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## From the editor



In this era of high street-slashing e-commerce, the wishlist is typically used as a way of noting products we might want to buy at a later date, or things we'd like to purchase but maybe can't afford right now. That's why the recent news of schools distributing Amazon wishlists populated with stationery items seems so jarring at first glance – they're typically used for luxuries, not essential items for our nation's schools.

As Sue Birchall explains on page 66, there are – or certainly should be – clear lines around what schools can seek donations for, yet the practice of asking parents for donations is certainly allowed, and for some, clearly more important and wide-ranging than it used to be.

However, as Simon Botten makes clear on page 71, there's much to be said for learning how to spot financial issues long before they start threatening your bottom line and carrying out your strategic financial planning well ahead of time. SBLs will be doing that already, of course – but headteachers need to be confidently on top of this stuff too.

Over on page 63, Noel Conreen further highlights several non-salary areas where schools can potentially make efficiency savings, but any efforts at getting more out of a school budget will at some point inevitably turn to staff salaries. If you're having to take an honest assessment of where you are and where you need to be, Laura Williams' guide to evaluating your staffing structure on page 56 may well come in useful.

Elsewhere, we take a wry look at what your SBL's really telling you, suggest some ways in which staff can assist with building your school's reputation and find out how one school is attempting to rid itself of disposable plastic.

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser  
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## Our experts this issue



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director of finance



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former headteacher



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Primary school  
headteacher



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Primary school  
headteacher



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Founder of  
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for Schools

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Compassionate Class winners 2018

# “Making education political poisons what happens in our schools”



What has Andreas Schleicher, creator of the Programme for International Student Assessment, learned from his global education surveys?

## Of the various PISA findings over the years, which ones have stayed with you?

One thing that's really struck me is that the gap between what our societies demand from modern education and what that education actually delivers is becoming wider. Curriculums are a good example. We build on them by putting something new on top of what we already do, but rarely question *why* we teach and *what* we teach.

That helps create this mile-wide, inch-deep system of instruction in which a lot of things are taught at quite a shallow level of depth. We teach trigonometry because it's held up as one of the foundations of mathematics – but if we're being honest, trigonometry is taught because 400 years it was helpful for measuring the sizes of fields and planning street layouts.

## Education systems are typically controlled by national governments, but is there a case for taking decisions over curriculums, placements and recruitment out of government hands?

I believe the act of making educational issues into political issues is poisoning much of what's happening in our schools. The long-term consequence is that teachers lose trust. If they're told one thing today and something completely different in four years' time, in the end they're not going to buy in to what you're proposing.

There are some ways out of this. In the Netherlands and Hong Kong, governments have essentially left such decisions in the hands of schools. The design of instructional practice and pedagogy is down to professional educators, with the government largely acting as a regulator – putting in place incentives to attract teaching talent and ensuring that resources end up where they're most needed. Another approach is what we see in Finland and Germany, where officials from across the political spectrum collaborate on long term goals,

making for a system that's more predictable in the medium term.

There's also a third group of countries that have successfully depoliticised their education systems, but only because they don't have worry about democracy. Countries like China and Vietnam can make long-term plans and won't be held hostage to political interests, but that's obviously not a model that's relevant for the Western world. The first two are.

## New competency measures have been introduced this year to test students' tolerance, cultural awareness and media literacy, but not all PISA participants have chosen to incorporate them. Any thoughts on why that might be?

The beauty of PISA is its voluntary nature. It's a choice each country must make for itself, and their reasons will vary. Some are of the view that we've gone beyond testing cognitive skills and into an area that's not the business of schools, but I'd disagree. I think schools have an important role to play in what's becoming an ever more interrelated, complex and volatile world, where success will depend having an inner moral compass that helps distinguish right from wrong. I'm still happy that we have over 50 countries who are willing to try it out.

## How does one quantify right and wrong?

People often underestimate what modern assessment is capable of. We can present students with scenarios, use anchoring vignettes and employ lots of other techniques that prompt students to make

choices, justify those choices and explain their reasoning. PISA isn't a high stakes test; students are aware that it's not about them as individuals, but about painting a more general picture.

What can often happen with testing is that we trade validity gains for efficiency gains and relevance for reliability, but I think we can afford to take more risks. In any case, PISA's innovative assessments have always been reported separately from our reading, maths and science measures.

## In terms of how successive PISA results have been received around the world, which responses have you been happiest to see, and which have you found less encouraging?

When the first PISA results came out, the reception in my own country, Germany, was quite sobering. Among the general public there was a sense that we'd spent a lot of money on education, only to discover that Germany was an average performer – but then people got their act together. German education has since been transformed by a series of initiatives and reforms that have led to some considerable achievements.

## Some critics have questioned whether other factors – cultural traditions, social values, private tuition – might affect PISA results from country to country. What's your view?

We actually factor those issues into PISA's design. With private tutoring, for example, we'll know its incidence and intensity

## CAREER TIMELINE

1989  
Appointed as international co-ordinator for the Reading Literacy Study run by the International Association for Educational Achievement

Relocates to the Netherlands to serve as the IEA's director for analysis  
1993

1994  
Joins the OECD's then Directorate for Education, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs

Oversees launch of the first PISA test in which 32 countries participate  
2000





across different countries and can represent that in our findings. We'll measure how many hours students are in school, how long they spend doing homework and how often they attend private tutoring.

There can be some interesting corollaries to this. We'd always believed that in Japan, private tutoring was a big part of students' success – yet the incidence of private tutoring there has declined dramatically, largely because

accessing university has become much easier with fewer students around. Their PISA performance has remained pretty constant, throughout, so it may be that their prior investment in private tutoring hasn't been that productive. You could even argue that Japanese students have become better by not being overloaded with learning.

**You've previously said you'd like to see educational knowledge shared between countries more organically and for PISA to be made superfluous. Do you still stand by that?**

Very much so. Most advanced professions are able to progress thanks to a culture of co-creation and sharing knowledge and best practice. You can see rapid progress towards this in some education systems such as Finland, for example, where there's very little comparative assessment because they already have other ways of

measuring learning. When that can happen internationally, instruments like PISA will inevitably become less important.



**Andreas Schleicher's book, *World Class – How to Build a 21st Century School System* is available**

**now from the OECD iLibrary via [tinyurl.com/world-class-pisa](http://tinyurl.com/world-class-pisa); a longer version of this interview can be found at [tinyurl.com/pl-schleicher](http://tinyurl.com/pl-schleicher)**

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**2003**  
**Awarded the Theodor Heuss prize in Germany for 'Exemplary democratic engagement' for his work with PISA**

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**2018**



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# 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?** Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

**WHAT?** Travelling fellowships

**HOW MUCH?** Dependent on project

**APPLY BY?** 18th September 2018  
(for travel in 2019)

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

**FUNDS?** A travel grant for individuals to spend a maximum of two months overseas, researching innovative practice on a topic of their choosing. Applications are welcome on any topic relating to education, particularly from those working with vulnerable children in a school setting. Upon their return, successful applicants will receive advice and further funding to help share their findings locally or nationally.



**WHO?** BookLife

**WHAT?** Match Funding

**HOW MUCH?** Unlimited per school

**APPLY BY?** Ends 24th July 2018

**WHERE?** [booklife.co.uk/pages/match-funding](http://booklife.co.uk/pages/match-funding)

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**WHO?** Department for Education

**WHAT?** Strategic School Improvement Fund: emergency funding

**HOW MUCH?** Amounts vary

**APPLY BY?** Ongoing

**WHERE?** [tinyurl.com/dfe-ssif-e](http://tinyurl.com/dfe-ssif-e)

**FUNDS?** The DfE's £140 million Strategic School Improvement Fund is a grant that's open to academies, maintained schools, alternative provision and PRUs across all phases. Applications can be made in exceptional circumstances to support individual schools confronted by unexpected or imminent failure, when other long-term support options are not feasible. Applications from maintained schools and academies eligible for intervention are subject to RSC approval, and LA approval in the case of other maintained schools.



**WHO?** Football Foundation

**WHAT?** Premier League & The FA Facilities Fund Small Grants Scheme

**HOW MUCH?** £1,000 to £10,000

**APPLY BY?** Ongoing

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

**FUNDS?** Provision of capital items, or improvements to existing facilities, that support participation in football-related activities. Open to educational establishments, eligible projects include pitch improvement works, replacement of items such as goalposts, provision of portable floodlighting and fencing, though grants are limited to no more than 50% of the total project cost.



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# School improvement

## DO PRIMARY CHILDREN NEED LESSONS IN MONEY?

Headteacher Joy Ingram explains what prompted her to offer pupils an award-winning programme of finance education...

**P**rior to being a head, I taught mainly in early years. My interest in finance education comes from seeing first-hand just how hard the concept of money is for 4- and 5-year-olds to grasp. Give them a 2 or 5 pence coin, and they'll acknowledge that they only have one coin – it's hard to break down that single coin and teach them that its value is actually 2, 5 or 10 pence. It made me realise the importance of starting money and financial talk really early.

We're a very rural primary school based in North Lancashire, in between Lancaster and Kirby Lonsdale on the Cumbrian border. Our general pupil intake is only around nine children per year coming into reception. We currently have 74 children on roll in total, and have four classes of mixed age groups – nursery, reception and years 1 to 6.

### SAVING & EARNING

Our finance education starts in a very practical way at early years, setting aside areas for role playing shop scenarios. We don't necessarily use the maths curriculum, but more our PSHE curriculum, structured so that each year groups studies certain concepts. We begin with asking 'What is money and where does it come from?' before considering 'Can we afford to buy certain things?' We then move on to



looking at how we use money, save it and earn it.

The older classes explore issues around paying taxes, spending money wisely and lending money. Our year 5 and 6 children are 'Rota Kids', which means they work with our local Carnforth Rotary Club. They do a great job of fundraising – looking at genuine needs and causes and thinking about what they can do, as a group of children, to raise money and make a difference to other people's lives.

I believe finance education is hugely important. Money has its place within the maths curriculum, and we do teach it in that way – but by also doing it through the PSHE curriculum, we're asking the children to consider more meaningful, deeper questions. They're growing up in what's almost a throwaway society, where they regularly see adverts for credit cards and are used to the idea of debt. We want them to understand what that actually means. There's a great responsibility that comes with earning and having money, and I think the sooner you start sowing those seeds, the better.

## GETTING A RETURN

Our work was recently recognised at the Personal Finance Teacher of the Year Competition organised by the magazine Moneywise, where we won in the primary school category and were awarded £3,250. We'll be using the prize to give each of our children between £1 and £5 and set them the task of getting a return on their money by the end of the year. They may choose to do something on their own, work collaboratively in a small group, pool it as a class – however they do it, we want them thinking about how they can become entrepreneurs.

To others wanting to try something similar, I'd recommend making your finance education practical and relevant, and trying to link it to either a theme or topic you're doing in school, or any support you might already be providing to community groups. The more real you can make it, the more the children will see the reasons for doing it.

**Joy Ingram is the headteacher of Arkholme Church of England Primary School in Arkholme, Lancashire**



## “WE WANT TO SHOW WHAT THE WORLD CAN OFFER THEM”

Philip Pritchard recalls how his school's efforts at boosting pupil aspirations attracted national media attention

Jesmond Gardens Primary School in Hartlepool has 315 children, plus a 26-place nursery, and serves an area of severe deprivation with approximately 50% of our pupils qualifying for Pupil Premium. We're a fairly new school, having been built in 2012, and recently renewed our 'Apple Distinguished School' award, putting us in a group of just 400 schools in the world that can say the same.

Hartlepool is a pocket of the north east that's historically been heavily reliant on industry, and recently suffered from significant deprivation and low aspirations. There are significant drug and alcohol issues, as well as a high level of need in the local community we serve, so we have to provide our children with the necessary skillsets and life aspirations they'll need when they leave here.

What we've therefore done is involve the children in developing what they see as important within the curriculum and made links with local secondary schools – one of which runs a programme called 'I Aspire', where our year 4, 5 and 6 children get to learn about a wide range of jobs and activities they could be doing in later life. The aim is to raise our children's aspirations to take in the prospect of attending university, and essentially show what the world can offer them, rather than put a ceiling on whatever their aspirations may be.

We're bound to keep things based around literacy and numeracy, but we try to place a real emphasis on developing each child's unique talents in terms of the foundation curriculum. We're always

looking to organise visits from professionals who can help develop our efforts in this area, which is how we came to be featured on an edition of ITV's *Tonight* show earlier this year, in which Robert Peston looked at 'life after Brexit', with a focus on the north east and the need for schools to teach the skills companies will need in future.

We've previously had visits from policemen, game designers and social workers – on this occasion it was a specialist art teacher who helped the children create some artworks themed around their aspirations that showcased what they wanted to be. The programme makers were keen to get a sense of what occupations the children had chosen, why they were important to them and what skills they felt they needed in order to pursue them.

The filming took place during the school day. I'd informed parents of it via our newsletter, highlighting what an exciting opportunity this was for the school to show what we believe in, and then contacted the children who were going to be part of the filming and their parents to discuss what was going to happen.

In the event, the children were a credit to the school. They embraced the opportunity to showcase just how amazing they are, and how much value we as a school place on their creativity.

**Philip Pritchard is the headteacher of Jesmond Gardens Primary School**



# What to look for when choosing an intervention

Pupil interventions have become a common expense – but how can you be sure that your offering is doing what it's supposed to?

**W**ith budgets becoming ever more squeezed, it's often tempting to go for the cheapest option when it comes to choosing an intervention – but 'cheapest' doesn't always equate to 'best value for money'.

As a provider of maths interventions ourselves, we would recommend that schools first carefully consider the following five areas before allocating their spend, along with the key questions they should be asking of every potential provider.

## 1. IMPACT

With both short and long term interventions you must be able to reliably measure their impact. Be prepared to examine both the empirical data and qualitative impact arising from an intervention. Agree your 'success' criteria at the start so that the intervention's impact is directly linked to the allocated budget spend. Any Pupil Premium funds must have an impact on Pupil Premium children; any other incidental impact on your other pupils' is an additional benefit.

**ALWAYS ASK:** *What are the short and the long term impacts you can expect from your intervention?*

## 2. INDIVIDUALS

Consider the individual needs of the pupils that will be involved and ensure the intervention can be personalised, since every child's gaps or areas of challenge will be different. The best programmes include a diagnostic element, allowing you to pinpoint individual gaps to work on. They should also include opportunities for class teachers to input their own recommendations – after all, they're the ones who know the pupils best.

**ALWAYS ASK:** *How does your intervention cater for individual pupils' needs?*

## 3. IMPLEMENTATION

You'll probably find that the intervention which needs minimal extra work on the part of staff is the one that will actually benefit your pupils the most. If an intervention is likely to add to your staff workload or take time to implement, chances are it simply won't happen.

**ALWAYS ASK:** *How long will it take to get this intervention set up in school?*

## 4. INFLUENCE

An intervention shouldn't simply be a one-off event; while you should see an immediate result by way of an upturn in pupil attainment, wider benefits from the programme should also be reflected in your pupils' lessons outside of the intervention. Pupils receiving interventions will often tend to be disengaged and in need of help; an intervention could therefore be considered successful if it leads to changes in a pupil's mindset and brings them back into the classroom, eager to learn.

**ALWAYS ASK:** *What additional benefits will your intervention bring to the classroom?*

## 5. INSIGHT

An intervention programme should provide you with insights into how your pupils are progressing and what their next steps are. Having a good reporting system in place will enable

these takeaways to be shared among key members of staff, helping them to better focus their lessons for the class as a whole.

**ALWAYS ASK:** *How will your intervention provide teachers with insights into their pupils' learning?*

More so than ever, every penny in a school budget counts counts. By following these five 'I's, you'll be better placed to make the right decision when determining the return you'll get from investing in an intervention.

**Rob Langman is the teacher experience lead for Third Space Learning's 1-to-1 maths interventions**

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# “EVERY OFSTED INSPECTION IS VERY DIFFERENT”

What does a headteacher need to become a good Ofsted inspector and what can they expect from the role? School leader turned HMI Lesley Butcher shares her thoughts...

**P**rior to joining Ofsted I'd been in education for nearly 30 years, having taught every primary year group and served as a headteacher for 12 years in three very different settings. I'd also previously worked as a regional leader for the National College and as an LA school improvement partner, and therefore felt I had some relevant experience to offer the organisation.

I'd previously been on the receiving end of five inspections as a headteacher myself, and had always found them to be constructive experiences. I enjoyed establishing a dialogue with professionals who could compare what we were doing in our school with many other schools. More importantly, in almost every case the inspectors I encountered had taken the trouble to recognise the challenges unique to my schools.

In the main, I found that the perceptions of my colleagues towards Ofsted at the time were that they were fair. There would occasionally be instances where I couldn't quite understand what had happened in a school to warrant the rating they received – but as I now know very well, every inspection is very different. It's important not to judge things from the outside.

## HARD MESSAGES

I recall the Ofsted application process as being quite rigorous and consisting of several stages, including a range of tasks carried out at an assessment centre and a timed online component that tested your ability to digest complex information. The process is largely aimed at people who already have well-developed interpersonal skills, because it can be difficult sharing hard messages with school staff.

Every member of HMI is very aware of the impact such messages can have on

school leaders, but ultimately we're in this for the children. Every child is entitled to be safe and have a good education. It's our job to draw attention to those places that aren't delivering that.

From my own experiences, I understand that some school leaders are operating in extremely challenging circumstances. What's important is that we work to attain clarity regarding those issues that leaders need to deal with, rather than make things personal. After all, the vast majority of headteachers are trying their best to do a good job.

Sometimes, however, other things can get in the way, to the point where they'll need support, possibly from an LA or MAT. I remember the former head of the National College, Steve Munby, once saying that the days of the 'superhero head' have gone. That was a surprise to me at the time, but the message I took from his remark was that no one person can lead and improve a school on their own.

*“You quickly learn that one of the things you need to bring to the job is humility”*





It takes an awful lot of people – parents, governors, staff, LAs, MATs – all playing their part to ensure that schools are supporting their pupils to be the best they can be.

## UNDER THE SKIN

The work of an inspector requires intense concentration and involves high stakes. We have to listen carefully, take time to grasp each school's particular set of issues and get under the skin of what makes the school tick. We have to properly understand each school's distinct features and ensure we report accurately on their effectiveness in a way that means something to parents and pupils. Taken together, that can be challenging.

We get to work with some very talented school leaders and teachers – for me, this is an uplifting part of the role. The most rewarding moments for HMI are

when we see that the leaders of a school we've built a relationship with have really worked their socks off to improve the quality of education they deliver and managed to move up a grade. Seeing that is such a joy, because it ultimately means that the pupils are getting a better deal.

We always try to judge a school's performance over time. There's plenty of external information and data we can use to help us with that, but it only represents a small part of the picture. When we enter a school, we're looking at whether the leaders have got a handle on the quality of teaching and learning that's taking place. It's those processes that are our concern and the main subject of our discussions.

However, it's important to note that we don't grade individual lessons, nor do we expect to see teachers' planning. Ofsted has gone to considerable lengths to try and bust some of those myths around what we expect from schools. What we actually want is to work alongside school leaders in understanding the nature of a school in the limited time that we have.

## BROADENING HORIZONS

What's surprised me most is how many opportunities there are for professional development within Ofsted. I've had the opportunity to inspect nurseries, primary and secondary schools, independent schools and teacher training institutions. I've been involved in piloting new arrangements and carrying out survey work. There are lots of avenues for broadening your horizons.

The support you receive from colleagues is phenomenal. Everyone understands the challenges and vulnerabilities you feel, and the sense of teamwork is strong. I feel lucky to have been part of the schools training team, and really enjoyed supporting and mentoring new inspectors. You don't join Ofsted and then simply inspect; you grow within the organisation.

You quickly learn that one of the things you need to bring to the job is humility. I have friends and family who are teachers

and headteachers, and they've kept me grounded with regards to what going through a school inspection feels like. For some, it's very stressful, which is why we must be careful to induce as little anxiety as possible during the process.

Most inspectors are very aware of how difficult inspections can feel, hence we have many discussions and work alongside leaders throughout the process. The building of that relationship starts with the initial phone call, during which the inspector should be trying to put the headteacher's mind at ease. In subsequent email exchanges I'll invite questions and try to maintain an open dialogue as much as I can. I'm generally keen to accept any form of information leaders want to give me, and allow them to have their say at each stage so that they feel properly consulted.

