouble. Doing this disempowers staff. It's like the passenger on a car journey who gives the driver a prescribed route and then demands control over the wheel if they stray from it.

As Lisa and Ibrahim's stories illustrate, micromanaging staff carries with it the danger of disengaging your colleagues from your vision. This is what happens when staff see themselves as just puppets, acting out the will of a puppeteer. Like a modern day Pinocchio, these staff are crying out, "I'm a real boy!", knowing that they're capable of independent decision making and achievement. They feel mistrusted and underappreciated.

In 2012, Google developed an initiative called 'Project Aristotle', which looked at its numerous internal working teams and investigated what made some successful and others less so (see [tinyurl.com/google-aristotle](http://tinyurl.com/google-aristotle)). It found that the single most important factor was trust. Delegating something of importance to someone shows that you trust them. If your staff don't feel trusted, then like Lisa and Ibrahim, they'll vote with their feet and leave for somewhere else where they feel more valued.



## MAKING THE SHIFT

The role of a leader is to give a clear destination, and have the determination to ensure everyone reaches it. As a former headteacher with 17 years experience, I believe our role is to 'macromanage' and not 'micromanage'. I've discovered that the best way of getting people in alignment with your vision is, like a photographic lens, to pan out and paint a clear picture of the end destination, while setting high expectations. We can then involve others in helping to shape certain aspects of the route we're going to take.

Some micromanagers will be worried about failure. Others might be concerned that people charged with delivery perform better than they do. The key to making the shift and becoming a great 'macromanager' is to focus on the why, what, who and when, rather than the how that dominates micromanagement.

First, the 'why'. Being clear on the purpose behind any given action is vital for engaging people. Find those whose passion and purpose sits within the action you have in mind, and delegate



them the task of delivering it. However, this clarity on the 'why' goes beyond the launch meeting. Like adding water to a bath, you need to constantly keep people topped up on the purpose of the vision. Being clear as to an action's purpose will give the person running it clarity, while also giving reformed micromanagers confidence that the deliverer 'gets it'.

## WHAT, WHO AND WHEN

So how should we prioritise the 'what' over the 'how'? Spend time helping the deliverer build a clear picture of the outcome expected, and then help them realise the result is their responsibility. This empowers the person, since there's now a sense of challenge.

When it comes to the 'who', choose people for tasks on the basis of them sharing your vision and possessing some proven experience, but also on the likelihood that the task will stretch them. In my last school we paired developing teachers with more experienced leaders. By pairing experienced leader Pip with new, enthusiastic science leader Emma, for example, we developed Emma and the school gained the Silver Science Mark. Creating a culture of mentoring, where growing staff members are paired with more experienced colleagues, will develop leaders and give you confidence.

With regards to the 'when', people need to know their deadlines so they know what they're working towards. Reassurance can be given to former

micromanagers by putting in place clear check points with buffer zones. Buffer zones provide time before the real deadline, thus allowing the person leading to improve the situation should any problems arise, rather than you taking over.

## CREATING SHIFT

Author and speaker Simon Sinek once remarked that, "When we tell people to do their jobs, we get workers. When we trust people to get their job done, we get leaders." Trust both empowers people and increases loyalty.

In my own leadership training, I talk about the following formula:

$$\text{Purpose} + \text{Alignment} = \text{Shift}$$

Align people to the destination, trust them to deliver and you'll get a 'shift' in delivery. People aren't waiting for your decision, the action can move faster and your freed as leader to set the course.

One of my greatest achievements as a headteacher is that 10 of my former staff are now headteachers themselves. That's due to their own skills, of course, but I believe the opportunities and encouragement I gave them contributed in some way.

By delegating, rather than micromanaging, you can help to create the next generation of leaders. And in an education system that's losing teachers faster than we can recruit them, that's more important than ever.

## ARE YOU MICRO OR MACRO?

You know you're a micromanager if you...

- Spend lots of time demonstrating exactly how tasks should be performed
- Take over projects at the first sign of trouble
- Assign administrative tasks, rather than tasks that help staff to grow
- Line over-manage, by focusing on specific projects over the broader picture
- Lament when subordinates make decisions without first consulting you

By macromanaging you can...