## COUNSELLORS AND MAGISTRATES

To any heads out there thinking of applying to Ofsted themselves, I'd say give it a go. We have many enthusiastic and passionate practitioners in our workforce, but we'll always need inspectors who fully understand the daily pressures and challenges school leaders face.

School leaders perform an awful lot of roles. I remember hearing the educationalist Ted Wragg speak many years ago about the 14 roles of a headteacher, which included things like 'counsellor', 'magistrate', 'Butlins red coat', 'property designer' before you even got to their responsibility for raising the quality of teaching and learning. Working as Ofsted Inspectors, serving practitioners are well placed to understand the pressures experienced by other serving heads.



**Lesley Butcher is a member of Her Majesty's Inspectorate in Ofsted's North East, Yorkshire and Humber region**



# STREAMLINE YOUR DATA

Still manually pasting your data into Word documents? It's time to automate and simplify, says Joshua Perry...

**D**ata can be a sensitive topic in schools. The word conjures up raw emotions; teachers may feel like they're generating tons of it, yet never seeing the benefit in the classroom.

Leaders can lose hours to crunching numbers in complex spreadsheets, all to satisfy a group of governors or a MAT central team, and students may find the process of being tested regularly somewhat stressful. It's no wonder, then, that some school staff may start to question why they even need to care about data in the first place.

In theory, it shouldn't be controversial to say that every school should have a management dashboard that brings together its key metrics in one place. Surely this is something every leader of every organisation wants? And yet in many schools this remains an elusive goal.

In fairness, I rarely come across people with a blanket dislike of data. Instead, people talk to me about anxieties in four broad areas – workload, technology, complexity and reliability. What follows are tips that will, I hope, persuade you that your school improvement strategy should have data at its heart.

## BEARABLE DATA COLLECTION

Many teachers will tell you they lose their personal life (and sanity) in the process of maintaining complex assessment tracking systems. James Pembroke, a primary data expert, recently pointed out in a blog post that '30 objectives for 30 pupils is 900 assessments' – and that's before we even broach the question of how frequently the system requires updating.

If you're re-evaluating performance against each objective every half term, you're asking a teacher to make (and substantiate) 5,400 judgements in a year, just for one class. It's a wonder some teachers find time to teach at all.

## FORMATIVE VS. SUMMATIVE

To be clear, I'm a fan of tracking systems, particularly when used for formative purposes and designed to ensure teachers benefit from their existence. However, I get nervous when schools use them to closely link together their formative and summative assessment processes.

I'd argue that formative data, whether created through teacher assessments or quizzes, should exist only for the benefit of the classroom teacher. As soon as you ask that teacher to aggregate the same data into summative judgments you create new, and possibly perverse incentives. After all, what teacher is going to enter completely accurate formative teacher assessments in an area where the class is unexpectedly underperforming if he or she knows that the same data will become a single summative number on a management report for the head or governors?

Crucially, it's the requirement to enter data in every area to feed a top-level summative judgment that creates so much workload that gives data a bad name.

## WHAT QUESTIONS NEED ANSWERING?

I have a confession to make – I've never read a 50 page data report. Literally never. I might have digested the executive summary, or skipped to the bits on my burning issues, and yet thick volumes containing table after table live on in schools, with much of the workload burden coming from generating the data to fill said reports. You can liberate yourself from this by instead asking what questions need answering.

For example, which of your key curriculum areas needs most management focus? Where in the school are you having issues with attendance? If a report doesn't answer a question you





could act on, just don't produce it. You'll have fewer reports and more action in no time.

## USE TECHNOLOGY

Some of my favourite recent technological innovations strip time out of the data collection process. The MARK gradebook from Hodder Education's RS Assessment ([rsassessment.com](http://rsassessment.com)), for example, lets children sit tests online, then handles all the marking within the system. That means no marking whatsoever for teachers.

Another clever system, No More Marking ([nomoremarking.com](http://nomoremarking.com)), takes an innovative approach to writing assessment. Instead of teachers marking scripts one by one using a complex rubric, No More Marking takes an approach known as comparative judgment. You upload your class's work

into the system, and then teachers rate work in pairs, selecting which is better. The system then ranks all submitted work on the same scale, using multiple judgments per piece of work and a clever algorithm to do the heavy lifting. Amazingly, it can be quicker and more reliable than conventional marking.

## AUTOMATE EVERYTHING

Many schools still use systems that require manual data uploads to be configured or maintained. I think this is wrong, and that schools shouldn't stand for it any longer.

The technology now exists to automate a link between a school's MIS and any other system – so demand your suppliers do that for you.

## COLLATE YOUR KPIS

Suppliers are increasingly offering management dashboards that collect and aggregate management data for leaders, governors and trustees. I'm a big fan of creating identical reports for as many audiences as possible, but if your budget can't stretch to the necessary software, you may find that you can reduce report production time with a bit of Excel jiggery pokery. Numbers want to live in a spreadsheet or database, so if you're still pasting measures into multiple Word documents, you could strip days out of your data collection processes with a little bit of automation.

“Many teachers will tell you they lose their personal life in the process of maintaining complex assessment tracking systems”

## STICK TO STANDARDISED

MATs have already wrestled with how to increase the accuracy and comparability of their assessment data. Increasingly, I'm seeing MATs build standardised assessments into their processes, either alongside teacher judgments as a reliable and objective reference point, or even as a replacement for teacher assessments.

## THINK BEYOND THE ACADEMIC

When talking about school data, the conversation can be dominated by reading, writing and maths. However, the questions you must ask to run a great school clearly stretch into other areas, so consider whether your data dashboard should cover them too. There's attendance and exclusions, of course – but it's also worth thinking about things such as finance and wellbeing.

I'd always encourage schools to include surplus/deficit and budget variance on their high-level data dashboard, since many school improvement decisions will link to the question of whether you can afford a particular initiative. Innovative edtech companies like EduKit ([edukit.org.uk](http://edukit.org.uk)) are starting to offer ways of tracking wellbeing across primary schools.

To summarise, data-driven schools needn't be dreadful to work in. Whatever your starting point, there's always more room to streamline your processes, automate your data collection and simplify your reports. Data hasn't always had the best reputation in recent years, but by taking some savvy steps, you may find your school can learn to love it.



**Joshua Perry is director of Assembly – a non-profit schools data platform incubated by Ark**

**Ventures and the NEON Foundation which offers analytics and integration services to schools and MATs.**

@assembly\_edu

[assembly.education/platform](http://assembly.education/platform)



# “I SEE THE **ZOMBIFICATION** OF OUR PROFESSION”

Scripted lessons are being touted in certain circles as the solution for all of our education system's ills - but Kevin Rooney, for one, is having none of it...

**H**ave you heard of American educationalist Siegfried Engelmann yet? If not, you will soon enough, as his ideas are already starting to impact on English schools - one of which is 'scripted teaching.' The thinking behind it goes something like this: too often, teachers are unclear and ambiguous in their instruction and explanations. Thus, due to poor teaching, pupils take on misconceptions and don't make as much progress as they should.

Scripted teaching solves this problem, claim its advocates. Carefully planned lessons designed around small learning increments aim to improve progress by eliminating any potential for misinterpretation. Centrally produced plans are distributed to teachers, who read out and deliver lessons from the scripts. The opportunity for educators to digress and make mistakes will be reduced. Instead, standardised scripts will ensure consistency, structure and quality assurance.

## **GROWING SUPPORT**

A growing number of schools are adopting scripted teaching, particularly those in MATs - and perhaps surprisingly, *TES* has reported that it's becoming popular with plenty of teachers. Notable supporters include John Blake, head of social policy and education at Policy Exchange, and Mark LeHain, director of Parents and Teachers for Excellence, who argue that a prescriptive approach is necessary to ensure pupils get the right progression in their learning.

Blake asserts that experts working

outside the classroom to design lessons and materials for teachers to follow reduces bad teaching, and has the potential to provide every child with a consistently high standard of education. Proponents further insist that the scripts can be precisely calibrated to ensure that knowledge is imparted efficiently and unambiguously. 'Script teaching' presently exists on a spectrum, and is generally considered better suited to certain age groups and subjects than others, but with the emergence of academy chains this is starting to change. These institutions generate their own resources centrally before disseminating them to up to dozens of schools and hundreds of teachers. In some schools, standardised script teaching is optional; in others, it's compulsory.

## **CONSISTENT QUALITY**

Arguing in favour of this new approach at a recent Academy of Ideas Education Forum debate on the topic, educationalist Kris Boulton asked, "Can we really trust half a million separate teachers to write their own lesson plans?" For supporters of scripted teaching, the answer would seem to be 'No'.

Boulton contrasted the 'hit and miss approach' of half a million teachers doing their own thing with the advantages of using a standardised script to deliver instruction sequences that have been refined and rigorously field tested over multiple years, and produced on the basis of expert research that individual teachers could never replicate. To not move towards standardised script teaching is akin to rolling the dice with our children's

“In conveying the love and understanding of our subject to pupils we must be able to exercise judgement”





future, he said.

John Blake recently built on this 'moral duty' argument in a Policy Exchange paper (see [tinyurl.com/pex-revolution](http://tinyurl.com/pex-revolution)) which stated that the only way of delivering on the promise of the 2014 National Curriculum is to move to scripted teaching, adding that scripts could reduce workload and liberate teachers from the drudgery of having to prepare individual lesson plans.

## MISTRUST AND UNIFORMITY

Should we welcome or reject scripted teaching? I have to confess that the prospect of teaching to a standardised lesson plan fills me with horror – so much so that if compelled to do so, I'd leave the profession.

For me, this approach represents the antithesis of everything I think it is to be a teacher. The move to embrace scripts is driven by a mistrust of teachers. It rests on the assumption that we aren't professional or qualified enough to design and teach our own lessons. It will erode teacher autonomy and sow further insecurity in an already insecure profession.

What is our model of a teacher? With standardised teaching, it's that of an automaton. In contrast, I believe that when we enter the teaching profession we're being inducted into a community of scholars and subject specialists. In conveying the love and understanding of our subject to pupils, we must be able to exercise judgement and discretion in exactly how we transmit knowledge and ideas.

Teaching is a relational activity in which we get to know our students as human beings. Quite often during lessons I'll go off piste on all sorts of tangents. Sometimes these learning adventures won't necessarily help students pass a test, but so what? If I think it appropriate to nourish pupils' intellectual curiosity, or answer questions not directly related to the lesson plan, I'll do so. Scripted teaching discourages deviation or wider exploration; it tells us what to teach and how.

## LIBERATION OR DISASTER?

The culture in schools today, encouraged by intense accountability measures, tends towards teaching to tests and improved exam results at all costs. In this context, a desperate search is on for the silver bullet that will consistently deliver those optimal final grades. Many at the top of the educational tree see scripted teaching as the answer, but I contend that the rise of the 'scripted teacher' isn't a panacea. Indeed, in the midst of a retention and recruitment crisis, I fear it'll lower the intellectual bar and accelerate deprofessionalisation.

The reification of scripted lessons redefines teaching from an art to a science. In essence, we've arrived at a moment where the agency and humanity of the teacher in the classroom is being subordinated to the iron cage of rationality gone mad. Those pushing scripted teaching argue it's about putting in structures to support young teachers. But where they see support, I see teachers being put in shackles and the zombification of our profession.

The aim of a teacher should be to enable and encourage our students to take their place in the world as autonomous young citizens who can think critically. If we're to make that happen we need the freedom to teach and engage in the free play of intellects

between teacher and pupil in a two way exchange. Scripted teaching restricts our ability to do that. That's why I think of it not as a liberation, but a disaster. There's a lot at stake with this issue, because it reflects a wider struggle over what we think education is for. Let the battle of ideas over our model of what it is to be a teacher in 2018 begin!

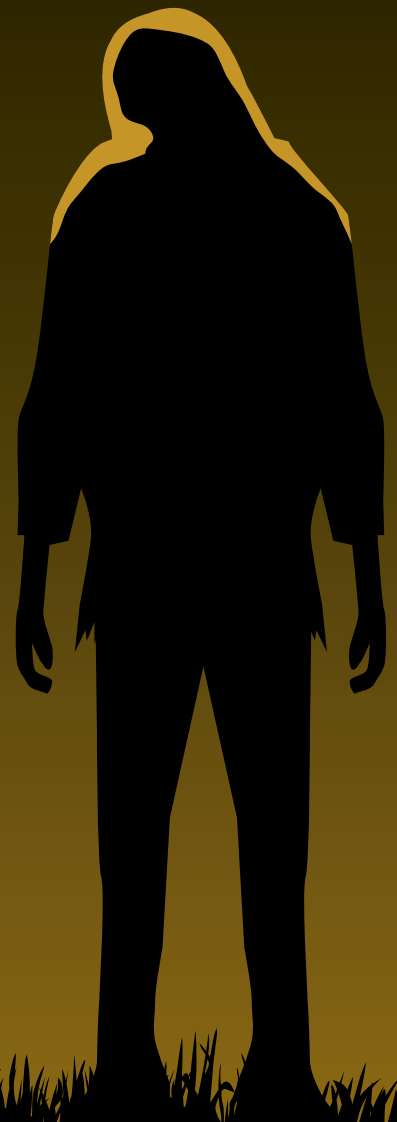


**Kevin Rooney is a teacher, author, and convenor of the Academy of Ideas Education Forum,**

**which gathers monthly to discuss trends in educational policy, theory and practice**

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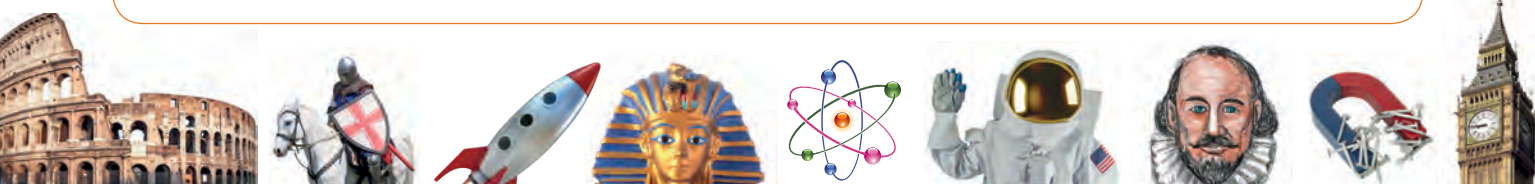
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**Maddy Barnes, English Consultant, Assistant Head Teacher**



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# The inside story

Marshall Minibus tells about its mission to furnish schools with the transport that's right for them – including vehicles that every member of staff can drive

## DRIVER REQUIREMENTS

It could be said that as they stand, rules around driving licences discriminate against the young. Many primary schools across the country are having real difficulty finding appropriately aged staff to drive the school minibus without them first having to undergo an expensive and time-consuming D1 driving test.

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**Chris Lavender from Marshall handing over the keys**

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The question of which path to go down is one that needs careful consideration. There are plenty of companies out there that can offer valuable guidance, and others that will be less helpful. Ultimately, the decision has to be made around the individual requirements of your school.

Many minibus suppliers will have a vested interest in specific product types, which can influence the advice they offer. At Marshall Minibus we are entirely impartial, and happy to supply the right type of vehicle for you, whether that's a more traditional manufacturer-built offering or a purpose-built lightweight vehicle.

## WHO SHOULD YOU TURN TO?

Choose your supplier carefully. If it's clear that they're trying to sell you additional services that you don't necessarily want, ask yourself if they're the right partner for you.

In addition to offering free and impartial advice, Marshall Minibus is able to supply

any type, make or size of minibus based on your requirements. Our inclusive service and maintenance packages will help you to stay compliant, whichever route you choose. Minibus training is available from a number of different sources, so shop around. In many cases, your local authority will be able to offer Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS) training at a fraction of the cost charged by commercial competitors.

We don't pretend this decision is easy. There are many factors to consider, and while we

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**For more information, contact Chris Lavender on 01480 220 444, email [info@marshall-minibus.co.uk](mailto:info@marshall-minibus.co.uk), follow @MarshallMinibus or visit [www.marshall-minibus.co.uk](http://www.marshall-minibus.co.uk)**

**1909**

David Marshall leases a small workshop from Cambridge University and starts hiring out and maintaining cars

**1926**

David Marshall's son Arthur, having learned to fly, opens an aerodrome that goes on to become the foundation of today's Marshall family-owned Cambridge Airport

**1991**

Marshall Leasing is established and proceeds to build a leased fleet of 6,300 vehicles, including Marshall Minibus

**2015**

Marshall Motor Holdings PLC is floated on the London Stock Exchange



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# Buildings & Facilities

“WE WANT  
TO MAKE OUR  
SCHOOL AS GREEN  
AS POSSIBLE”

Paul Jackson explains how applying for the Trees for Schools programme helped his school's environment to flourish...

**M**anorfield Primary is an inner-city London school with lots of outdoor space, but that space is pretty grey. Our pupils don't often get the chance to enjoy the outdoors, especially in the local area where there isn't much green space, so we wanted to make the school as green as possible and give the children the chance to experience and enjoy nature. With shrinking school budgets, we're keen to work with any partners who can help us to do this, so the offer of free trees from Trees for Schools – a programme funded by Defra and delivered in partnership with the Woodland Trust – was great for us.

I can go with my own children to Epping Forest for a day, or any of the other large London parks, and they'll get to experience nature, but not all children have those same opportunities. Even touching a tree is something that many of the children at Manorfield haven't experienced for themselves. Those little things we take for granted – catching a falling leaf,



seeing a caterpillar on a tree branch – can all enrich a child's language and their understanding of the world around them.

The children have really enjoyed getting their hands and feet dirty by planting and caring for the trees we've received. Ordinarily, the children we teach won't have the chance to do things like dig a hole and look for worms, let alone plant a tree. Through Trees for Schools, they've been able to experience a real sense of ownership from seeing a whip they've planted grow from week to week while thinking "This is something I created!"

It can be hard for parents living in cities to give their children access to nature, which is why it's important that this can be done at school. The best part is seeing the children's excitement. Having seen the process of tree planting, they'll ask what happens next, how much water trees need and get to provide that water themselves. This can filter into their lives outside of school, encouraging them to become the kind of people who look after their environment and persuade others to do the same.

Many schools in Tower Hamlets are sadly in areas where levels of air pollution exceed safety levels, so the more we can do to counter that, the cleaner our air will be too. I'd love for our school to be carbon neutral – we're not there yet, but with every tree we plant we get closer to that goal. Besides trees, I'd also like to make it so that the children can access other green spaces such as mini woodland, fruit trees and a wildflower meadow within the school grounds.

The local community has responded to our trees initiative really well. We already had an Edible Playground close to where children get picked up and dropped off, which has helped to engage parents and other members of our local area. More generally, the trees have made our premises feel more welcoming. When people see a school taking care of itself, be it through applying a lick of paint or planting trees, it shows that it cares – about both the environment and the children it teaches.

**Paul Jackson is headteacher of Manorfield Primary School**



@TreesforCities



[treesforcities.org/trees-for-schools](https://treesforcities.org/trees-for-schools)



## PUSH YOUR BOUNDARIES

Business manager Philip Burton shares how his school went about replacing a set of fencing that had long outlived its usefulness...

**T**he fencing of our medium-sized primary school was the first major project I tackled after starting here. Not only was it quite old and in need of repair, it wasn't especially high. The risk of intruder-related incidents is fairly low, due to the school's location behind a housing estate and backing on to farmers' fields – but in practice, anyone outside could have got past our fencing quite easily.

The first thing we had to do was settle on the type of border security we wanted. After some discussion, the SLT's original intention had been to install automatic gates at the front of the school, but after the costs proved prohibitive, we looked at what alternatives there might be for getting what we needed in terms of security and safety and value.

We received some suggestions for recommended specialists from two local network groups in Leicestershire that we're part of, but I also happened to receive a marketing approach from a company based in Leicester that none of the other schools had heard of. We ended up inviting a couple of the known companies along with this other company, and it turned out our SLT liked the latter's solution best.

We then consulted with our School Council – the kids – about what they wanted to see and also spoke to parents, who'd expressed some concern that we'd end up looking like a prison. The other thing we did, which can sometimes be forgotten, was check in with the

residential properties that neighbour the school. I went knocking on doors, explaining what would be happening at the school and what the impact was likely to be.

We ended up going with a form of mesh fencing around 8 feet high that can be seen through and looks far better than what we had before. Our field comes right up to the school car park, so in place of the automatic gate we'd looked at we fenced around the field. Anyone can enter through the school's main gate, but it's not possible to get from there into the school or the playing fields.

The installation was done in school time, with hardly any disruption. It's often assumed that this type of work can only be done during the summer holidays, but if managed properly, it can be completed with the kids on site. Doing that enabled us to drive the price down a bit, as they were able to come straight in and get on with things. It helps to be cheeky with contractors – they want the job as much as you want it doing.

We'd originally been looking at spending close to £40,000 just to have the gate work done. After some negotiation, the total cost of the fencing we had installed came to just over £11,000. We have a solution that works, our stakeholders are happy, and we've been able to use the money we saved on installing a new ICT suite.

**Philip Burton is business manager at Hallbrook Primary School in Broughton Astley, Leicestershire**



# Do primary schools have a hygiene problem?

The standards of cleanliness in primary school toilets is causing severe issues for pupils and teachers alike, says Kevin Starr

**I**n May this year, Essity published a report titled 'Bottom of the Class' that presents strong evidence to suggest that a combination of poor toilet facilities and poor hygiene habits among children in primary schools are having an negative impact on pupils' education, health and wellbeing.

Those findings are based on a series of interviews conducted earlier in the year by YouGov which involved 400 teachers and 500 parents and children. When putting the report together, we saw three key issues emerge – that hygiene levels in primary schools are poor; that children aren't learning essential hygiene habits early enough; and that children are actively avoiding using toilets at school, with the result that they develop unhealthy behaviours from an early age.

The findings further indicate that the amount of time spent by teachers on cleaning children who are unable to clean themselves, or even cleaning school toilets after children have used them, is quite staggering. We've calculated that staff are spending over a million hours per year on doing that, equating to around £11 million in labour costs.

Quite often the interviewees would talk of primary toilets lacking toilet roll and soap – in some instances, teachers were even buying soap personally and bringing it in themselves. It would seem that the general standard of many primary school washrooms is putting children off going into them, which is in turn having big knock-on effects.

We found that just over 10% of the pupils interviewed avoided using them each day, while around 40% of primary school teachers told us that children known to avoid visiting the toilet at school were unable to properly concentrate in class. That loss of learning isn't even the whole story, with children who 'hold on' in this way obviously running the risk of wetting or

soiling themselves, or even developing long-term bladder and bowel issues.

We're now embarking on the next phase of what we're calling the School Hygiene Essentials Initiative, which will see us organise discussions with schools, LAs and other educational organisations and reach a collective understanding of what will improve the hygiene of primary school toilets so that we can look at possible solutions. We're well aware that school budgets are maxed out for many, so we don't see it is a case of simply throwing money at this issue. It's perhaps more about trying to find an educational approach to resolving the problem.

Once we've completed those next steps we'll look to implement some pilots over a six-month period with a

number of schools across the UK, measure the (hopefully positive) impact of any proposed solutions and then move forward from there. The aim is to take solutions to government and other interested parties, with a view to potentially rolling out new national standards to primary schools across the country.

**Kevin Starr is the managing director of Essity – a producer of hygiene and health products under a number of brands, including Cushelle, Tempo and Lotus**

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# “THE CHILDREN ARE NO LONGER CRAMMED IN”

We find out how freeing up space in a previously packed learning environment had a transformative effect for one London primary

**A**s demand for school places continues to grow, many existing schools have found themselves having to dramatically increase the size of their premises. Five years ago, that was the situation facing Ivydale Primary in London, though it was in good company, being among 12 schools in the local area earmarked for expansion by Southwark Council as part of an ambitious school places programme.

For headteacher Helen Ingham, this scaling up in size couldn't come soon enough: “We're a full form entry primary school with around 550 children, and up until July last year all 550 were sharing one four-storey traditional Victorian building. When we were first approached by Southwark about the possibility of expanding, we were told a site had been

identified about 200 yards away from our existing building. After a lot of thought, we decided it was the right option for ensuring the needs of our local community could be met.”

The plan was to move years 4 to 6 of Ivydale's pupil population into the new building, while the school's nursery through to year 3 remained where they were – albeit with rather more space to call on than before.

## COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

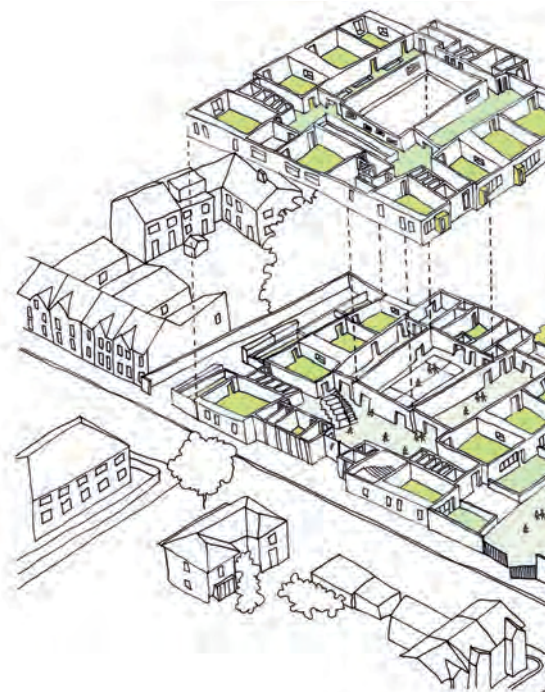
With the local community showing considerable interest in the project, both parents and children were given opportunities to contribute ideas and become part of the process. Consultations were carried out and the children were

invited to make their views known.

Leading efforts in this area was project architect Shoko Kijima of Hawkins\Brown, who recalls that, “We assisted with assemblies, introducing fairly early on the notion that the older children would be moving into this new building. We wanted to make sure the children were familiar with what was happening and kept informed.”

Over a series of workshops, Ivydale's pupils were surveyed on what they liked about the school's existing facilities and what they wanted to see from the new space, while also getting some hands-on lessons in engineering principles. “We took part in the school's science and engineering week,” Kijima recalls, “looking at how triangles are used to lend strength to structures, making models of the Olympic Stadium and testing them with notebooks.”





**Left – Ivydale’s interiors were designed to maximise the amount of natural light**

## STEPPING STONE

According to Helen Ingham, “There were two things I insisted we have in the new building. One was a staircase that could double up as seating and enable the school to come together in a different kind of way. The other was to have a large and small school hall side by side, with a sliding partition between them so we could make flexible use of the space.”

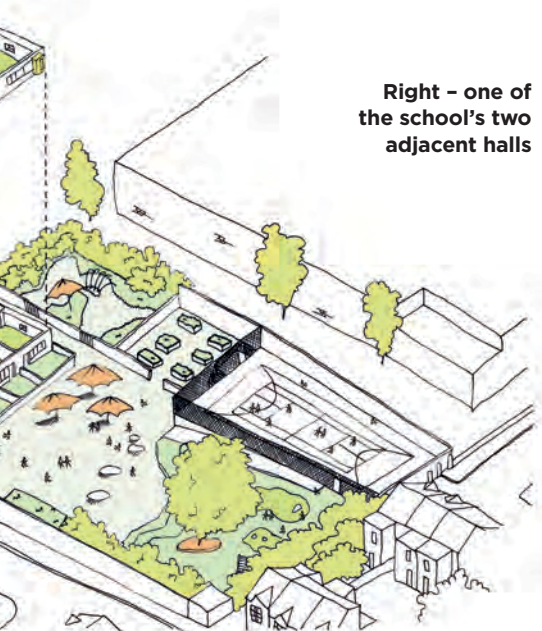
Ivydale’s new extension was also notable for being designed with a particular group in mind. “It’s quite unique in that it’s a building specifically for KS2 children,” Kijima explains, “designed as a stepping stone between KS1 and secondary school. We wanted the children to feel a bit more grown up than their KS1 peers, and more inclined to look after the building a bit more.”

As the project came together over the following two and a half years, the choices made at the planning stage remained largely intact. “We made sure to retain certain things that were integral to the design, such as the circulation spaces that could also serve as breakout areas,” says Kijima. “Aside from incorporating sprinklers into the design after planning and having the main stairway and central atrium space go through some slight iterations, the design otherwise remained largely unchanged.”

Helen Ingham similarly remembers the project as one largely free of complications. With the works taking place at a separate location there was minimal disruption to the school, but this in turn gave rise to a







Right – one of the school's two adjacent halls



challenge of a different kind: "There was a risk of the project becoming 'detached'," remembers Ingham. "We felt it important to keep the children involved throughout the project, rather than having them see it as this thing happening at the end of the road. We wanted them to be aware that it was *their* school which was being built."

## CALMING AND INVITING

As the works progressed, the school sought to keep the children involved by organising regular class visits to the site and held a safety poster competition, the winners of which got to see their entries prominently displayed along the site's exterior hoardings.

What was Ingham's verdict once the works were complete? "When moving into a new space it takes a while to settle in and figure out what's working and what isn't" she says. "However, this is the third school I've worked in that's seen a rebuild, and it's been by far the smoothest in terms of the

building working exactly as we want it to."

I ask Kijima what she sees as the building's most notable aspect. "The internal environment is very calming and inviting," she replies. "The spaces we designed were all intended to inspire feelings of openness, while still having connected views throughout the classrooms. Everything from the colour palette to the use of exposed Cross Laminated Timber and the amount of natural light helps make for a calm, learning environment."

Almost one year on from the building's opening in September 2017, what impact has it had? "The biggest difference is the extra space we now have," says Ingham, "which has allowed us to work in a much more flexible way – teachers can now actually lead activities in different spaces."

"We also saw almost immediately an improvement in behaviour. Because the children are no longer crammed in and jostling for space, their general behaviour around school has really improved, thanks to them having a far better environment to work in."



@hawkins\_brown



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*Shoko Kijima explains how a children's illustration fed into the building's aesthetics*

"I've always turned to children's book illustrations for inspiration. For this project I wanted an image associated with nature and woodland, given the school's name. After extensive searching I found 'The Fox in the Forest' by the author and illustrator Julia Woolf, which we really liked. The fox in the centre of the image seems very independent, but also friendly, determined and curious. The image conveys this sense of warmth with its green tones, which we thought would work well with the ideas we already had and correlate well to the school's ethos and values.

We took cues from Julia's use of colour proportions, the image's composition and the diagonal elements to inform the building's colour palette and other visual aspects. I'm happy to say she's impressed by the building and really likes it, which is lovely."



# Give your school a **NEW LICK OF PAINT**

Peter Howard considers how the right paint finish within a primary school can serve to enhance pupils' experiences

1

## **DON'T UNDERESTIMATE COLOUR**

Colour can have significant effects on mood, productivity, health and wellbeing. Research commissioned by Dulux Trade in April 2017 and conducted by 3GEM Research and Insights found that 85% of UK teachers agreed that a vibrant space can inspire teachers and pupils alike.

2

## **WHY REDECORATE?**

A primary school's interior spaces and surroundings should ultimately aim to encourage concentration, creativity and learning. When deciding on a new scheme, make a point of selecting paint specifications that are variously light, bright and perhaps even playful.

3

## **SETTLE ON A SCHEME**

To find a colour scheme that works for your school, it's important to first understand how your teachers and pupils interact with and move around the building. Are there areas that might benefit from bright, stimulating colours and others where more muted shades might be more suitable?

4

## **EXPLORE THE OPTIONS**

With the upper spend limit for schools set at £1,300 per square metre, many educational establishments assume they can't deliver good results within their budget – but by exploring the range of options available, you'll be able to maximise the benefits that redecorating can offer.

5

## **DON'T OVERSTIMULATE**

Younger pupils new to your school may appreciate brighter colours, but your main objective should be to encourage fun and play without overstimulating. Clean, neutral colours complemented by vibrantly decorated feature walls and doors are ideal for learning environments.

6

## **USE NATURAL LIGHT**

It's possible to make a classroom seem brighter and lighter by harnessing natural light and reflecting it back into the room. Dulux Trade's Diamond Matt Light and Space, for example, requires 22% less light energy\* than other surfaces, which could afford schools the opportunity to switch to using lower wattage bulbs.

7

## **EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED**

Paints used in corridors and other shared spaces must withstand high volumes of movement and a rigorous cleaning regime. Certain paint formulations will actively repel stains, while offering improved durability. The need for fewer retouches during the building's lifespan will help reduce long term costs.

8

## **OBSERVE THE REGULATIONS**

Take note of Building Regulations Part M (BS8300), which stipulate a minimum difference in light reflectance of 30 points between two adjoining surfaces in new build projects. For accessibility purposes, colour schemes also need to clearly distinguish between walls, floors, doorframes and ceilings.

9

## **USE TOOLS**

Specifiers can call upon a number of different tools such as the Dulux Trade Colour Schemer (see panel), which helps specifiers maximise the inclusivity and usability of their spaces through the creation of colour schemes that are both aesthetically pleasing and compliant with official visual contrast guidelines.

10

## **TAKE RESPONSIBILITY**

Provided they're specified correctly, the right paint finish can contribute to the sustainability of a school in its composition, ease of maintenance and longevity. Lower Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) content and embodied carbon levels are key to minimising the impact of any paint choice on the environment.



**Peter Howard is public sector lead at AkzoNobel, makers of Dulux Trade**

@DuluxTrade

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







## “THEY WERE ABLE TO PUT FORWARD THEIR VISION FOR THE SPACES”

HOW A REDECORATING PROJECT AT ONE TELFORD SCHOOL INVITED PUPILS TO SUBMIT SOME IDEAS OF THEIR OWN

### VIBRANCY

Recognising that primary schools often require support to achieve the optimum finish on any refurbishment project, Dulux Trade launched Smarter Spaces in 2015 – an initiative to help teachers and pupils thrive with the aid of colour and design. Working with schools around the UK, the Smarter Spaces team create spaces that help transform schools and classrooms. Lawley Primary School in Telford is one such project. Working closely with the school and its Year 5 pupils, the Dulux Smarter Spaces team created a refreshing design for the communal areas that was not only aesthetically pleasing, but also able to enhance the pupils' experiences of school.

With the introduction of a stimulating wall feature, the school's entrance hall and main corridor have been transformed.

### DURABILITY

Utilising varying shades of blue and yellow, the wall features a splash of green in its colour-blocking pattern to accompany nature-led images designed by the pupils. The warm, neutral tone chosen for the other wall areas incorporate a hint of peach that complements the pastel hue of the blue and yellow, further enhancing the vibrancy of the green. Dulux Trade Diamond Matt water-based emulsion paint was specified for the project due to its superior durability, with Diamond technology from Dulux Trade making it 10 times tougher than the Vinyl Matt and Vinyl Silk ranges.

The inclusion of Stain Repellent Technology ensures that the paint range is ideal for high traffic areas, such as busy school corridors, since it can be cleaned without the continuous need for touch ups – thus prolonging the lifetime of the paint.

### INPUT

This use of a more hard-wearing and durable type of paint ultimately helps to reduce the school's long-term building maintenance costs.

Another key contributing factor to the successful transformation of Lawley Primary School's interiors was the incorporation of design input from the pupils themselves. They were invited to put forward their own vision for how the school's spaces could potentially look, and in some cases their design ideas were acted upon, resulting in a colourful welcome for their teachers and fellow pupils as they enter the building each day.

Conceiving a comfortable, visually appealing space that can support and enrich pupils' learning is vital to the success of any educational project – with colour playing a key component of any design scheme.

## FINISHING TOUCH

Make your redecorating project and any subsequent touch ups go more smoothly with these PSM product picks...



For those hard to reach areas of the school hall, the Henchman Platform Ladder is just the thing. Available in 6' to 12' height variations with one or three adjustable legs, it's designed for safe working at height and comes into its own when used on sloping or uneven terrain, its claw-like feet working to 'grab' soft ground and prevent sudden slips.

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



Take the pain out of creating effective colour schemes with the help of the Dulux Trade Colour Schemer. Users submit the intended outcome of their decorating project and are presented with a curated selection of colour schemes appropriate to the education sector. Having made their selection, they can then order a colour accurate A3 printed mood board for sharing their scheme with others.

[specifier.duluxtradepaintexpert.co.uk](http://specifier.duluxtradepaintexpert.co.uk)



The paint applied to your walls will hopefully serve you for years, but you'll likely want to keep a set of heavy duty brushes on standby, just in case. This set of four Hamilton Perfection Satin Tipped natural bristle paintbrushes can be had from B&Q for £22, and are just the thing for applying solvent-based coatings to skirting boards, door panels and windowsills.

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



# “WE’VE OVERCOME MAJOR CHALLENGES TO ENSURE EVERY CHILD HAS A PLACE”

Joe Chell outlines how one local authority has helped its schools cope with the pressures of a rapidly growing population...

In the face of some of the highest demand for additional school places in the country, Essex School Organisation Service (ESOS) has worked with school leaders to create a strategy that will deliver twice as many new school places than any other LA has planned between 2017 and 2021, investing £190M over the next three years. Despite the headlines you may have read, it is possible to build the right number of school places, in the right areas, at the right time. Over the last five years Essex County Council has transformed the way it plans for and delivers new school places, overcoming some major challenges in the process, in order to ensure every child in Essex has a place to go to school. Alongside expansions to schools in every area of the county, the last few years have seen seven new primary schools open across Essex, with scope for up to 16 more over the next decade.

## COLCHESTER

Colchester Borough Council presently plans for and oversees the building of nearly 1,000 new homes a year. That’s the kind of growth that could warrant a new primary school being opened annually, and can result in schools having to admit a high number of pupils mid-year.

In 2015, ESOS together with colleagues from the council’s Admissions Team embarked upon a major project in conjunction with Colchester’s 44 local primary schools to identify the potential for both new schools and school expansions. We collectively devised a strategy to deliver the necessary school infrastructure ahead of time, thereby ensuring that children moving into the town had somewhere to go to school while reducing levels of over-admission.

Headteachers and governing bodies

were able to confidently discuss their expansion proposals with us, knowing that there would be capital investment in high quality accommodation and revenue support for their schools as they grew. This work culminated in a plan that we’re currently delivering to provide enough school places in the town until 2023. That includes three new primary schools (all two-form entry), four school expansions (adding a further 875 places overall) and a number of bulge classes, where appropriate.

Growth in Colchester hasn’t slowed down. In fact, our intelligence indicates that there are double the number of primary school pupils moving into some of the town’s new housing developments than we would usually expect, so we’re planning accordingly. We’re continuing to hold discussions with the schools involved, ensuring that headteachers can help us formulate an appropriate strategy and provide us with live information that we can use to refine our plans and provide extra spaces.

## CHELMSFORD

In Chelmsford, a new solution was required to meet the forecast demand for primary and secondary school places. ESOS ran a presumption process (see [tinyurl.com/school-presumption](https://tinyurl.com/school-presumption)) to find a sponsor for the county’s first all-through school at

Beaulieu – a major urban extension to the north of the city.

Essex County Council had successfully negotiated a new school site and a significant financial contribution from the developers towards the new school provision. To make the most of the funding available, ESOS and our education colleagues investigated newly opened and opening all-through schools throughout the region. At the same time, our Infrastructure Delivery Service evaluated the potential financial efficiencies in building an all-through school, to make sure that we could deliver state of the art facilities within the funding level available.

The presumption process resulted in the Chelmsford Learning Partnership multi academy trust being appointed as sponsor for the new all-through school. ESOS continued to work with the trust as they became involved in decisions concerning the new school’s finish and setup. The funding agreement has since been signed and primary school places are now being offered for 2018 entry, with Year 7 admissions commencing in September 2019. The local community is





genuinely excited about this new offer in Chelmsford, and the academy trust is embracing the education advantages and opportunities that could be realised.

We continue to look at different options for delivering school places. Beaulieu is a good example of how a slightly different approach provided a great value project, which was delivered without the need to borrow money and resulted in the setting up of a school with great facilities. Having the teaching profession strongly represented on our Local Plans and planning applications has meant that we're more likely to obtain appropriate education infrastructure and funding, and that we don't miss opportunities to innovate.

### PLANS AND COLLABORATIONS

The foundation for our provision of new school places in Essex has been our 10-year Plan (see [tinyurl.com/esos-10y-plan](https://tinyurl.com/esos-10y-plan)). Basing this plan on solid information has enabled the LA to secure the highest levels of funding from both central government and developers, to the extent that Newhall School in Harlow, for example – due to open in September 2018 – has been fully funded by a developer.