- Empower your staff to use their talents
- Multiply energy for projects; there's one of you, but lots of them
- Professionally develop skills in staff
- Allow more time for leading and inspiring people
- Select the best-skilled person for the job
- Speed up delivery
- Increase loyalty
- Open up opportunities for growing new leaders
- Nurture trust



**Colin Tapscott is a leadership consultant and former headteacher**

 @colintapscott

 [everydayleader.co.uk](http://everydayleader.co.uk)

# Get some inspiration

If your school's classroom resources and learning solutions are in need of a refresh, it's worth making the trip to this year's Education Show. Here, some of the exhibitors at this year's event fill us in on what they have in store...

## EVENT DETAILS

### Where:

NEC Birmingham, Hall 7  
B40 1NT

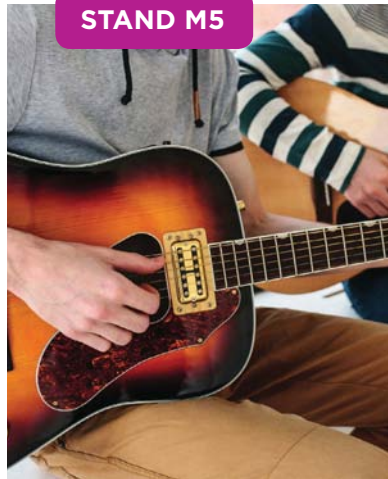
### When:

Thu 15th March 2018 – 9am to 5pm  
Fri 16th March – 9am to 5pm  
Sat 17th March – 9am to 4pm

### Contact:

[education-show.com](http://education-show.com)  
[@educationshow](https://twitter.com/educationshow)  
[facebook.com/educationshow](https://facebook.com/educationshow)

### STAND M5



## British Kodály Academy

The British Kodály Academy offers musicianship training for anyone wanting to improve their pitch, singing technique, music reading, listening, harmony or theory skills. It caters for a range of individual requirements, from adult beginners with a love of music to experienced musicians striving for deeper understanding. The programme is delivered by world class Hungarian and British tutors, with spring course and summer school places available. For those with any primary instrumental teacher training needs, their stand may be worth a look...

[kodaly.org.uk](http://kodaly.org.uk)

## Unistage

Unistage offers high quality modular staging and audience tiering that's quick and easy to reconfigure, providing schools with a versatile, cost-effective and quiet solution in cases where performance spaces have to be changed on a regular basis.

Ideal for choirs, music groups and theatrical productions, Unistage's solutions are also perfect for conferences, graduation ceremonies, lectures and a variety of other shows and events. With space at a premium in most education settings, the ability to compactly stack and store your staging is one that's likely to be welcomed...

[unistage.co.uk](http://unistage.co.uk)

### STAND L49



### STAND K20



## Jigsaw

Jigsaw is an original and comprehensive scheme of learning for Years 1 to 6. It integrates PSHE, emotional literacy, social skills, spiritual development, British values and SMSC opportunities in a lesson-a-week programme, and is accompanied by teaching resources that include original music, songs, and assemblies for the whole school term. Over 1,900 schools already use Jigsaw, including schools in China, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, The Netherlands, South Korea and The Falkland Islands. For more information, visit the Jigsaw website. [jigsawpshe.com](http://jigsawpshe.com)



**STAND C3****Allianz Musical Insurance**

We're the UK's number one musical instrument insurer, dedicated to protecting what matters to musicians, students and teachers since 1960. Our bespoke policies can cover nearly every specialist musical need you could think of, and start from only £33 a year. Come and visit our stand at the expo for a chat, some useful freebies and 20% off a no-obligation quote.

[allianzmusicalinsurance.co.uk](http://allianzmusicalinsurance.co.uk)

**Stage Systems**

Flexible and fun, Stage Systems' Imagine range of modular educational furniture was developed in consultation with schools and LAs. The comprehensive selection of items spans desks, chairs, storage units and furniture for classrooms and libraries, which aim to encourage creative and artistic expression and complement structured learning and imaginative play. As Paul Doleman, product development director explains, "Many pieces are of modular construction, so they can be manoeuvred to suit the size and shape of the space."