Having a strong plan in place has also allowed the LA to be far more robust in its support or opposition to new housing developments, as well as helping it make strong cases for land and financial

contributions from developers. In the absence of such a plan, we would have been unable influence housing plans or secure vital land and funding for educational purposes.

We couldn't have formulated and published said plan without the guidance and assistance of schools. We strive to keep an open channel for dialogue with all schools, be they maintained or an academy, so that all children in Essex are given the best possible experience of education.

This collaborative approach provides clarity to all involved, and means we can benefit from the knowledge and ideas of education experts when planning our investment in the buildings they'll end up using. Our schools are involved in the initial planning, right through to delivery and handover of the new school accommodation – one of our key success criteria being the satisfaction of schools with the learning environments we provide. This way, headteachers are able to plan and budget proactively for changes in demand for school places.

ESOS is also working with smaller schools in areas of surplus capacity and helping them remain sustainable. With closure an option that nobody wants to pursue, we've explored amalgamation, federation, changes to admissions arrangements and other approaches so that they can continue offering a great education and communities get to keep an asset that's dear to them.

### OUR WORK WITH ACADEMIES

**There are approximately 500 schools in Essex. Over 250 are academies, with many more undergoing conversion. ESOS maintains strong relationships with schools when they become academies, and continues working with them to plan for and deliver school places in the same way as with mainstream schools.**

**We've previously advised academy trusts on how to maximise the gains from betterment projects offered by housing developers, supported their efforts to secure condition improvement funding and worked with them on various planning matters.**



**Joe Chell is the Head of School Organisation and Place Planning at Essex County Council**





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## HOW TO DISPOSE OF YESTERDAY'S TECH

Gary Spracklen looks at where your old computers should go once their best years are behind them...

The speed at which technology changes is phenomenal, becoming ever more flexible, mobile and – critically for those holding the purse-strings of tightening school budgets – cheaper. Gone are expensive servers with ongoing support contracts, and in their place are flexible, cloud-based solutions and devices for schools, such as Google's Chromebooks, which come with a free, easy to use management system for educators.

But whatever technological shift you're seeing at your school, you'll likely be left with redundant hardware as part of the change. Below are a few questions to help you consider how to dispose of such technology safely, with minimal costs involved.

### WHAT'S MOST ECO-FRIENDLY?

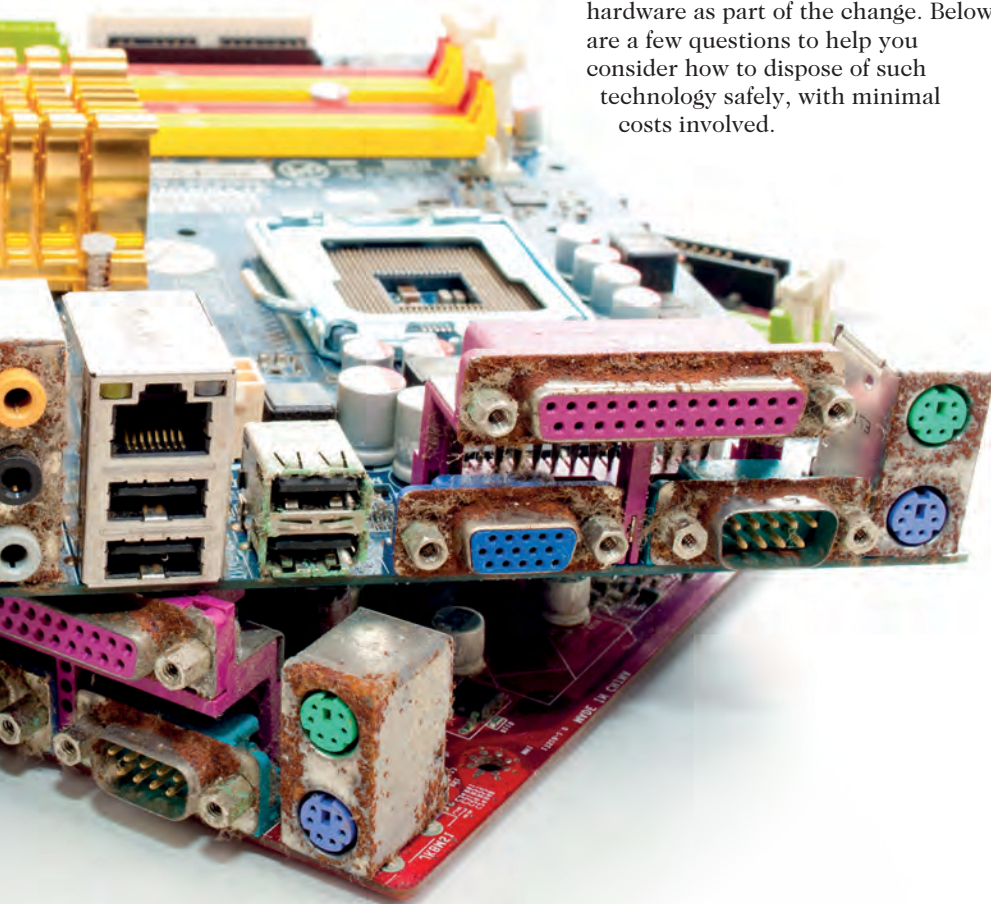
IT-related equipment contains numerous hazardous pollutants, such as the lead content in CRT monitors and batteries. Many companies will offer to take away your old computers, but if they don't have appropriate accreditation you run the risk of disposing of your equipment illegally. Equipment disposed of via non-accredited firms can end up anywhere in the world, and could potentially damage your name and reputation.

To avoid any problems, seek out companies that handle such waste in accordance with two particular EU directives: WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) and RoHS (Restriction of Hazardous Substances).

### WHAT ABOUT DATA DESTRUCTION?

With the recent introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation, it's never been more critical to keep your data confidential – an important consideration when disposing of redundant hardware. When choosing a technology disposal specialist, ask them for assurances that your data will remain secure from the moment their driver collects your equipment, and that this will continue at their secure location where the data (often on hard drives) will be destroyed.

Data removal should be a forensic wiping procedure, eliminating all traces of data from hard drives, and be carried out by a disposal company whose work complies with 'CESG Infosec Level 5 HMG' approved



standards. The disposal company should be able to present you with the relevant certification, a copy of which should be retained by the school as a permanent record of disposal. I'd recommend writing down the serial numbers of any hard drives and asking for these to be signed for when handing over the equipment.

## HOW COSTLY IS HARDWARE DISPOSAL?

In short, free! While it's often the case that what you're seeking to dispose of has little value in its current form, the raw materials inside may still hold some market value. There are specialist companies, such as PRM Green Tech ([prmgreentech.com](http://prmgreentech.com)), which work with extractors to remove any items of value, and in turn generate profits from the transaction. Avoid any companies that promise large returns upon you handing over redundant hardware, but can't present evidence of meeting industry standards or holding any professional accreditation.

## AND FINALLY...

Safe and effective hardware disposal will usually be your best option, but there can occasionally be a better alternative. Installing newer operating systems on old hardware is a practice that's becoming ever more popular, especially with the growth of cloud-based systems that don't require a lot of on-board hardware to work.

Neverware ([neverware.com](http://neverware.com)), for example, is a desktop operating system specifically designed for schools wanting to extend the useful life of their old hardware. Billed as a 'CloudReady' product, it's based on Google's Chromium OS, which shares the same open-source architecture as Chrome OS, and is well worth checking out before throwing those old laptops away!

**Gary Spracklen is headteacher at The Prince of Wales School, Dorchester, a former Digital Educator of the Year and a member of the government's Educational Technology Action Group**



## WHAT TO REMEMBER WHEN INVESTING IN EDTECH

Allocating spend to your ICT provision is just the first step – if any good's to come of it, leaders must address three key considerations

**G**iven the impact of school funding cuts on ICT budgets over the past few years, school leaders who opt to invest in their ICT and EdTech provision have to show tangible results. There might not be a magic formula for ensuring a consistently outstanding return on your investment, but there are some key points you should keep in mind when looking to bring more EdTech into your school.

### 1. TRAIN YOUR PEOPLE

One of the main reasons for EdTech not being as effective as it could be is when teachers don't feel confident using it. Recent research by the British Educational Suppliers Association found that a significant number school leaders identified a lack of willingness on the part of teachers to use EdTech, coupled with a poor understanding of the benefits that EdTech solutions can deliver, as key obstacles to making more extensive use of EdTech systems within their schools.

This is easily remedied via initial training on the new platform, product or system and regular refreshers. Appropriate training in the use of the relevant EdTech service or product would enable teachers to feel more in control and willing – even happy – to use EdTech in the classroom. CPD might be difficult to fit into existing teacher workloads, but it's time spent today that will save additional time tomorrow.

### 2. USE EDTECH ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

EdTech isn't solely effective at helping to teach STEM – it's just the most obvious use. According to the latest State of Technology in Education report by BESA member Promethean (see [tinyurl.com/sot-17-18](http://tinyurl.com/sot-17-18)),

"The majority of teachers believe that computing (69%), design and technology (41%) and maths (39%) educators are effectively utilising technology in the classroom. There is minimal increase, however, in the use of technology across core subjects such as history (5%), English (5%), geography (4%) and art & design (12%)."

Yet there are many EdTech products that aim to boost literacy, teach history and even teach modern languages – such as VR headsets, which can help to foster children's imagination and inspiration.

### 3. BE STRATEGIC

Lastly, but importantly, it's crucial to have a clear understanding of what your school needs in terms of ICT and EdTech. Many of us might want the latest VR headsets so that the children can walk in the footsteps of Egyptian pharaohs or swim with whales, but it might not be what your school or pupils need most at the present time.

Once you've identified that need, know where to go to find the best solution. BESA vets all of its members when they join the association and asks that they adhere to its strict Code of Practice. This assures teachers and heads of the high quality of BESA members' products and services, their professionalism and dedication to helping schools enhance children's performance.

**Cléo Fatoorehchi is communications coordinator at BESA**

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



# Make your school website MORE INCLUSIVE

Does your school's website currently tell the parents of prospective pupils with additional needs everything they need to know?

Last year my wife Nicole and I spent a number of months researching and visiting schools, looking for a setting that would be the perfect place for our youngest son, who has Down's syndrome. Before visiting each school we checked their website and quickly ruled a number of them out, as there was no mention at all of their SEN provision. The most appealing schools went much further than box-checking and compliance.

But I also write with my professional hat on. Nicole and I run a company that has built hundreds of websites for schools, and know that a school website will always be the first port of call for prospective parents. Their initial questions will be quite straightforward: What kind of school is this? What are the priorities? Will my child belong here? What are the staff like?

For parents of children with additional needs, however, these questions will be different: Will my child be cared for and included? Will they be taught outside of the classroom or in a corner, or will they be in the thick of the

classroom, fully included as much as possible? With your website presenting the best opportunity to prove to parents you're the right setting for their child, it's worth taking steps to make it inclusive – and it needn't be all that complicated.

If you simply throw your LA's SEN policies on there, don't expect parents to think you take inclusion seriously. Why not create a page dedicated to inclusion for showcasing what you're doing for everyone and celebrating the life stories within the school? The very best school websites will include a page about SEN provision that includes at least one appropriately chosen and visually appealing photo, a message from the headteacher or SENCo about why your school would be the best place for parents' sons or daughters if they have additional needs, and links

to relevant policies and resources. A brilliant example can be seen at [tinyurl.com/fairfield-send](http://tinyurl.com/fairfield-send).

Talk about specific children. Every child is different, and the same applies to children with additional needs. A child with Down's syndrome isn't a 'Down's syndrome child' – they're a child in their own right, with their own loves and struggles. Parents will want to know how you'll meet their child's needs; not how you'll apply a template.

One of the biggest worries for parents of children with additional needs is whether they'll be included in decisions around their child. Reassuring parents that you're open and welcoming and that you want their input is a huge boon. All you've got to do then is prove that's the reality when welcoming them to your school.

If you update your SEN page along the lines set out above, it'll contain everything inspectors expect to see, make the content easy for visitors to find, and prove you're taking SEN seriously. Everything you've done to make your website more inclusive can then be applied to the rest of your website, creating a much richer picture of life in your school – which is what everyone visiting your website will ultimately be looking for.

**Ian Richardson is the co-founder and director of Schudio – a company that specialises in building compliant and easy-to-manage school websites**

 @schudio

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



# USE THE ASSISTIVE TECH YOU ALREADY HAVE

It's worth looking at what SEND-appropriate support your ICT offers out of the box, says John Galloway

**W**e're all familiar with assistive technology (AT) these days, even if we don't always realise it. Making a device more user friendly for someone with disabilities or learning difficulties would once have involved a specialist assessment, a hefty outlay on peripheral equipment, a technically demanding installation process and several sessions of training to get it used properly. Nowadays we have almost all of that technology quite literally sitting in the palm of our hand.

Once upon a time, touchscreens, screen readers, dictation, word prediction, voice control and vibrating alerts were only available by putting in extra effort and investment; now we take them for granted. We can dictate texts, listen back to responses, translate foreign languages, change the appearance of our screens and use swipes and gestures to simplify the way we operate our devices. However, we don't always recognise what all these advances can do for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

## EASE OF ACCESS

All computers, no matter what make or operating system, have accessibility options built in. Windows 10 brings these together in its 'Ease of Access Centre' where choices can be made about what settings are most appropriate for specific users. It can also recommend particular combinations of settings for users with certain conditions, such as short sightedness, deafness, restricted motor skills and speech and language difficulties. Clicking through the questions and surveying the 'Recommended settings' screen can be enlightening, with its numerous check boxes for speech to text/text to speech functionality, screen magnification, high-contrast colour schemes and enlarged mouse pointers, among others. Apple's iOS for mobile devices has a similar set of offerings,



“Built-in accessibility features won't be the most sophisticated solutions, but they do provide a free starting point”

some of which are pretty impressive and especially helpful on iPads.

The built-in accessibility features found in every major operating systems won't be the most sophisticated solutions available, but they do provide a free starting point. Accessibility functions can also be found in non-specialist software. Microsoft Word, for example, now has a 'Read Aloud' function, which can be good for learners who have difficulty accessing texts, be it through a condition such as dyslexia, a visual impairment, or being new to English. Microsoft's Office 365 online productivity software meanwhile includes an 'Immersive Reader,' which can read chunks of text, skip backwards and forwards and highlight each word in turn. There are also options to change colour schemes and font sizes and pick out nouns, verbs and adjectives to help learners' understanding of grammar.

Also newly added to the installed version is a 'Dictate' option that supports seven different languages, including variations such as 'English (India)'. Combined with Word's existing 'Translate' feature, it could be a powerful tool for non-native English speakers, providing an opportunity to work across two languages.

## ACCURATE DICTATION

Turning to the iPad, it has a text to speech function dubbed 'VoiceOver' that can be switched on in the settings menu. When active, it can be engaged by simply tapping on a word.

What's particularly impressive about the iPad, though, is its in-built dictation function. The on-screen keyboard includes a microphone button that lets you search for terms using your voice – a feature now common to all browsers – but also take notes or create an extended piece of work. It's remarkably accurate, even for quite young children, which is great for those who struggle with spelling or have limited hand eye coordination due to a physical disability.

Accurate dictation isn't limited to Apple, however. Schools are increasingly turning to Chromebooks as a cost effective way of getting computers into the hands of their learners, and on those, the go-to writing resource is Google Docs – which happens to have





a 'Voice typing' option included under its 'Tools' menu. Again, this does what the name suggests, with similarly impressive results even when used by quite young children.

Based around traditional laptop designs, Chromebooks typically feature touchscreens, keyboards and trackpads, making them a great option for learners who might need various options for how to use them, including their voices.

## LOW COST ALTERNATIVES

As yet, no provider is offering combined speech to text and text to speech functionality in a single online resource, but it likely won't be long before we see one. In the meantime, it's worth examining

a number of low cost options.

WordQ ([assistiveitsolutions.com/wordq](http://assistiveitsolutions.com/wordq)) is an application for Windows, macOS and iPads that offers prediction, text to speech and – via the SpeakQ add-on – dictation facilities. It's straightforward in operation, and gives users the option of turning its various features on and off as they're needed. A similar spread of options can be found in the literacy, accessibility and dyslexia software developed by Texthelp ([texthelp.com](http://texthelp.com)) along with some additional features such as a dictionary that can both speak and display definitions with accompanying images.

Once your free and low cost options have been thoroughly explored, it will be easier to make informed decisions regarding what additional resources, if any, your pupils might need.

## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Lisa is in year 4 and has hypermobility, which can make handwriting a painful experience. It hurts when she attempts to do written work, causing her deep frustration resulting in her seldom finishing set tasks. Things got to the stage where she couldn't see the point of even starting something when instructed to, and was beginning to get a reputation for being 'difficult.'

The school had opted to invest in several class sets of Chromebooks, one of which was allocated to Lisa for her exclusive use. The model chosen included a touchscreen, standard keyboard and trackpad; Lisa was additionally given a 'Tiny Mouse' which fitted well in her small hand. She was shown how to conduct voice searches in the browser and how to engage the 'Voice Typing' function in Google Docs. She therefore had several options for controlling the machine and taking charge of what she was doing. She could type, or if her hands hurt, dictate. If using the mouse gave her a cramp, she could switch to using the touchscreen or trackpad.

The impact was dramatic. From someone who had to be coaxed to scratch out barely half a page she became quite productive, often producing a page or two of text, and volunteering to add more. She found that she could get her ideas down on screen and tell the stories that she had in her head.

She is currently learning to touch type, gaining independence and is now able to work unsupervised for longer periods, thoroughly comfortable with the technology she uses.



**John Galloway is a consultant and writer, specialising in the use of technology for the educational inclusion of learners with SEND in schools**

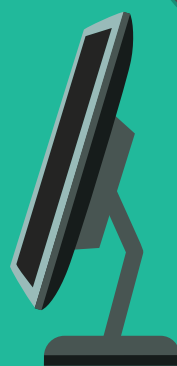
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# Ask the Expert

**Vicky Cottrill** explains how Kapow Primary helps educators deliver a broad and balanced curriculum by teaching specialist subjects with confidence



**Vicky Cottrill** is the creator of Kapow Primary. She was formerly a teacher and head of primary at educational publisher Espresso

## In a nutshell, what is Kapow Primary?

Authored by practising subject specialist teachers, Kapow Primary is an online resource designed to help educators deliver specialist subjects with confidence. It also assists schools to create consistency across these curriculum areas, while saving time and money. Covering KS1 and KS2 for art and design, computing, DT, languages, music

and wellbeing, it provides teachers with everything they need, from lesson plans to teacher-focused instructional videos and classroom materials.

## Why does Kapow Primary focus on the more specialist subjects?

As a teacher, I always wanted to give children a well-rounded experience, yet one of the biggest challenges I faced was teaching the subjects to achieve this, like French, music and DT. Almost every teacher I've met has told me the same, so when creating my own product I wanted it to be something that would make a real difference – for teachers and children.

## Why is now the right time for this product?

Our journey started two years ago, with schools nationwide raising specialist subjects as an area of concern. Ofsted has recently reiterated its commitment to a broad curriculum and this change in focus creates a challenge for schools. It's up to publishers to help schools address this without major upheaval or cost. I think Kapow Primary does exactly that and I'm excited by its potential impact.

## What makes your approach unique?

Kapow is designed to make teaching easier, immediately. The short instructional videos are unique – they're teacher focused and bring lesson plans to life in minutes. Techniques which can seem difficult on paper suddenly become simple – inspiring teachers and building

CPD into lesson planning, yet still saving time. The combination of these videos alongside classroom-tested lessons and ready-made resources is simple but powerful.

## Who has created the resources?

We handpicked a group of primary subject specialist teachers to collaborate with us, keeping numbers low to maintain consistency and quality, and creating an environment that allows us to challenge each other. They're an impressive bunch and include a parliamentary advisor, a TES subject genius and even a nominee for European Digital Woman of the Year. Best of all, they have incredible passion for making their subjects accessible.

## Why have you included wellbeing?

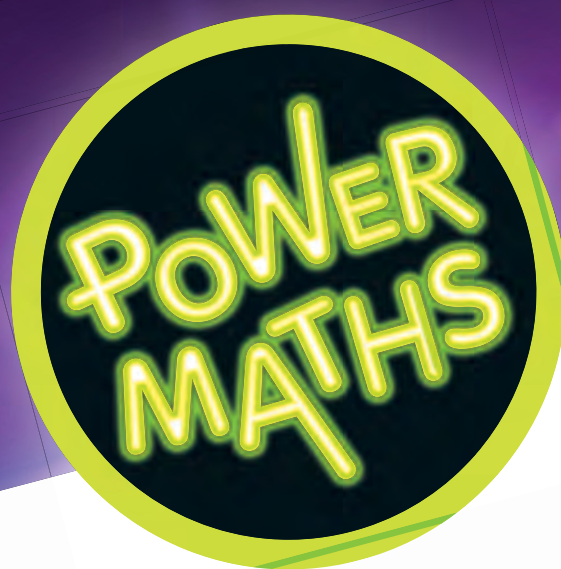
Increasing focus on children's mental health is a necessity but can create a challenge for teachers – being another 'specialist' area. The country's leading online mental health provider for children, Xenzon, has helped us create engaging lessons addressing the relevant aspects of the PSHE Association's curriculum. We've also created bite-size videos for teachers containing easy-to-digest information on prevalent mental health conditions and practical tips for helping pupils.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more, visit [kapowprimary.com](https://kapowprimary.com)

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# Community Engagement

“AS A SCHOOL, WE’RE  
TRYING TO **BECOME  
PLASTIC-FREE**”

Is it possible for a school to banish disposable plastic from its premises? One primary in Cornwall is doing its best to give it a go...

**I**n years to come, will we look back on the BBC’s second series of *Blue Planet* as one of the most politically transformative TV programmes ever shown on British television? The damage done to marine wildlife by plastic waste portrayed in its final episode went on to spark a national conversation about the need to reduce plastic waste and prompted government action to tackle the problem.

However, the pupils at Gwinear School in Hayle, Cornwall were ahead of the game. As the school’s administrator, Helen Bodé, explains, even before *Blue Planet 2*

was shown, the school’s pupil council had called for action so that “As a whole school, we would attempt to become plastic-free.”

The school had previously only recycled paper and card, but this pupil-driven effort to tackle plastic pollution ended up prompting a major rethink regarding the school’s approach to waste disposal. The school continues to use the same private waste contractor as it did before, but now has them take away spent cans and bottles, food waste and whatever remains of its mixed



plastics separately. Those extra collections entail additional costs, but according to Bodé, the expenses involved have been largely offset by the school paying less for its general waste collections.

So what does the school's attempts at a 'plastic ban' mean in practice for pupils? Bodé describes how the in-house alternative 'packed lunch' option provided by the school's kitchen now comes served on a plate, rather than in the plastic bag it did before. Pupils are still able to bring their own packed lunches in from home, but are expected to take any plastic materials home with them with two notable exceptions. The first is yoghurt packaging, which can be repurposed as glue pots and other types of containers. The second, however, are the rigid bottles produced by a certain specific brand of soft drink which, as Bodé tells it, "Are awful – we've banned those."

The policy has proved slightly more challenging where Gwinear's procurement policy is concerned, but far from insurmountable. "The biggest difficulty has been finding alternative suppliers," says Bodé, "but it's an ongoing process. It's quite simple for basic stationary supplies like exercise books, for example, which just arrive in cardboard boxes that can be recycled easily."

Bodé's efforts at sourcing supplies from companies that use plastic as little as possible has even crossed over into campaigning territory, and resulted in some interesting feedback: "I've written to various companies requesting that their catalogues, brochures, magazines and other publications are sent to us without any plastic packaging. I heard from one company that our letter to them prompted a discussion at their offices, and they're now looking into distributing their print material with recyclable packaging made from corn starch. The pupils on our council were impressed and pleased that they'd managed to effect a change like that outside the school."

Thus far, the response to the school's efforts at reducing plastic waste have been warmly received by pupils and parents alike, with little in the way of pushback. "When you see the TV footage of those plastic mountains, it really brings home to you just how serious the problem is," Bodé concludes. "After all, it's our children's future."

 [gwinear.cornwall.sch.uk](http://gwinear.cornwall.sch.uk)



## WHAT CAN YOUR LOCAL NETWORK DO FOR YOU?

If you're yet to join a local SBP network, now's the time to seek one out, or even start your own, says Bethan Cullen...

**T**here's surely not a professional in the country, in any sector, who can't benefit from receiving support and guidance from another practitioner at some point in their career. Being a professional entails recognising that you don't always have all the answers, and are constantly working to develop and grow your knowledge and experience.

One method of achieving this is by engaging and networking with peers in the same profession, and school business leaders are no exception. In actual fact, many parts of the country play host to local school business professionals' groups, some of which have been operating for more than 20 years. That may come as a surprise to some, who until recently will likely have received most of their advice and support from their LA.

These local network groups will typically be run by experienced practitioners, and often it's only a lack of awareness and inability to identify them that stops SBLs benefiting from what they have to offer.

The DfE's Schools Commercial Team is currently working on several projects aimed at supporting SBL networks, as per the aim set out in the January 2017 Schools' Buying Strategy (see [tinyurl.com/psm-sbs17](http://tinyurl.com/psm-sbs17)) to "Provide all SBMs with a first line of support to ask questions and share knowledge at a local level."

These include a networks directory (see [tinyurl.com/dfe-sbp-network](http://tinyurl.com/dfe-sbp-network)) that lists over 50 networks across the country with accompanying contact details. Leaders of any networks that aren't presently listed

can complete a registration form and have their group included in the next update. The DfE has also produced guidance (see [tinyurl.com/dfe-sbp-guidance](http://tinyurl.com/dfe-sbp-guidance)) on how to set up an SBL network of your own, based on the experience and insights of others who have done so successfully.

By joining and participating in a local group, SBLs will be able to benefit from peer-to-peer support, collaborative procurement arrangements and CPD opportunities. They can also receive better insight into local issues and what strategies might help to alleviate their impact, coaching and mentoring support and access to a forum for constructive debate around pressing challenges, such as schools funding and SEN provision.

If you're an SBL but not yet part of a local group, I'd urge you to join one. It will bring you into contact with other professionals facing the same challenges, enabling you to mutually support one another, pool resources, share good practice and support the growth of knowledge across the sector.

The Institute of School Business Leadership encourages SBPs to join both their local group and national professional body. If local groups share information with ISBL, it allows us to include regional perspectives in our discussions with government officials.

**Bethan Cullen is commercial director at the Institute of School Business Leadership**

 [@isbl\\_news](https://twitter.com/isbl_news)

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



# Get the most from visiting authors

You could ask a visiting children's author to simply read a passage from their latest book and answer some questions – or you could think a bit bigger...

**P**lanned well, a good author visit can enhance what you're currently doing in the classroom. The first thing to do ahead of time is therefore think about is how you'd like the visit to be organised. Start with your curriculum links – which particular topic do you think could come alive in the hands of a visiting speaker?

Having identified an area to focus on, consider then what you'd like the visiting author to actually do. The most basic option would be to

have them read out one or more portions of their work, followed by some talk of what their process of creating characters usually involves and a discussion of where they like to write, before ending with a Q & A session.

You could think a little more ambitiously, however. For example, why not ask the author to help run a writing workshop, or even a drama session in which the children role play some of their characters and scenes?

Once you've decided on the purpose of your author's visit, and how you'd ideally

like to involve them, the next stage is to actually find an author (unless you already have one in mind, of course). Unfortunately, some authors simply don't do school visits at all, while others can be in heavy demand and therefore unavailable for long stretches of time. Depending on who they are and their public profile, you may need to start planning their visit as much as a year or more in advance.

A good way of finding willing authors is via the professional directory maintained by the National Association of Writers in Education. Accessible via a national map (see [tinyurl.com/nawe-map](http://tinyurl.com/nawe-map)), it lets users select authors by school phase, specialism ('storytelling', 'poetry', 'scriptwriting', etc.) and location.

Having found an author, liaised with them about what they'll do on the day, agreed on a fee and set a date, the thing to do next is build up some buzz. Ask the author to contact their publisher about getting in some books for purchase that the author can sign and prepare some posters advertising the event. If you can, inform parents of the event in writing, mentioning that they can give their child the money to buy a signed book.

Officially, if the visitor won't be left alone with the children then a DBS check isn't needed, but some schools require that all visitors be vetted. If you're unsure, consult your school's visits policy.

Also check whether your LA, governors or trustees require visiting speakers to have public liability insurance. If so, it'll be up to the author to arrange this, though if they undertake school visits regularly there's a good chance that they'll have done so already.

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



# ENGAGE YOUR STAFF IN MARKETING

When it comes to improving your school's reputation and demonstrating what makes it great, everyone has a part to play...

**C**oming up with exciting and inventive ideas that will help schools meet their wider goals – income generation, recruitment of pupils or staff, a better reputation in their local area – is an enjoyable part of school marketing.

But there's often a catch. How can schools make sure that key messages are shared consistently by all the staff that parents meet? How can you tap into the wider networks that teachers have in the local community? And what if you can't find any examples that back up your ideas and show stakeholders how your school is truly different?

The key to achieving these goals is to engage your staff in marketing. You can accomplish this via two key stages – explaining to staff what marketing is and why it matters to your school, and helping them make a real difference to your plan.

## EXPLAINING MARKETING

Some schools don't like using the word itself, preferring to instead talk about 'communication' or 'reputation management', but I'd always recommend taking the bull by the horns and using the dreaded 'm' word. Why? Because it's actually got little to do with common perceptions around 'advertising', 'promotion', or (my favourite) 'organised lying'. In fact, marketing is defined by the Chartered Institute of Marketing as "The process of understanding and meeting the needs of stakeholders to enable an organisation to meet its objectives."

In a school, that can mean listening to local community groups who'd like to use your facilities; making changes to your recruitment processes so that the best teachers can attend interviews on a day

of their choosing; or focusing your parental communications so that parents can clearly see the strengths of your school on a regular basis. It's usually less about spending money and much more about finding and telling stories that show what's great about your school. Once staff realise this, they'll be happy to help.

## THE DIFFERENCE STAFF CAN MAKE

With the aforementioned definition in mind, there are many ways in which staff can get involved in your marketing. Here are six of them...

### 1 Helping you listen to parents and other stakeholders

Teachers and reception staff are your eyes and ears in the community. If something isn't working, or parents are thinking of moving their children elsewhere, this needs to be passed quickly to someone who can take action. Conversely, if you're doing something new and they like it, this should also be shared.

### 2 Helping create marketing messages

It's important when marketing a school to be clear and consistent about what makes it great. This means focusing on strengths and future plans, but these are stronger when they're agreed by and come from the whole school community. When creating these messages, staff should be involved at every stage.

### 3 Finding stories that illustrate these messages

Schools are full of fascinating stories, but it can often be the same people or departments who share them. By encouraging all staff to pass on great things that are being planned – ideally

well in advance – they can be captured and shared to show the school's full breadth. Once these members of staff see their stories being shared, they'll soon find more.

### 4 Using their talents to help make stories come alive

School staff possess a huge range of skills that can help your marketing efforts. These include practical skills, such as videography, illustration or music production, as well as language skills that can help you communicate to wider







“Teachers and reception staff are your eyes and ears in the community”

### PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

In November 2017, Risley Avenue Primary School in Haringey, North London, was facing a decline in application numbers driven by an external population change. Rather than accepting that it would have to close down one of its three forms of entry, the school looked instead to create a communal marketing response.

An initial workshop led by Marketing Advice for Schools for staff from across the school led to an explosion of good news and marketing ideas, from a new school video and improved recruitment processes, to better ways of communicating with existing parents. There was also a realisation that the school needed to become more engaged with its diverse and changing community. The school took this message on board and responded swiftly, holding a full staff INSET session to gather information and engage everyone in the marketing process. Conversations were then had with an architect to gather ideas for making the school appear more physically welcome. Office staff were brought together to think about how they gathered and used information from interested parents, and how they could go about revitalising their use of social media.

Six months on, you just need to look at @risleyN17 on Twitter to see how the school is now sharing great stories with its community. More importantly, the school is back on target to run three reception classes from September 2018.

As headteacher Linda Sarr explains, “Working as a team has resulted in all members of our staff team, parents, governors and the children themselves knowing how and why we need to promote our school. Everyone understands the need to create the very best impression when people visit. Parents recommend our school to their friends and family. In a matter of three months we managed to increase next year’s Reception roll numbers by 25 pupils. It’s been truly astonishing!”

communities, and digital skills in areas such as social media and website analytics. Make sure they have time to contribute them, and that their contributions are celebrated.

#### 5 Helping you reach wider communities

Make sure to ask staff for their community connections, whether it be running a local Cub Scout Pack, serving as a charity trustee or helping to organise a faith community. These links are important ways of getting your messages out, provided the staff in question are given the right information and aren’t simply expected to ‘sell the school’.

#### 6 Pointing people in the right direction

This is a small change that can make a huge difference. Could every member of staff help parents find out more about your school, assist them with filling out application forms in their own language or point newly arrived families towards community organisations that can help them? If not, do they know anyone who may be able to help, how they can be reached and when they might be available?



**Simon Hepburn is the founder of Marketing Advice for Schools**

 @Mktadvice4schls

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

# Could your mental health support use some outside help?

With demand for child mental health support continuing to rise, it's vital that schools know how to go about obtaining professional assistance, says Catherine Roche...

**L**ike many teachers, Sarah – a SENCo – really cared about the mental health of her pupils, but lacked the time or resources to properly address it. She'd been trained to manage angry outbursts from pupils as and when they happened, but says "I felt like I was trying to stick a little plaster over a massive hole and didn't know how to help with the bigger stuff – the reasons behind the anger." As both a class teacher and a member of her school's leadership team, Sarah felt unable to fully meet her pupils' needs.

This experience isn't uncommon. Schools today are increasingly under pressure to not only achieve academic excellence, but to also cope with a growing number of pupils who are struggling with their wellbeing. Last December, the government released a green paper (see [tinyurl.com/gp-dec17](https://tinyurl.com/gp-dec17)) that emphasised the role of schools in improving children's mental health. Yet in a survey we conducted last year in partnership with the NAHT, 93% of school leaders said that pupils bring more worries into school than they did five years ago.

Meeting the educational and emotional needs of 30 pupils is a big challenge, especially when the data tells us that on average, three of those children will have a diagnosable mental health problem. And that doesn't even include all those who will be coping with challenges like bullying, family breakdown and bereavement, as well as smaller worries and pressures, on a daily basis. Sarah's concerns are echoed by many school staff. Expectations are high, but there are only so many hours in the day.

## ABOVE AND BEYOND

From Place2Be's work in schools over the past 23 years, we know that many

teachers already go above and beyond to support pupils, and that plenty of schools are already putting mental health at the centre of their school culture or ethos. When I visit Place2Be partner schools from Edinburgh to Hastings, I'm often in awe of the commitment to mental health shown by the whole school community.

In February, many hundreds of schools across the UK joined us to celebrate Children's Mental Health Week 2018, shining a spotlight on the crucial role that schools can play. Yet in our aforementioned survey with the NAHT, 92% of school leaders said teaching staff have to manage issues for pupils that go beyond their professional role. The 'bigger stuff' that worried Sarah is getting bigger, and we can't expect teachers to deal with it alone.

## THROWING CHAIRS

Teachers aren't mental health experts, and no one should expect them to be. But we must equip them with the skills they need to keep an eye on the mental health of their class and spot problems early, while knowing where to turn if more serious issues present themselves.

"Sometimes teachers have got kids throwing chairs on a daily basis," Sarah told us. "That's a really difficult thing to deal with." Teachers tend to know their classes well, so you can probably tell when certain behaviour – be it chair throwing, silence or something else entirely – has some deeper cause. You may even know some of what lies behind it.

But how likely is it that you have the time, resources or expertise to look into things further? And how are you supposed to manage the behaviour quickly, so that it causes minimum disruption to the rest of the class, while making sure that the child is getting the support they need? Sarah isn't the only





one to feel caught between a rock and a hard place.

We feel strongly that mental health training is an important piece of the puzzle. One option is Place2Be's 'Mental Health Champions – Class Teachers' programme, which is an independently evaluated programme to enhance teachers' understanding of emotional wellbeing, while boosting staff confidence and helping them manage their own stress in practical ways.

## IN-SCHOOL SERVICES

As well as training, teachers should be able to call on advice and support from a professional. Many school leaders face the frustration of knowing that staff and pupils are struggling, while feeling limited as to what additional professional support they can provide.

When you're looking to bring in a professional, the mental health landscape can feel like a foreign land with its own language and unfamiliar rules. Our research with the NAHT, United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy and British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy found that almost half of school leaders have found it difficult to commission mental health support for their pupils, while 44% said 'knowing what type of support is needed' is a barrier. 37% said they don't feel confident in commissioning a counsellor or therapist.

It's vital to help school leaders develop a 'whole school approach' to mental health in which pupils, parents and staff are all supported, and where there are strong links with local mental health services. For Sarah's school, help came in the form of our in-school service, which provided what she describes as "The longer term, systemic approach, as opposed to the spur of the moment, six-week anger management course". The government's proposal in the green paper for a designated senior lead in every school and new mental health support teams could be good starting points, provided both are adequately trained and receive ongoing support.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Training initiatives aimed at senior staff, like our 'Mental Health Champions – School Leaders' programme, can help staff focus on driving changes that make their school more mentally healthy overall.

Brenda, a school leader in Leicester, had been worried about a particular pupil, but after taking part in the programme she felt able to have a conversation with CAMHS "Using language which enabled me to be listened to."

In an ideal world, every school in the UK would be able to make changes like these. In the meantime, the significant impact that teachers can – and do – have on the wellbeing of their classes is being recognised on a national scale. The Heads Together campaign, spearheaded by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry, has launched a new 'Mentally Healthy Schools' website, a one-stop shop for resources that primary

schools can use to support emotional wellbeing.

The green paper offers a fantastic opportunity to be part of what could be a truly transformative period for children and young people. We're hopeful that now is the moment to seize this opportunity and make a difference to future generations.

## HOW TO PICK A COUNSELLOR FOR YOUR SCHOOL

- Read the DfE's guidance for schools about setting up counselling services ([tinyurl.com/tpcounselling](https://tinyurl.com/tpcounselling)).
- Ask other local school staff about their experiences and what they recommend. Could you group together to commission a counselling service?
- Find out what services are available in your community, including agencies, charities, organisations and individuals.
- Check that any counsellor you employ is registered and accredited with one of the recognised professional bodies, such as the BACP or UKCP. This ensures they have met certain training and qualification standards, are working to an ethical framework, have supervision requirements and are subject to a complaints procedure.
- Check that the counsellor is trained in working with children, confident working with parents and carers and qualified to at least diploma level.



**Catherine Roche** is chief executive of the children's mental health charity Place2Be

@place2be

[place2be.org.uk](https://place2be.org.uk)

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## 1 FRONT ROW

As part of an effective Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP), schools need to support their life safety systems with communication technologies that help optimise responses to a wide range of scenarios. Many schools use networked systems daily for paging, intercom, and bells, but only in recent years have they employed networked technology to

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# Ask the Expert

**Dr Amanda Simpson** explains how The Shanghai Maths Project supports teachers and pupils with teaching for mastery in maths



**Dr Amanda Simpson** is a pioneer and leading specialist in mathematics mastery in the UK and works closely with experts in Shanghai. Experienced as an educator, she understands both teachers' and pupils' needs.

## How does The Shanghai Maths Project support a teaching for mastery approach?

Pupils whose teachers use The Shanghai Maths Project will develop a deep, long-term, secure and adaptable understanding of mathematics, including fluency (rapid and accurate recall and application of facts and concepts), a growing confidence to reason

mathematically, and the ability to apply maths to solve problems, to conjecture and to test hypotheses. This is absolutely in line with established definitions of mastery.

## What are the benefits of Shanghai pedagogy for schools in England?

The focus for Shanghai pedagogy is on deep understanding and pupils are supported to be flexible thinkers and problem solvers. Shanghai pedagogy enables schools to focus on teaching for understanding. It combines what we have always known as excellent practice in the UK with knowledge developed over generations in Shanghai about how children learn mathematics – what they need to do, hear and practise.