[stagesystems.co.uk](http://stagesystems.co.uk)

**STAND J34****TeeJay Maths**

TeeJay Maths produces colourful core textbooks for Y1 and upwards that are pupil-friendly, contain lots of graded exercises and are capable of being used in both a group work arrangement and as a whole class teaching resource. The scheme is supported by dedicated homework packs that cover the curricular content of the day's teaching. Each year book also has an assessment pack with individual tests and an end-of-year full diagnostic assessment.

[teejaymaths.com](http://teejaymaths.com)

**STAND E81****Boolino**

We develop reading and literacy resources for primary schools that engage young readers in unique ways. Our innovative book platform, Fiction Express, connects students with authors, encouraging reading for pleasure through fun co-creation of stories. We publish books in weekly chapters, and what happens next is entirely up to the readers. Via a system of voting they're able to decide where the plot goes next, and the author brings the most popular choice to life. All chapters are complemented with teacher resources, activities, online reading and comprehension questions, and students can interact with the authors through a dedicated book forum as the story is being written. [fictionexpress.co.uk](http://fictionexpress.co.uk)

**STAND F50-G59****Renaissance UK**

Renaissance UK is proud to be a Knowledge Partner and Sponsor of the 2018 Education Show, and would invite visitors to attend the thought-provoking sessions that will be delivered by seasoned education experts at The Main Stage. Our top pick is definitely Gary Alexander's session, 'Proving Progress and Predicting SATs', where he will explain how and why his school uses data, generated by computer adaptive testing, to check the children's attainment and relative progress, inform and monitor the impact of interventions and reliably predict SATs results.

[renlearn.co.uk](http://renlearn.co.uk)





# Are you raising a disabled child or young person?

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be able to help



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Helping disabled children

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in touch

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[info@familyfund.org.uk](mailto:info@familyfund.org.uk)

Call us:  
01904 550055

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## HOW TO CUT THE ADMIN for your After School or Breakfast Club

Running an after school or breakfast club is a great source of income for the school and provides an essential service for working parents. The problem is that it's easy to underestimate the amount of admin that's required to keep things running smoothly and to comply with Ofsted requirements.



There's a lot of information to be collected and stored about the children and when they will be attending. Double or triple keying information from paper forms or emails to produce registers then creating and sending invoices to parents is incredibly time consuming. That's before you start to deal with the inevitable last-minute changes.

Things could be much easier for everyone. Collecting the required information using online forms and a central database means parents don't need to submit repeated information and you have easy access to what you need all in one place.

When using Kids Club HQ, registers are automatically up to date (including last

minute changes!) and can be viewed online in an instant or exported to Excel for offline use.

Instead of manually creating invoices for parents, these can be generated and sent by email automatically. Automated reminders for outstanding payments help to keep accounts up to date and reduce time spent chasing parents.

Kids Club HQ is an easy to use cloud-based platform built from the ground up for breakfast, after school and holiday clubs with an online booking system for parents and an administration system for you and the club staff.

Schools like yours rely on Kids Club HQ to keep on top of the admin for their clubs.

### KidsClubHQ

To find out how we can reduce your admin burden please get in touch at [hello@kidsclubhq.co.uk](mailto:hello@kidsclubhq.co.uk) or visit our website at <https://www.kidsclubhq.co.uk/for-schools>

# Cornerstones test resources

Professional packages for testing reading, maths and SPaG across the school



- KS1 and KS2 tests that are fully mapped to the national curriculum
- Content created by teachers and designed by in-school testing
- Tests for all-year use, supporting accurate measurement of progress
- Helps inform planning for accurate gap filling and addressing weak spots



Reviewed by: John Dabell

**W**hen I'm looking for tests, I look at the ingredients and where they are coming from. I want organic, home-grown resources written with vision, knowledge and ingenuity by people who care. Good job we have Cornerstones then. Its creative community has developed three sets of business-like test resources that are spot-on.

On offer there are tests for maths, reading and SPaG. Although they have all been designed to mirror the SATs papers, these aren't vanilla resources, all beige and boring. Instead, these are bright, colourful and content rich with pedagogical insight.

A good test equals good questions and these tests are full of them. The resources are off-the-shelf, easy to use and perfect for showing children what to expect in their statutory tests.