## How does The Shanghai Maths Project support teachers in delivering the maths programme of study?

The UK curriculum is covered comprehensively and in depth. The teacher's guides are extremely detailed, describing activities and lines of questioning as well as explaining the mathematics itself for teachers and the way concepts develop. Every aspect of the programme of study is taught thoroughly, incorporating practice, development, intervention and extension tasks. Pupils learn to reason and solve problems, applying their knowledge in new contexts.

## How does the Shanghai Maths Project help educators teach mixed ability classes without setting?

All lessons are set out in detail for mixed ability classes. The teacher's guides

explain how to introduce and develop ideas for all pupils – always building on existing knowledge. Learning is achieved in small increments so pupils are not left behind. For every new idea, additional intervention and enrichment activities are provided so that all pupils can achieve the objectives for every lesson.

## Is The Shanghai Maths Project only for high-achieving schools?

Pupils in all schools will learn mathematics securely and in depth, and will be able to think mathematically. Because the focus is on small steps, with lots of practical work, discussion and practise with reasoning, all pupils can make dramatic progress in their understanding and ability to think mathematically. Some schools might choose to introduce the Shanghai Maths Project to all year groups – others will introduce it gradually.

## What sets The Shanghai Maths Project apart from other maths schemes?

The teacher's guides are unique in the level of support they provide. All teachers are fully supported to provide every lesson, knowing what pupils need to do in order to learn fundamental concepts very securely and flexibly. The teacher's guide is, itself, a CPD resource, enabling educators to develop their own subject knowledge and pedagogy. All linked resources combine coherently, creating a comprehensive programme.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**  
To find out more, visit [collins.co.uk/theshanghaismathsproject](http://collins.co.uk/theshanghaismathsproject)

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## SIGNED OFF WITH STRESS?

Fostering an open environment and being sensitive to people's triggers are key to combatting work-related stress, says Hayley Dunn

**S**tress can take its toll on even the strongest colleagues and will manifest in different ways. Some may become insular or easily agitated; in extreme cases, others might not be able to leave their homes, because the thought of doing so is too overwhelming.

You can sometimes see it in people's eyes – the panic and the fear. It's heartbreaking to witness, and it can affect everyone around them. They don't want to feel the way they do, and can be embarrassed as a result. We have to make it okay to talk about stress in our workplaces, and take action to prevent things from getting to that stage.

Stress can be described as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. The NAHT has previously defined six key stress triggers as:

- |           |                 |
|-----------|-----------------|
| 1 Demands | 4 Relationships |
| 2 Control | 5 Role          |
| 3 Support | 6 Change        |

All of these elements can come from the workplace, but they can equally stem from someone's personal life, so that work becomes a place of safety and calm, where there's sense of normality, routine and support.

Signs of stress in individuals or groups can include changes in their usual behaviour – increased anger or agitation, for example, or a loss of their usual sense of humour. They may come across as tired or irritable in exchanges with colleagues and pupils. They may become more argumentative, or produce work that's below their usual standards.



Other indicators might include poor judgement, indecisiveness and lax timekeeping, and there can be physical signs, too – headaches, nausea, panic attacks, aches and pains.

In groups, it may be possible to observe patterns of behaviour or statistical trends involving absences, a rise in complaints, a high turnover of staff and poor performance.

If someone has to be signed off work, your response must adapt to the situation at hand. If they're uncomfortable with meeting to discuss their absence from school, offer to meet them at an alternative location and suggest they bring a close friend or relative with them for support. Understanding the trigger and driver of the stress – particularly if it's related to their working environment – is key. There are useful resources available from the Health and Safety Executive (see [hse.gov.uk/stress](http://hse.gov.uk/stress)), including a 'Management Standards Indicator' tool.

Returning to work after being signed off with stress will feel like a huge step. Have a trusted colleague be there when the person arrives and walk in with them so that they're not alone. Make sure they know that they're important to the school and the children, and that they're cared about. We're all human.

## IMPROVE YOUR STAFF'S MENTAL HEALTH

- Listen and respond to your staff's needs and concerns
- Model good behaviours
- Allow and encourage staff time to work off-site, where appropriate
- Facilitate a staff wellbeing committee; try to have it led by staff and not senior leaders
- Implement a reward and recognition system
- Consider adopting email restrictions outside of working hours

**Hayley Dunn is a multi academy trust finance director; her book, *The School Business Manager's Handbook*, is available now, published by John Catt**



# SAFEGUARDING IN 2018/19

Jessica Cope from The Key outlines how leaders can ensure staff are informed, compliant and vigilant when it comes to safeguarding

**W**ith the end of term fast approaching, thoughts of September's INSET day are probably looming – which for many might mean taking the opportunity to update staff on essential safeguarding training. In 2018-19 such training will need to reflect recent changes to the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (see [tinyurl.com/dfe-safe](http://tinyurl.com/dfe-safe)) – particularly its new emphasis on sexual harassment and sexual violence between children.

Schools must provide safeguarding training for every member staff at induction, even those who don't work closely with children. This process is usually co-ordinated by the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), who will find that the scope of said training has now slightly expanded.

As of this year, staff safeguarding training will need to cover the school's behaviour policy and immediate response when children go missing from the setting. That's in addition to those areas already covered, which include the school's child protection policy, staff code of conduct and the role performed by the DSL.

Ideally, training of this type should also be extended to external contractors – but if that's not possible, it's sufficient for individual contractors to provide written confirmation from their employer stating that they've already completed equivalent training elsewhere.

Your safeguarding must be regularly updated, but this can be done via various

means. It's possible for updates to be issued in the form of emails, e-learning sessions, staff bulletins or at staff meetings, rather than within the context of a formal face-to-face training session.

All staff also need to be made aware of specific safeguarding issues, such as the Prevent duty, female genital mutilation and gang violence. The DfE added some new ones this year, with the result that your staff will now also need to know about the safeguarding issues involved with children having contact with the court system, children with a family member in prison and homelessness, as well as the aforementioned emphasis on sexual harassment and sexual violence between children – also known as peer-on-peer abuse.

At a minimum, all staff must read part 1 and Annex A of the Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance. It's especially important that they familiarise themselves with the new version so that they're up to speed with the changes.

The final change you need to be aware of is that a school's DSL must now be trained before taking on the role, and will need to update their training at least every two years.

**Jessica Cope is Lead Content Editor at The Key, which provides leadership and management support to schools**

 @TheKeySL

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# The key to better teacher retention? Collaboration

Pooling resources and planning effectively can go a long way towards helping schools' recruitment and retention

**A**s schools and academies have looked to forge closer working relationships, particularly within MATs, it's fair to say that there have been successes, failures and many lessons learnt along the way.

I firmly believe that the rationale for closer working relationships and sharing best practice between schools remains a sound one. The pressures on schools and MATs to deliver outstanding classroom experiences and drive up performance continues to increase, despite a consistently challenging budgetary environment. In my opinion, more collaborative, joined-up thinking and working, along with the economies of scale that MATs should deliver, can only help in that regard.

From an HR perspective, I can see for myself the positive impact that collaboration can have on the ability of schools and academies to find and retain the high-quality teaching talent they need to drive performance. When we're facing such a profound talent crisis, collaboration can be used as a key differentiator and the basis for more strategic and sustainable workforce planning.

We've recently spoken to several MAT CEOs and human resource development leaders who are putting collaboration at the heart of their recruitment and retention strategies. They're communicating to potential and existing staff that they can build a varied and rewarding career within their organisation, with opportunities to experience different schools and different roles, progress quickly and get exposure to leadership positions earlier in their careers. They're re-framing the way that teachers can build their careers, and showing them that they can fulfil all of their ambitions across a family of schools, whilst remaining

with the same employer.

Where schools and academies struggle to find the skills they need, closer collaboration and communication can help to fix such issues quickly and efficiently. By looking at a teacher workforce across an entire Trust or cluster, schools and academies can share resources and deploy staff where they're needed most.

A report recently published by Ambition School Leadership cited collaboration as a major 'breakpoint' for small and medium-sized MATs that are looking to expand. Progress has been held up by a lack of data and workforce visibility, and the inability to strategically plan. What's more, collaboration takes time – something senior leaders simply don't have when they're so focused on improving and maintaining teaching and learning standards and providing enriching education experiences for their pupils.

When considering what makes a good potential employer, teachers want many of the advantages that MATs and true

collaboration can deliver, such as increased flexibility, potential to experience leadership positions, and opportunities to move between schools more easily. I truly believe that a more collaborative approach to workforce management, both within MATs and between schools, can play a big part in tackling the skills crisis and revitalising the careers of many teachers who currently feel disillusioned and may be reconsidering their futures in the profession. I've seen and heard from enough headteachers and MAT CEOs to know that it really can make a difference.

**Amanda Webb is strategic relationship director (education) at Affinity Workforce – a recruitment and management solutions provider specialising in the education, health and social care sectors**

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# REVISE YOUR STAFFING STRUCTURE

Your staffing structure can't afford to be fixed and immutable, writes Laura Williams – but changing it needn't involve major upsets if there's a sensible plan in place...

**Y**our school's pupil numbers, curriculum model and financial bottom line provide you with more than a firm steer as to what your staffing structure should look like. Your staffing structure is the nerve centre of your school, requiring almost constant attention that can range from a full restructuring to just a few tweaks. In truth, schools are always in the process of restructuring their staff, but doing so with a sufficiently long lead time allows this to become a change management process, rather than a wholesale HR operation you need to complete in a half term.

Given the current climate of continuous change, how can schools ensure that their staffing structure is both fit for purpose and value for money? And how do you make sure that what looks good on paper works out well in practice? What follows is a three-phase self-evaluation guide designed to help you achieve just that...

## PHASE 1: DETERMINATION

Where do you need to be, and what might prevent you from getting there?

It's essential to determine your 'destination' before setting off on this journey, or else you risk the wheels coming off along the way. Curriculum-led financial planning and benchmarking are key cornerstones of school budget management, but other factors also need to be taken into account before you start reshaping your staffing structure.

It's easy to delete lines from spreadsheets and merge classes in SIMS, but when it comes to dealing with people, assessing, evaluating and implementing the changes you need to make won't be as straightforward. A consideration of the current context, wider picture and long-term goals of

your school should be the starting point of any staffing review.

Assess your vision, mission and strategic plan, and determine whether they're reflective of what needs to be done and where the school needs to get to. Consider whether there might be any external threats to your organisation that need managing. Review any upcoming legislation or accountability framework changes that could impact your capacity or hinder progress towards your objectives.

Determine what strategies you'll need to ensure that accountability lines remain clear in the face of change, and check that you can protect your continuity of operation and facilitate knowledge sharing to mitigate the impact of turnover. Identify what knowledge your governors will need and what role they should have in relation to any changes you need to make.

## PHASE 2: ASSESSMENT

What do you already have in place, what else do you need and how can you fill in the gaps?

When determining your destination you'll almost certainly have flagged a number of issues requiring your attention. Recruitment or redundancy is often seen as the obvious way forward, but both options can prove costly and should only be undertaken if all other angles have been explored.

At this stage, marrying together as much as possible the ambitions of your staff and





the ambitions of the organisation can really start to bear fruit. The more you know about your staff and where you need to be, the better placed you'll be to implement the changes that are needed. The future isn't predetermined, so go through as many drafts as you need to.

Ensure the information you have on your staff is accurate and up to date in terms of pay scales, job descriptions and skillsets. Look at the tasks being done in your school and consider whether the right people are doing them, if they can be done in a more efficient way or whether they need to be done at all. Look across your structure, establish what capacity you have and whether it's concentrated in the right place.

Consider whether a review of descriptions, investment in CPD and appropriate remuneration could secure better value for your organisation and staff, rather than further recruitment. What routes for progression are there in your organisation? Could your leadership roles could be redefined? Thinking about this could not only reduce your head count and overall cost, but also help foster your management talent and create new progression pathways.

Look closer at your performance management system and see if it can be made to serve you better in terms of talent identification and management. If you can't locate solutions internally, consider whether a service level agreement or local collaboration might be a suitable solution.

## PHASE 3: EVALUATION

When it comes to staffing, there's always going to be a curveball you didn't account for – maternity leave, a resignation, long-term illness or similar. This phase is about both testing and safeguarding your strategy in as many ways as you can. What risks come with your proposed strategy and how are you going to communicate it?

Determine whether your process of structuring has to be implemented quickly, or can be managed over time. Think about the impact of any changes on your support staff and operational capacity, and ask yourself 'What if?...' Think of your head of English, business manager, deputy head and your union representatives and what they might say about your plan. What would worry them or make them anxious? What questions might they have? Now think about the answers you'd give them.

Having now drawn up a draft proposal, give yourself some time before returning to objectively evaluate it. Consider whether your proposal will achieve what you need it to. Consider the risks it could create, and what plans will need putting in place to mitigate those. Be sure that you've truly exhausted the alternatives, that the reasons supporting your proposal are sound and that you're comfortable in justifying your decisions.

Be clear about any elements of your plans that are non-negotiable, allow time for appropriate communication with staff and build space to include meaningful feedback. Use that feedback to demonstrate transparency and fairness, through both discussion and implementation.



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

 @lauraljbusiness

 [ljbusinessconsultancy ltd.co.uk](http://ljbusinessconsultancy ltd.co.uk)

## 5 ISSUES TO WATCH



### 1. BEWARE THE RIPPLE EFFECT

One seemingly small change can create a lot of problems. Don't assume anything, and always think at least two steps outside of the immediate 'impact zone' when it comes to adding, removing or changing any roles.



### 2. HAVE A CONTINGENCY

Don't hang your strategy on one person or one plan – keep an alphabetised file of back-up plans, just in case.



### 3. DON'T BE HELD HOSTAGE

If you end up getting caught out, negotiate on your own terms. Don't be panicked into a 'knee jerk' (and likely costly) response. Remember that hostage situations can be negotiated.



### 4. CONSIDER INTELLIGENCE, NOT JUST EVIDENCE

Do your homework – don't just rely on hard data. Triangulate your knowledge with numerous sources before committing to anything.



### 5. YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A MYSTIC – JUST BE AWARE

It's not just about planning for the future. You can only plan so far ahead, and the unexpected can and usually does happen. What matters is that you regularly review your plan, so that you're agile and better placed to respond should your situation suddenly change.

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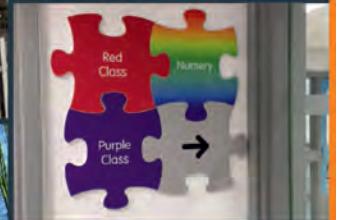
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# Tackle bullying among staff

Schools are expected to crack down swiftly on bullying between pupils – but what if there's bullying taking place among your own colleagues?

**B**y law, all state (not private) schools must have a behaviour policy in place that includes measures to prevent bullying among pupils. Such policies are designed to ensure pupils can learn, play, thrive and develop in a safe, harmonious and respectful environment.

But what about their teachers? On a daily basis, headteachers will have to manage myriad relationships with pupils, parents, staff and various professionals and representatives from across the education sector. In the course of doing this, it's inevitable that on occasion, disagreements and differences of opinion will arise. Learning how to manage, contain and resolve any disputes that could potentially lead to accusations of bullying is vital. Any instance of teacher-on-teacher bullying ought to be addressed in the same way as incidents to which your standard bullying policies might apply, whether recording a grievance or carrying out a disciplinary action.

A recent report by Education Support Partnership found that workplace stress

and work performance issues were the two most common reasons for education staff contacting our services. Of particular concern are the increases we've seen in cases that relate to bullying or harassment (up 18%) and conflict at work (up 16%) compared to last year. Our confidential support helpline further reported a 35% increase in calls from teachers over the past 12 months, alongside a 24% rise in calls from headteachers and deputy heads seeking advice and guidance.

*“Even good relationships can become strained over time”*

There are no easy solutions for preventing conflict in working relationships, though there are some management techniques that are worth pursuing. Headteachers might want to consider adopting a system of 'matching up', whereby members of staff who will be working or interacting with one another regularly are partly

assigned on the basis of having complementary personalities.

Be aware that even good relationships can become gradually strained over time. In situations where this has started causing issues, fostering an honest discussion between both parties may help to increase reciprocal understanding and prevent the likelihood of either outright confrontation or more subtle forms of bullying.

Don't allow past differences to linger. If some staff members seem to continually rub each other up the wrong way, assist them with revisiting the cause(s) of their initial conflict and attempt to resolve them.

There are many good leaders out there, including headteachers who see themselves more as coaches than managers. Good leadership can be learned, and we've seen for ourselves many examples of what a good school leader looks like. Often they'll be the ones seeking our support, because they recognise that they need help too. We can offer schools a wide range of services, including visits by staff wellbeing consultants, as we know just how tough the tasks faced by leaders and staff can sometimes be.

**Julian Stanley is the chief executive of Education Support Partnership; for help or advice on any issues affecting your work in education, contact the organisation's free 24-hour helpline on 08000 562 561**

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# DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE A BLAME CULTURE?

Acknowledging how and who we accuse when things go wrong in school is vital for both pupils and teachers, writes Anna Gregory

**R**ecently I mismanaged my diary. The meeting everyone else had down for a certain date, I had down for a month later. I instantly felt panicked, embarrassed and a bit shameful. I tried to claw my way out of these feelings by asking my team a barrage of questions. Who set the date? Was I given the right one? Why wasn't it on the shared calendar? Why was the meeting called in the first place? I needed this awful feeling that I'd messed up to go away.

The easiest way to do that was to pass the discomfort, the unease, to someone else; to blame them for what had happened. The meeting ended abruptly and I could tell that people were affected by how I'd acted. My blameful outburst had affected the feeling in the room. I'd started to affect the culture of our meetings.

## WHO DO WE BLAME?

Who do you blame when things don't go well? How are you when, say, poorer than expected SATs results come out? Are you uncomfortable, embarrassed, angry? Do you (privately or publicly) blame the parents, the Y5 teacher or the number of SEN children in the class?

When a lesson goes badly, might you blame a lack of resources in your classroom, the children for misbehaving or your partner for snoring the night before and stopping you from getting a good night's sleep? Or is it all your fault because you're a terrible person? We can start to make changes if we can acknowledge how and who we blame. This involves being honest and a bit brave.

Blame produces negative feelings.

For some people, this may be guilt. For others, blame can go further and produce shame. This is more painful than guilt and can stay with people for a long time. Shame is personal; someone might feel they are a bad person, rather than someone who has done a bad thing (guilt).

If shamed, we tend to react in one of four ways:

**Withdrawal:** we isolate ourselves, run and hide, keep stuff to ourselves.

**Avoidance:** we go into denial – 'It wasn't me' – or we distract ourselves. Children may change the subject or consume themselves with other activities or friendships, whereas adults might look to social media, shopping or alcohol.

**Attack ourselves:** this is when we put ourselves down and tell ourselves we're no good.

**Attack others:** this is when we 'turn the tables' on the other person and the blame is passed on. We might lash out and say things we later regret.

Think about how someone you know (adult or child) recently reacted to some feedback. Might they have felt personally attacked or blamed and reacted in one of the four ways above?

## PLAYING THE BLAME GAME

If we know to look for them, we can see the feelings produced by blame coming out in the way we speak to one another. Our language and behaviour affects the climate – the social temperature – of our schools. It can be felt in the classroom, the staffroom, the playground and beyond.

Occasionally, we can get stuck in the



blame game. This consists of two or more people blaming each other and persisting in it, instead of proactively making changes that could transform the situation. For some people, the blame game can last years.

In the structured 'peacemaker' sessions I run in my role as restorative coordinator, we play the 'blame game' with children. This light-hearted activity can start valuable discussions about blame, how we get trapped in it and possible ways of changing the conversation.

I start with games in which people are 'out' quite quickly. From there, we think about how it feels to be out of a game or activity we're enjoying. The range of responses (which can include anger, frustration, relief, nonchalance and more) help to start a discussion around feelings. We then talk about blame and what it sounds like. This can be revealing for the adults, as the children often describe situations in which adults don't fully listen to their version of events.

With the teacher, I will then model the 'blame game'. Using a red card with 'It's your fault because...' written on it (download it from [learning.peacemakers.org.uk](http://learning.peacemakers.org.uk)), the teacher and I pass the card back and forth and elaborate on mutual accusations. Our responses to each other escalate in terms of volume and emotion. The 'acting' often causes a lot of laughter...

I then ask the children what they noticed about our bodies and our voices. They might say that we were jabbing our fingers at each other, or that our voices got louder. They're then asked to comment on what we said to each other. The responses might include that we stopped making sense and just wanted to win the argument, or that we brought up things from the past that had nothing to do with what was initially being discussed.

It would appear that everyone, regardless of age, has experience of playing the blame game for real and can

recognise the nuances and strategies used to 'win' it. It's now the children's turn to have a go. I limit the activity to less than 20 seconds – just enough time to experience the emotion, language and physicality associated with blame.

Next, the teacher and I model an alternative. Taking a green card, on which is written 'It's partly my fault because...', we pass the card back and forth as before, this time taking some responsibility for what's happened. The children are again asked to comment on what they saw and heard: 'You were calmer.' 'You had an actual conversation.' 'It slowed right down.' 'You were looking at each other.' Again, the children have a go at experiencing what it feels like to accept some of the responsibility. They're not being asked to accept all of it – just to take what steps they think they can to accept their part in the incident.

This activity quickly highlights for both children and adults that given the opportunity, and the right structures, they can transform conflict into something much more positive.

## IRRATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

Months on from my diary mess-up I see that it was an easy mistake to make, but in that heightened, panicked moment, I couldn't think rationally. I reacted to my feelings. Blame is emotional. Once I experienced distressing feelings (shame, embarrassment, fear) I tried to find the cause of them and shift the distress onto that. My mortification at my diary mismanagement meant that others in my team, my online calendar and even the meeting itself was to blame.

If I'd been allowed to carry on, I may have even blamed the weather, the traffic or my great aunt. If I'd had the green blame card on me at that meeting, I'd have been able to say, "It was partly my fault, I wrote the meeting down wrong. Easily done. Apologies, everyone."



**Anna Gregory is restorative coordinator at Peacemakers – an organisation that**

**delivers peace education via practical workshops, experiences and training sessions.**

 @wmqpep

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



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## WHERE CAN YOU MAKE **EFFICIENCY SAVINGS?**

Noel Conreen highlights five non-salary areas in which schools can potentially cut back on their spending...

### **1. JOIN A LOCAL SBM GROUP**

I joined the Lancashire Association of School Business Managers – the second largest business manager network in the country – just over two years ago. There's a small cost involved, and it means I'm off site for various conferences and events throughout the year, but being part of this network has introduced me to many new business partners and resulted in numerous services and resources being available to my school at a reduced cost. I've made savings on classroom furniture, a library refurbishment, energy bills, paper and am currently going through a tender process for a new telephone system through a LASBM-approved supplier. The money saved from being part of the network has far exceeded the outlay required to join it.

### **2. BRING PAYROLL IN-HOUSE**

I'm still amazed at the number of schools that pay a provider to process payroll. It's relatively simple to do and can save you thousands each year. Training can be sourced through payroll providers at a small cost, and there's also free help available from HMRC. I process payroll for 70 staff, some with varying hours and shifts due to the social care of our business, which usually takes two to three days each month. The work I do to prepare for payroll I'd have to do anyway, regardless of whether it was processed externally or in-house. I was previously quoted around £5,000 for an external provider to take this on, so why not just complete the full process yourself?



### 3. OVERHAUL YOUR LIGHTING

Install LED lighting and replace your light switches with sensors wherever possible. Interest-free funding is available through the Salix Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme (see [tinyurl.com/psm-seels](https://tinyurl.com/psm-seels)) or else you can do as we've done and install LED alternatives whenever an existing light fitting or lamp fails. Swapping out switches with sensors not only saves money from lights that won't turn themselves off, but also stops me shouting 'Turn that light off!' at people, which has been good for my wellbeing...

### 4. STOP FRANKING!

Okay, so it depends on your postage needs, but most things today are sent by email. How many schools still possess and pay for a franking machine? We did. There are maintenance costs, topping up costs and further costs when the price of postage changes, not to mention phone line and servicing costs. Stamps don't even need licking any more – instead of spending money on topping the machine up, just order your stamps directly from Royal Mail.

### 5. BRING SERVICES IN-HOUSE

Yes, it's a hassle. No, you can't shout at a supplier when things aren't quite right, and in the event of absence, someone else will need to be there to carry out the necessary tasks. But if you can recruit the right staff, the quality of your catering and cleaning may improve as the people responsible for them develop an identity with your school and become part of the wider school community. Managed well, your costs will subsequently be less.

**Noel Conreen is a school business and finance manager at Chaigeley School – a school in Warrington providing social, emotional and mental health support for pupils aged 8 to 16**

 @NConreen

## HOW DO YOUR FINANCES MEASURE UP?



It's natural to want to compare your school's financial situation with that of others, says Caroline Collins – but it's a useful administrative exercise, too...

**L**ike any organisation, schools need to understand what income they've received and what that income has been spent on. By conducting an annual benchmarking exercise, a school business manager can not only review how the school budget has been spent, but also investigate those areas where the school has spent significantly more – or even less – than other similarly sized schools.

The DfE's 'Schools financial benchmarking' tool (see [tinyurl.com/dfe-benchmarking](https://tinyurl.com/dfe-benchmarking)) isn't a perfect resource, since the data it uses is a year old, but schools that tend to base their budget on the previous year's expenditure may find it useful for improving efficiencies.

The benchmarking data in question is based on CFR codes, which can be problematic as schools often post expenditure to different codes for a variety of reasons. This could be simply due to a misunderstanding of the correct code, or because a cost centre has insufficient funds, necessitating the use of an alternative. Irrespective of that, however, it's unlikely that this would cause major differences to the data. These two weaknesses in the system shouldn't deter SBMs from scrutinising the data and acting on their findings.

The benchmarking website allows users to view their own school's data with supporting graphs and then conduct benchmarking against other schools, either by using the DfE's default criteria or by setting their own. The website produces raw data with accompanying graphs that can be saved as images, pasted in to your

own templates or exported as a CSV file for use in Excel. You might want to prepare your own spreadsheet with conditional formatting in place, so that you can quickly and easily spot notable instances of under- or overspend.

If, for example, you find that you're spending significantly more on electricity compared to the other schools in your set, you may want to contact some or all of said schools and start asking some pertinent questions. You might want to discover which provider they use, what tariff they're on, what procedures they have for minimising spend and wastage and so forth. You may well learn that you're actually with the same provider, or even on the same tariff, and that your next step will probably be to contact your provider and ask why your bills are so high compared with others.

Finding your high spend, and then carrying out appropriate investigations to determine the reasons behind it, will help your school make savings and become more efficient. This process can also be useful when drawing up a business case for changing a service provider or carrying out a staffing restructure. However good your financial management is, conducting an annual exercise like this can only be helpful, and will provide you with robust evidence for future decisions.

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

 @caroline\_261



# What SBLs say (and what they really mean)

Hilary Goldsmith presents a helpful guide to making sure your SBL's thoughts, comments and contributions don't get lost in translation

**T**he school business leader can be a tricky beast to fathom. By turns brash, coy, approachable and searingly honest, the SBL in your life is likely to be as variable as the centre aisle in Lidl.

That's because they have to juggle a huge variety of tasks, jobs, priorities and problems all day, every day. At the precise moment you're interacting with them, they might have anywhere from 5 to 50 thoughts rushing round their heads, all requiring urgent attention.

It's therefore understandable that the response you get from your SBL isn't

always quite what you're expecting – or indeed, quite what they intend to say. For that reason, the SBL profession has developed a number of stock phrases for different occasions to buy them enough time to wriggle out of whatever it is you've asked them for. Here are some of the classics...

**“Let me get back to you on that one”**

Never in a million years. It ain't happening, but let me think up some half decent reasons to turn you down and I'll reply later. Once you've gone home.

**“Well, that's an interesting thought”**

That is possibly the stupidest idea I've ever heard, but rather than a direct 'no', let's give it 24 hours before I point out the glaringly obvious health and safety reason as to why it's not possible – though I'll wrap it up in a sigh and a shrug, so you don't get discouraged. Bless you for trying.

**“I'm afraid there's nothing in the budget for that” (Pre 2017)**

I may or may not have a secret stash of cash available, but unless you come bearing cupcakes I'm unlikely to ever admit it. If you're still interested in

whatever whim it is you want money for in eight months' time, fill out this 32-page bidding form in triplicate and submit it countersigned by at least seven hobgoblins, and I'll attempt to write it into next year's budget.

**“I'm afraid there's nothing in the budget for that” (Post 2017)**

I'm afraid there's nothing in the budget for that. Or anything else. Ever.

**“I'm just about to go into a meeting”**

I really need a wee and you're not very interesting.

**“Let's review it in a few months' time”**

Let's agree to never speak of this embarrassing debacle ever again.

**“We may need to realistic about expectations on this project”**

That number you have in your head? Take all the zeros off the end. That's your budget.

**“Would you mind if we rescheduled for later this week?”**

Someone more important than you just pitched up.

**“Thank you for your patience”**

I finally got to the bottom of my to-do list and you got lucky.

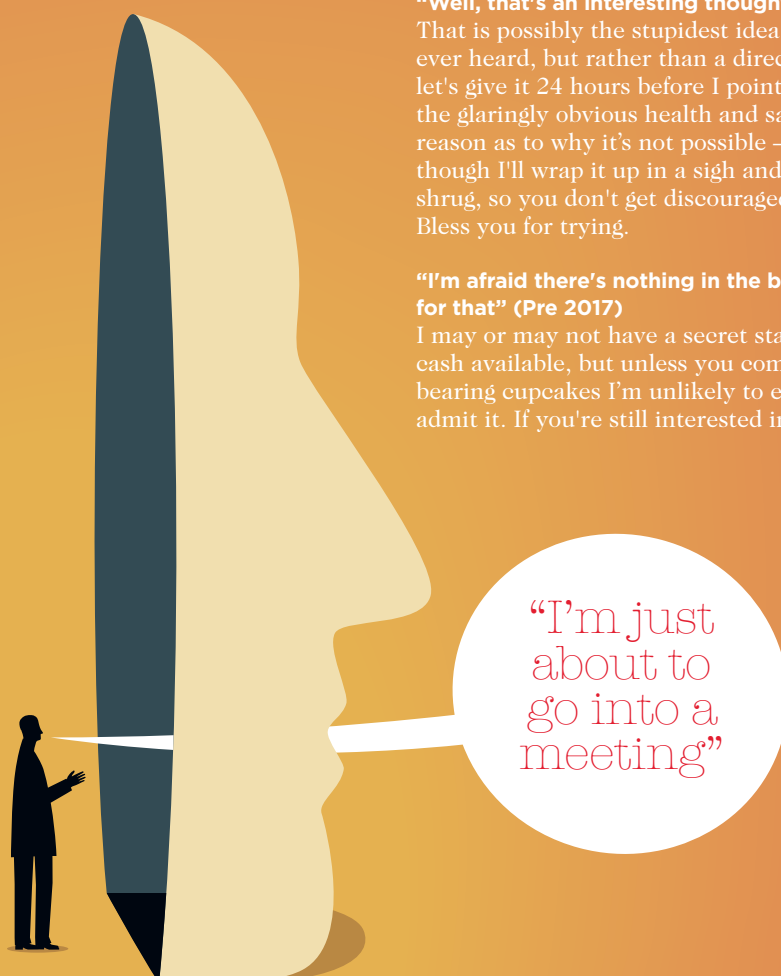
**“Yep, have a good evening”**

Yeah, off you go to your family and your life. Me? I'll be here for another three hours actually, but you didn't ask, did you? No, you were too busy racing out the door...

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

 @sbm365

 sbm365.wordpress.com



# PARENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS

## LUXURY OR NECESSITY?

Sue Birchall considers whether asking parents to dig deep for the sake of their school's provision can be justified – and if so, how should the proceeds should be spent

**P**arental payments are an emotive subject, and rightly so. We're fortunate in this country to have an education system that's mostly funded by public money raised through taxes. In an ideal world, this would be enough to cover all operational costs and enable schools to develop and progress in line with their students' needs – but the reality is somewhat different!

We're still seeing a policy of financial austerity being extended across many areas of public spending, and education has certainly been on the receiving end. Yes, as Theresa May and others have noted on various occasions, it's true that the amount of money being put into education has risen to the point where it currently stands at record levels. However, this overall funding figure fails to take into account rising pupil numbers and increasing actual costs at the operational level.

The DfE itself has announced that pupil numbers will rise by over 7 million between 2016 and 2025. Couple that with the freeze placed on per pupil funding by the government in 2015, and we're facing what the Institute of Fiscal Studies predicts will be a further 8% real terms cut per pupil. We'll see schools continuing to receive less income, while having to contend with increasing costs – which, incidentally, have been further added to by rises in national insurance, employer pension contributions and the apprenticeship levy. The National Funding Formula changes won't be able to resolve this disparity.

As schools look at how to preserve what's left of their budgets, the notion of turning to parental contributions doesn't seem quite so immoral. Yet the question remains – how can we get our parents on board with the idea of supporting their child's school financially, and what should their contributions be put towards?

### POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The first part of the process must be focused on information gathering and getting your stakeholders on board. This doesn't mean you should come straight out and state publicly that the school needs more money – all that's likely to do is prompt people to cite the 'school funding has never been higher' argument outlined above. Instead, you need to ensure that:

- Staff are behind you; if a colleague doesn't agree with the rationale behind your efforts to seek parental funding, they won't effectively promote it to pupils and parents themselves. Seek input, ideas and feedback from everyone first.
- Governors are aware of the legal and financial implications involved, and are prepared to approve whatever approach you decide to opt for.
- Your school's parental forums are used to identify and highlight those areas that parents would be willing to support
- You do some research into how other schools in your area raise funds and collaborate; if all nearby schools operate a similar policy in this area, you can assume that's the practice your parents will expect to see.

Your school will likely already have a charging and remissions policy in place. If not, now's a good time to devise one. This should clearly state what the school can charge for, what's compulsory for parents to pay for and the type of items that you'll be asking for contributions towards.

You can also use it to explain the terms under which certain things won't be

provided by the school – for instance, the extent to which the school will subsidise a trip before it's cancelled. The policy should then be shared with parents at the earliest opportunity, since a working document will be invaluable in getting parents onside.

### EXPECTATIONS AND TRANSPARENCY

If you've decided as a school to ask for annual parental contributions, make sure this is advertised at admissions time and see to it that parents know what their contributions will be used for. If someone's able to see that what they're paying for is worthwhile and represents good value for money, they're more likely to contribute and engage with the process.

Many parents and carers will be all too willing to support their school, but doing so might be a financial struggle for some. Offer the facility for parents to set up monthly payments, provide the option to pay online and/or via direct debit, and look into offering discounts for families with more than one child.

If your school community ultimately decides not to pursue the route of asking parents for financial contributions, consider instead asking for help in other ways (see 'How else can parents help?'). A parent at one of my primary schools ran a fast food outlet. Students were able to visit the premises, find out what the process of running the business involved and even got to make some food of their own – a curriculum-relevant school trip with minimal outlay.



## VOLUNTARY VS MANDATORY

So what should you charge for? There's been some coverage in the popular press of schools demanding parental contributions for help in securing essential classroom items, but I believe this is where we have to be careful. It's not acceptable for our system to come

across as one that expects parents to pay for their child's 'free' education. When setting your budget, it's important to recognise that your core funding can and should pay for the school's basic operational costs.

That said, parents and carers have historically held certain expectations when it comes to contributing to school trips and other activities. I can remember, as a student, being asked to bring in either items or money for supplies to assist with resource shortages in cookery and some other subjects. It's not a new phenomenon – there are things you can legitimately ask for help with.

We can define what those things might be by sorting them into the categories of 'voluntary contributions' and 'charges'.

### VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

- Trips with curriculum-linked educational elements that take place on a standard school day or outside school hours
- Contributions towards specific educational activities
- Supplies (such as providing students with pencils, pens and other stationary)
- Instrumental tuition provided as part of standard school activities

According to guidance issued by the DfE ([tinyurl.com/dfe-school-charges](https://tinyurl.com/dfe-school-charges)), the above are all areas that schools can't demand that parents pay for. Conversely, schools are able to levy charges for the following:

### CHARGES

- Residential tips (though be aware that your charging and remissions policy might include some exceptions)
- Supplemental activities and trips

Schools have the option of asking parents to cover some of the costs entailed by a school trip or other activity, but only up to a point – for example, it won't be possible to put parental contributions towards the cost of sourcing supply staff to cover any pupils not attending.



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

## HOW ELSE CAN PARENTS HELP?

If your school community is unable or unwilling to cover certain costs with financial contributions from parents, consider the following:

- Calling on people to volunteer their time, rather than financial donations
- Seeing if parents' places of work can serve as potential school trip destinations, venues for events or even provide match funding
- Getting pupils to help raise funds that can go towards trips and events

It can help to share what you're doing, communicate it well and collaborate with others.

# WEAR JEANS CHANGE LIVES



Morgan cuddles her brother Cameron, 5, who has Norrie disease. Cameron is blind, going deaf and has learning difficulties.



**Help children with disabilities**  
**Sign up your school to take**  
**part in Jeans for Genes Day**  
**on Friday 21 September**

**Cameron is five years old. He was born with the genetic disorder Norrie Disease. This means he is blind. He is also deaf in his right ear and may lose his hearing completely as he grows older. He has autism, learning difficulties and hasn't learned to speak yet.**

Despite all his challenges, Cameron is incredibly happy and has a smile that stops you in your tracks. His sister Morgan, nine, says: "He never lets anything get him down."

Jeans for Genes Day raises money to support families who are coping with a genetic disorder that makes their child very ill.

All you need to do to raise money is to ask your pupils and colleagues to bring in £1 to wear their jeans instead of their uniform. The money you raise will fund family conferences, equipment and special nurses for children with genetic disorders.

Be the one who makes a difference. Sign-up for your free fundraising pack today at [jeansforgenes.org](https://jeansforgenes.org)

## IT'S SO EASY TO GET INVOLVED

### 1 Sign up

Sign up for your free fundraising pack at [jeansforgenes.org](https://jeansforgenes.org) today and you'll be on your way to organising your Jeans for Genes Day on Friday 21 September

### 2 Have fun!

We will send you top tips, fundraising ideas, posters and stickers to hold an amazing Jeans for Genes Day

### 3 Change lives

Use your event to raise money to make a difference for children like Cameron who have a genetic disorder

**[jeansforgenes.org](https://jeansforgenes.org)**





# How to buy... sports equipment

VISIT: [YPO.CO.UK](http://YPO.CO.UK) FOLLOW: @YPOINFO



The PE and sport premium has given schools more spending power when it comes to procuring new sports equipment, but where should they start when deciding what to purchase? YPO's category buyer for sports, Gemma Maw, offers some suggestions...

## OBTAIN FUNDING

In 2016 the government announced the doubling of the PE and sport premium for primary schools until 2020 to help improve the health of future generations. The premium is intended to be used by schools to boost their PE and sports provision for all children, giving schools the perfect opportunity to establish sustainable strategies for physical wellbeing while securing a legacy of improved sport provision.

The premium is ring-fenced and must only be spent on physical education. Identify priority areas and set some clear objectives that will help you make long-lasting changes and improvements. For example, you might have already become aware of gaps in your existing provision and recognised the need to introduce new sports to your school, which can be achieved by investing in new sports equipment. This could lead to the formation of new school teams, which may in turn pave the way for running sports activities in partnership with other schools.

## PRIORITISE

Carry out a thorough audit of your PE storage facilities, noting what items you have, what's fit for purpose and what needs replacing. The Association for Physical Education ([afpe.org.uk](http://afpe.org.uk)) can provide you with a series of recommendations and some handy checklists to help with this. Give your broken items an MOT and organise your store so that everything's in order.

Good though it is to make sure your school has a fully-equipped PE cupboard, it's also worth thinking about activities your school can organise that *don't* require much in the way of PE equipment. There's been a growing recognition in recent years of how important physical movement activity is for children's development, as well as the emergence of initiatives such as The Daily Mile and Walk to School Week, which can be built into children's daily school routines and supported all year round.

## SEEK VALUE

When buying PE equipment, there are a few areas to consider in order to ensure you achieve the best value for money. Always base any comparisons not just price, but also quality by checking relevant reviews of the items in question. It's also worth looking at own brand products that might be available at a more competitive price compared to branded items, but still offer good quality.

Buying products as part of a pack or kit can deliver great value, as doing so will sometimes work out cheaper than buying items individually. Kits can also take away the hard work of deciding what items you need to buy together. YPO offers specially designed kits for sports day and after school clubs that can be tailored for specific needs, which can be a great help for teachers and a real time saver for busy PE coordinators.