The Arithmetic and Number Progress Tests support Y1-6 formative assessment for use across the year and the content within is impressive for £150. A higher order set of tests is available for challenging children exceeding Y6 expectations. Also on offer are Summative Test Master Packs for

end of term summative assessment across Y1-6 and these mirror SATs papers 1, 2 and 3.

The Cornerstones reading tests cover KS1 and KS2 and have been developed for summative assessment purposes at the end of every term using the government content domain. The purpose, format, content, cognitive demand and specification for the KS2 English reading test are all closely followed. Reading booklets are made up of a range of well-chosen, appropriate and engaging texts and these come with clear and child-friendly answer booklets and scrupulous marking schemes.

Summative SPaG tests follow a reassuringly similar high quality approach, with carefully designed content, user-friendly design and a tip-top mark scheme that leaves no stone unturned. For all the tests, Cornerstones boasts a nifty electronic tool for zooming in on attainment and gap analysis which enables you to easily spot faults and ensure that your attention is drawn to addressing and ironing out vulnerable pain points. The full suite costs £1200, which feels expensive but do the maths and you realise it's great value.

**PSM**  
PRIMARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

## VERDICT

- ✓ Quality and comprehensive materials with validity and reliability
- ✓ Ready to go, flexible and highly manageable for stress-free use
- ✓ Perfect for pinpointing individual needs and tracking progress
- ✓ All resources are downloadable, helping you keep costs down

## UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for broad and balanced diagnostic and innovative test resources that assess against end of year and end of Key Stages.

Individual tests, £425 each; full suite, £1200, 0333 320 8000, [cornerstoneseducation.co.uk](http://cornerstoneseducation.co.uk)



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This means you can focus on teaching, without worrying about classroom clutter. Classroom furniture needs to be as safe as possible for children and teachers, which is why we've also added extra safety features that include our custom finger guard, chunky wheels and secure legs.

[www.tidyteach.co.uk](http://www.tidyteach.co.uk)

## 2 MAKING DATA EASY

Developed by a team with over 20 years' experience working with schools on appraisal, performance management, and training, Standards Tracker from Educate enables school leaders to effectively use PM processes to strategically target development priorities based on accurate information. It lets you make robust performance-related pay decisions. Inform school development and improvement plans, as well as self-evaluation. Monitor the impact of CPD. It can also be used to provide inspectors and governance boards with straightforward summaries of performance against specific measurable standards, highlight areas of developmental need and demonstrate clearly what you're doing to address areas of weakness.

[info.standardstracker.co.uk/primary-management-2018](http://info.standardstracker.co.uk/primary-management-2018)



## 5 THE MAGIC OF THEATRE

M&M Theatrical Productions are the UK's largest and most respected provider of theatre-in-education, specialising in classic literature adaptations and pantomime productions for primary and SEN school audiences.

We transform gyms and dining halls into a magical theatrical experience, using state of the art sets, sound, lighting and special effects. Our productions are renowned for their high quality and attention to detail, ensuring that children of all ages and abilities are equally engaged, educated and entertained.

[magicoftheatre.com](http://magicoftheatre.com)



## GREATER CLARITY

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[gofrontrow.com](http://gofrontrow.com)

## FUN GUYS

From Leaffield Environmental comes a range of 'Mushroom bins' that add an element of fun to litter collection. Available with or without character faces, Mushroom bins are made from colourful and highly durable polyethylene with smooth surfaces for easy cleaning and are designed for use with internal plastic refuse sacks, giving each bin a capacity of 60 litres (or 70 litres with an optional extended plastic liner. 800mm in height, a Mushroom bin is tall enough to make an impact but short enough for younger children to deposit litter using the 150mm-diameter open aperture in the top of its lid.

[leaffieldrecycle.com](http://leaffieldrecycle.com)



4

# “THE PRISON IS OPEN, BUT MANY ARE SCARED TO LEAVE”

In the struggle against excessive workloads in schools, headteachers can do their bit by being more open and honest with staff

It's been over two years since the government released three reports on reducing teacher workload, covering data management, planning and marking. Yet many teachers are still reporting that they work under policies and practices that fly in the face of said reports' recommendations. The prison doors are open, but it seems many are scared to leave.

The importance of getting this right is clear. Huge teacher workloads make a sensible work-life balance impossible to maintain. As well as clearly putting a teacher's wellbeing at risk, this must ultimately impact the wellbeing of the children we teach – after all, how can they thrive when they're having to spend their days with an overworked, stressed, and in the worst cases, unstable adult?

We know from experience that when colleagues around us are struggling in that negative spiral it can be hard to maintain our own wellbeing, even as adults. On the flip side, no one can deny that good quality teaching requires effort, dedication, and yes, *some* work in the evenings if it's going to be done well. The trick seems to be maintaining one's happiness whilst getting through the inevitable workload. But how?

For most teachers, wellbeing isn't simply about the school offering one-off 'wellbeing sessions' on INSET days. It's about achievable workloads focussed on the real purpose of our job. Ask your staff the question 'Why do you teach?' and the answer is sure to be something along the lines of, 'To make a positive difference to children's lives.' Once that big 'Why' is in place, the systems and processes of the school should be compared against it – is all this marking in differently coloured pens actually making a difference, or is it for show? Do these half-termly data drops make a difference to the children, or are they for micromanagement's sake? Is the difference big enough to justify the workload?

The workload teachers find onerous is that which doesn't serve their core purpose, but instead seeks to 'box tick'. Strip away that fluff, and what we'd be left with is the high-impact core that brings satisfaction, rather than stress.

Having been brought up in an overzealous cloud of high-stakes accountability, many teachers will cling to the hours they work as protection from criticism – and who can blame them? They might face a barrage of criticism from SLT, parents and media on a daily basis, but at least no one can say they don't work hard. Transparency of expectation is key to breaking down this tendency for (dare I say) self-martyrdom among teachers. Some schools have demonstrated their commitment to wellbeing by creating 'workload charters', which clearly outline their commitment to, and expectations of, their staff. These serve as useful myth-busters, and challenge notions such as presentee-ism and outdated expectations in terms of assessment, planning, leading clubs and more.

Leaders need to lead by example too. What time are you leaving? Is your workload focussed your core purpose? Are you sending emails at midnight? It's not easy, but an open dialogue and reflection on

those difficulties with staff can stimulate the debate, humanise you as a leader and give them an opportunity to provide solutions too. Too often, leaders can be isolated by a desire to protect staff – but opening up that world and not becoming a cautionary tale yourself might be the way to begin to improving wellbeing in your school.



**Lucy Starbuck Braidley is a primary school teacher and subject leader for English and PE**







[www.magicoftheatre.com](http://www.magicoftheatre.com)

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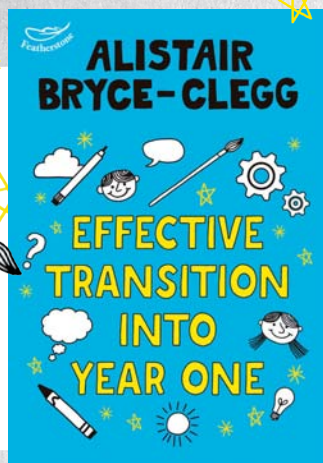


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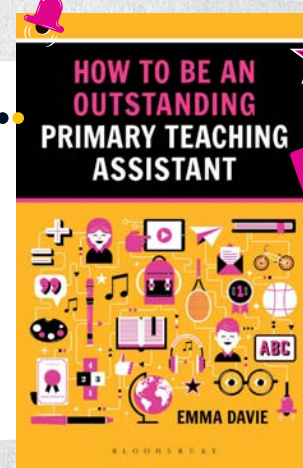


**"This book is an essential resource for all Key Stage One teachers as it offers insight into how early years children learn and what strategies should continue into later years. Beyond simply continuity, this book advocates a practical and discovery based curriculum which is so vital to the development and engagement of young minds."**

*UKEdChat Magazine*

**"This is an incredibly useful guide for both new and more experienced teaching assistants. Emma's personal experience in the classroom shines through and the book highlights just how valuable an outstanding teaching assistant is to any school."**

*Jenna Lucas,  
Primary Teacher and English Specialist Leader of Education*



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