# HOW HEADS CAN MAKE EVERY POUND COUNT

The strategic financial planning might not be your favourite aspect of headship, says Simon Botten – but you owe it to your school to make the best of it...

I find school finance boring.

There, I said it. I may be a headteacher, but I was once only a teacher, which means I'm interested in children and learning, not budgets and spreadsheets. That said, as a teacher I still remember the giddy excitement as the Consortium catalogue (other educational stockists are available) was passed around the staff room prior to ordering stock for the new term. Then, as now, Pritt Sticks were hard currency.

As a headteacher, I still see the school budget in much the same way – as a means of delivering excellent teaching and learning. Manage it well and there are lots of resources to improve children's learning. Manage it badly and your school

can be crippled, unable to provide the people, places and resources the children need. With budgets being squeezed relentlessly by government cuts (and they *are* cuts) it's now even more important that we headteachers make every pound count. So here are my five top tips for strategic financial planning...

## 1. Your budget follows your SDP...

... and not the other way around. In the past, like many headteachers, I'd get my budget figures for the coming financial year around February and write the budget with my school business leader in March, putting dollops of money into vague cost codes: "I suppose we might want to buy some new resources next

year – stick £3,000 in the 'educational resources' budget," would be the level of strategy used to make those decisions.

Historically, September would roll round and I'd decide that the new school development plan demanded £5,000 of maths resources. Having not allocated any money to this when the budget was written, the SBL would then be left scrabbling around to find the cash by via-ing amounts from one code to another.

But around five years ago we switched to starting from the point of what we wanted to achieve educationally – before we'd even seen the budget figures – and write the new budget around that. This was transformational, as we now actually had the cash for the things we wanted to do.

## 2. Start planning in February

The first step of our strategic financial planning process begins in February,





“As a headteacher, I see the school budget as a means of delivering excellent teaching and learning”

when our SLT – of which my SBL is a full member – looks at our four-year strategic plan, and at what we’ve planned to achieve in the school year from that September. Having all the leaders do this together ensures that nothing is missed, while our SBL’s brief is to always challenge the cost/ benefit of any planned initiative that requires funding. It’s fine for something to be high cost, so long as it’s also high impact. Our SBL reminds us of this perpetually, so that every taxpayer’s pound is made to work hard.

We list all the things in the strategic plan we’re aiming to do in the coming academic year, and then consider the approximate cost for each element. It’s quite a rough and ready process, since we don’t know the exact costs at this point. You’ll also no doubt have something pop up later in the year requiring attention (often after the end of year assessments show that something needs improving)

which you won’t yet know about, so we put money aside in a ‘standards’ budget to cover this eventuality. When creating this plan, we try to decide what’s essential and what’s desirable, creating a wishlist of additional spending if money allows.

### 3. Let your SBL build around the plan

Once my SBL knows what the school wants to achieve, she transfers this information onto a more complex spreadsheet that adds in the specific budget cost codes, so that money can be allocated.

### 4. Staffing is a long-term consideration

Staffing will account for 70-80% of your budget (though if it starts getting above 85%, you’re in trouble), so if belts need tightening, this is the only place where big reductions can be made. However, taking a longer-term view on this can reduce the need for painful and disruptive staffing cuts that can damage morale and educational outcomes.

When creating our strategic financial plan in February, we’ll look at the forecasted staffing costs for the next three years and at whether our staffing is sustainable. This has radically changed our thinking from ‘hoping for the best’ to making realistic, if unpalatable decisions.

For example, we calculated that if we continued spending as we were, the school would be in financial trouble by year 3, prompting us to look at how our staff were organised and deployed. This led to us consciously deciding that any teacher vacancies would have to be filled by NQTs in the coming year, and to us filling some vacancies by redeploying staff from other roles as they became available. Nobody likes to consciously cut staffing, but if you plan well enough in advance, it can be achieved without having to reduce hours or making existing staff redundant.

With budgets so tight, looking down the track and cutting back on staffing costs way before things reach crisis point is a must.



**Simon Botten is a primary school headteacher**



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southgloshead.wordpress.com

## STRATEGIC FINANCIAL PLAN – KEY POINTS

1. Think ahead and build your budgets around long-term improvement goals

2. Plan your spending around your school development plan, not the other way round

3. Think about your staffing in a strategic, long-term way to avoid cliff-edge cuts

4. Decide what’s essential and what’s desirable; then add spending back in as your budget allows

5. View your budget for what it is – a vehicle for delivering great outcomes for children

### 5. Adjust your spending plans

Come October, most of the areas that were unknown when the budget was set should have become clearer. By now, your SDP for the academic year will have been written and your staffing bill for the year will be known, as any departures and recruitment will have already taken place.

At this point in the school year you have the opportunity to revisit your strategic financial plan and add in a few more items off the wishlist if money allows. For example, if a UPS 3 teacher gets a promotion during the summer term and you’ve replaced them with an NQT, you may find that you’ve freed up a significant amount of money that can be put to work elsewhere.

I doubt I’ll ever find budgets exciting, though I’m lucky enough to have a fabulous SBL who does. Yet with a bit of planning, I hope to ensure that in these most testing of financial times my school’s children have what they need to thrive. And that’s why we all do the job we do, isn’t it?

Primaryleaders.com has hundreds of articles written by headteachers and school business managers looking at how to run a successful school. New content is being added all the time, covering a wide range of issues from increasing school funds to mastering your budget management and getting the best out of difficult members of staff.

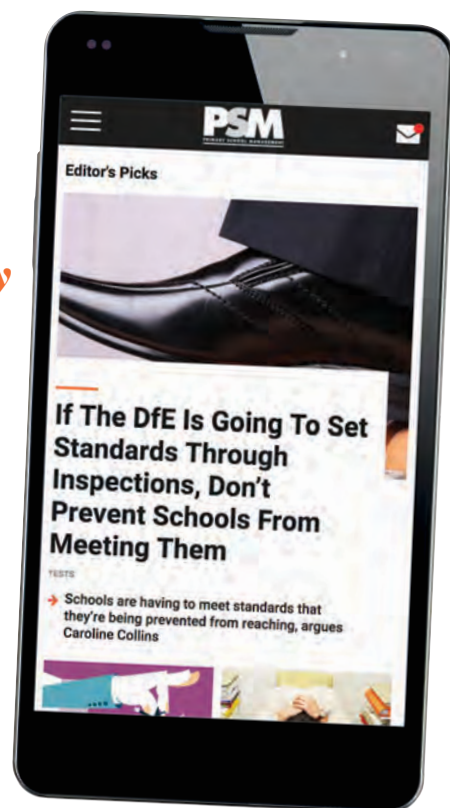
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## “HYPER-ACCOUNTABILITY IS A PROBLEM”

Parents who expect an instant answer to emails are adding to teachers' hyper-accountability woes

**T**hank goodness I'm a head. I really couldn't hack it as a teacher any more. This isn't because being a head is easy (it really isn't), nor because I don't think I'm a good teacher. It's because teaching has changed so much since I swapped children's reports for headteacher ones.

No, it's not the curriculum, or actually anything to do

with teaching, learning or behaviour. I don't think I could hack it as a teacher any more because of the accountability.

It's a no-brainer that teachers should be held accountable for learning. If you want to be an educator, but don't think it's fair that you should be responsible for your performance, try something else. It's hyper-accountability that's the problem. Why does everything nowadays have to be jacked up to 11? Why must teachers be made to care about everything, right now?

When I was a teacher, it was simple. You planned, you taught, you assessed. You then made sure the children all got on, while keeping parents reasonably informed. My, how things have changed.



The word 'change' has much to answer for. Education is very good at changing, when it should be better at *evoking*. Whenever there's a change, the world of education seems to throw everything in the air and expect things to land fully formed as something new, exciting and fully implemented.

Take GDPR. OK, we were given a bit of notice on that one, but look how the profession reacted. Scaremongering hyperbole that had everyone panicking about whether you could even write children's names on their workbooks any more. We seem unable to change gracefully, which puts far too much pressure on teachers already too busy with the day job.

Another irritant of hyper-accountability is the degree of public access teachers are exposed to. I'm not saying educators should be allowed to work in secret, but their professionalism is under attack by a 24-hour news service. A good proportion of parents now think it acceptable to email teachers directly at any time of day or night. What does that say about their respect for the profession? I know parents are busy, but so are teachers.

That's why I couldn't be a teacher today, but it's also why I'm a head. I don't advocate giving teachers' emails to parents – they can contact teachers via the office. Nothing that urgent is ever put in an email. It might be important, but even at A&E you have to wait. My teachers are busy people, and one of my biggest aims is to minimise distractions. They'll always strive to help, because they care, but they need to be in control of when and how.

My job is to control the changes that come at us, and I prefer to do that by taking my time and shielding teachers from the faff of unplanned implementation. I don't mind them feeling the pinch of accountability, but don't want them feeling the burn of hyper-accountability. Until that disappears, I won't be returning to the classroom – I'm too busy making sure those that teach, can.

**The writer is the headteacher of a UK primary school**

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## THE LEADERS WHO TAUGHT ME THE MOST

Jill Berry reflects on the leadership lessons from senior colleagues that went on to inform her own approach to headship...

Over my 30 years working in schools I've learnt a good deal about leadership. Across six different schools I worked with 10 different heads or acting heads, and no fewer than 20 senior leaders. Since finishing headship in 2010 I've met many more serving and recently serving school leaders in my consultancy capacity, including through my work for the National College for Teaching and Leadership, and in many school visits. So from which of those leaders have I learnt the most?

The head who appointed me as a young English teacher in my first school was actually a far better head than I realised at the time, having then no real point of comparison. The school had opened six years prior for Year 7 only, with this head at the helm, and he'd appointed every member of teaching and support staff. The school was welcoming its first Lower Sixth cohort when I arrived, and by my second year had a full complement of students from ages 11 to 18.

The head had led the development of every policy and established the school culture, working alongside his senior leaders and the growing staff. He was fair and forthright, committed and personable. He gave me opportunities, as a young and enthusiastic professional, which set me on an interesting and challenging career path that took in both academic and pastoral responsibilities. Only later in my career did I recognise how much I owed him and the school, and was pleased to be invited back to his retirement celebrations some time after

I'd left.

The headteacher who appointed me as head of English in my third school also taught me a good deal – sometimes, ironically, through her negative example. I found myself reflecting on how and why I disagreed with her way of handling people and issues, and without necessarily realising it, began honing my vision of the head I'd one day wish to be. But I also remember her words in the first assembly I sat in on, feeling nervous and excited about my new role. "Everyone has a handle, a way in," she said. "You have to search for it, and then make the most of it, if you're to get the best from them." This proved to be excellent advice.

Taking on my own headship three schools later, my most valuable governor was herself a former head. She was a tremendous support to me and a source of wise counsel – constructively challenging, but always on my side. Some things she said have stayed with me ever since, such as "Daytime is for people, Jill. You can leave the paperwork to the evenings and weekends," and "The sign of a great school is that anyone, even the least experienced member of staff, can have a good idea and know it'll be taken seriously."

So to all the leaders I've worked with and met over the years, thank you. I'm sure I've taken something valuable from every one of you.

**Jill Berry is a leadership consultant, author and former headteacher**



# Where will your next leaders come from?

Anoara Mughal looks at what schools can be doing to cultivate the responsible decision-makers and stewards it'll need in the years to come

**A**gainst a backdrop of continuing budget cuts and a high-stakes accountability system, many existing teachers are being put off the idea of applying for senior leadership roles. Compounding the problem is what will inevitably happen once our current generation of senior leaders come to retire. We're already having to work around a huge shortfall in primary leaders, and that shortfall is predicted to get significantly bigger.

If we're to tackle what's become a pressing and urgent issue, we must do two things. We have to entice willing and talented staff into applying their skills to leadership roles, but also put in place robust systems that will serve to motivate and retain them.

Falling retention rates are a big part of the reason why finding staff with leadership potential has become so challenging in recent years. Coaching can play an extremely important role in addressing this, in that it allows trust to develop, encourages problem solving and

can inspire staff to come up with their own ideas and solutions – not to mention the fact that resilience and innovative thinking are both desirable traits for a school leader to have.

Another way of tackling the retention issue is to think carefully about what potential there is for staff to pursue meaningful career progression within your own school. Next time you see a member of staff applying themselves particularly well to certain tasks, or demonstrating an aptitude that impresses you, give some careful thought as to how that potential can be picked up on and developed. Bring this up with the colleague concerned and suggest that they embark on a personalised leadership learning plan. It might be a case of having to find the time, but being creative and offering them opportunities to grow and excel can pay dividends in the long term.

It's a given that school leaders should provide their colleagues with regular training and CPD opportunities based on the needs of their staffing structure – but at the same time, think about offering personalised learning and routes into

NPQML and NPQSL so that you can start growing your own leaders.

More ambitiously, you could also consider encouraging the leaders of tomorrow through a system of distributed leadership, or by adopting a self-improving schools model. This will allow staff who show interest and potential in pursuing leadership to be provided with valuable insight into what it entails in practice. If done successfully, this will result in colleagues being able to acquire experience of leadership via a steady rate of progression, rather than being thrown in at the deep end – which is what can happen all too often when someone becomes a headteacher for the first time.

However, we must be mindful that entering headship may not be a career pathway for all. Retaining such teachers may entail supporting them in carving out an alternative career path, whereby they become expert leaders in their chosen field, and helping them share their expertise across a MAT or group of schools in a local area.

**Anoara Mughal is an assistant headteacher and year 6 primary teacher**



# HOW TO HANDLE A HEADSHIP HANDOVER

Congratulations, you've just been appointed head at a new school – now, here's how to assume the role and settle into it without breaking anything...

**H**anding over the reins to a new incumbent always entails a mix of emotions. For most, this will include a thought along the lines of 'This is my baby, don't drop it' and it's for that reason that a healthy handover process is critical, since your community will be thinking much the same.

Here, I'll explore what this 'ideal' handover period should look like – and what a less than ideal handover period might look like if you're not careful...

## A YEAR TO ADJUST

In general, every head will be acutely aware of the need for a smooth transition between one leader and the next. It's essential that the new leader is able to establish themselves during what will be a very high stakes process for the school, and there's a duty on the incumbent to ensure that this process be conducted as smoothly as possible. Simply put, the head is the focus of the school and the only person that every single child and parent will know the name of.

Headship interviews typically take place in spring, leaving the summer free for fact-finding. As an incoming headteacher, during this period you'll need to familiarise yourself with three distinct groups – the school's leaders and governors; the staff; families and pupils – as well as the school's budget and most recently pursued leadership initiatives.

There's a great deal that needs to be grasped and understood, particularly if this is your first headship. You'll not only be trying to assimilate a socially dynamic

range of people, but also adjusting internally so that you're ready to take on what's going to be a big job. Some say it takes at least a year to adjust, which I wouldn't argue with. Know that during that first year you're going to have a 'fake it' a lot, whilst settling in to your new role.

If time allows, arrange a series of meetings scheduled at fortnightly intervals. This will give you time to strategically cover a range of subjects whilst preventing overload and providing personal opportunities to reflect on each meeting. Once you've had your initial meeting with the incumbent, arrange to meet the SLT and your deputy as soon as possible. The principle aim here is to break the ice – they'll be both curious and anxious, particularly the deputy. The relationship between HT and DHT is a mix of professional challenge and comradeship. Remember that they inhabit the role you may well have just left, and could potentially be a head-in-waiting as you've been.

Establishing a positive working relationship is essential to any school, and at the heart of this should be trust.

“The head is the focus of the school and the only person that every single child and parent will know the name of”





It may be uncomfortable, but if you feel that trust has at any point been complicated, particularly during those early days, you must challenge it. Ultimately, you're the head and it's your name on the door.

## HIGH RISK SITUATION

As previously noted, this process is for most a positive experience. However, what do you do if the outgoing head has already left? In most cases this should be a significant warning sign, and as such, you may well need money to dig your way out of some issues.

Don't delay in asking to see the budget. In a high risk situation where you have little point of reference within the school, the financial situation of the school may well dictate your first moves. Even when the school is over-subscribed, if your predecessor has over-staffed the site you could find yourself limited in being able to execute your own goals due to the budget being stretched.

The school's existing deputy or an external head may have been appointed as acting headteacher in the interim, and might therefore be able to advise you on teaching practice, standards and school culture. I've recently come across instances where new arrivals have had to immediately grapple with a staff capability issue, or deal with multiple

cases of long-term illness, both of which would likely be costly for the school in the short term.

While my own advice would previously have been to take a short-term financial hit for a long-term gain, nowadays you need to give serious consideration as to what impact a £10,000 to £25,000 spend on 'pay-offs' will actually have and whether your budget can sustain it.

Having to meet this type of cost in a small school could easily create a long-term deficit, and may well result in you having to restructure quickly in order to save money. That said, it's better to try and address both issues at once – it won't be the ideal start, but it will at least mean that you're able to begin shaping the type of school you want to be leading in future.

You might equally find yourself in a situation where the incumbent is reluctant to meet. In many cases, this should be seen as more of a reflection on them than anything particularly concerning about the school. If an incumbent has been in post for many years, it's reasonable to conclude that they've invested a great deal of their life into the school and may be finding it harder to let go than they'd initially thought.

You may find this to be the situation where you're able to find out some 'soft'

## STRESS WARNING

Moving into headship creates two types of stress – one for the community, for whom it will be an anxious time, and a different type of stress for you if this is your first headship.

You may feel internally that you can take on the role, but there's a world of difference between 'thinking' and 'doing'. Projecting the image of a smooth transition is therefore essential. Your staff, pupils and families will want to feel that you're in control, even if your circumstances and/or personal confidence might suggest otherwise...

issues about the school (general ethos, staff strengths and weaknesses, which families require additional support), but much of your work will take place once you start.

Because the future is what it's all about. Leading a school centres on the securing of long-term goals; there are few organisations that need to contemplate the years ahead in the same way that schools do. We consider our youngest students first as the benchmark for the future, and trust me – you'll find yourself wishing those 'youngest' students well as they graduate and embark on their next ventures before you know it.

When that happens, take a moment to consider your early days as a novice head. Could it be that you're at that stage where it's time to move on and hand over to a new leader...?



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



# WHAT SCHOOL LEADERS CAN LEARN FROM TRADESMEN

In construction projects, everyone's roles, tasks and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood. If only we in education could say the same, says **Tom Rees**...



A few years ago, we built an extension on the back of our house. It was a big project and at one point we had to move our family of five to live with my parents for what we thought might be a fortnight and ended up being three months. With Adele (my wife) having spent hours watching *Grand Designs* and my natural assumption that I had the skills and knowledge to be able to take on such a task, we decided to manage the project ourselves, with most of the work carried out by a builder friend.

It was an exciting yet stressful time, which inevitably took considerably longer than planned and cost more than we could afford. The stress of trying to manage the project and help with the manual labour at weekends and evenings was compounded by preparation at

school for an Ofsted inspection. Simon de Senlis Primary had been (rightly) judged as 'Requiring Improvement' 18 months previously, shortly after I was appointed as head, and we knew we would be re-inspected at some point in the summer term. While all logical thinking assured us that the outcome would almost certainly be positive, there is always an element of doubt and a great deal was riding on it. I felt that our staff and community really needed the public stamp of approval to recognise all the improvements that had taken place.

## BUILT TO LAST?

Although it was difficult, there were some therapeutic benefits to living this dual managerial role of school leader and site manager. Seeing our dreams become a

reality was both exciting and rewarding; lifting blocks and sweeping up in the evening offered enforced escape from the all-consuming world of 'Ofsted readiness'; and watching different tradesmen at work provided a welcome and refreshing new perspective to life.

One memorable observation was of the confidence exuded by the many tradesmen as they carried out their different roles. The bricklayers knew that with a 4:1 mix of sand to cement, one inch of mortar would be enough to hold the blocks and bricks together securely; the carpenters knew that two-inch screws would keep the doorframes firmly in place; and the electrician slept well at night, knowing that once he had tested the circuits and tightened the final screws, his work was done.





This article is based on an edited extract from Tom Rees' book *Wholesome Leadership*, published by John Catt ([johncatt.com](http://johncatt.com))



I was so envious of this certainty that the job was 'done'. Why is it that tradesmen can drive home confident that their work for the day has been completed, while teachers up and down the country spend their lives worrying about whether their different approaches are working, continually trying new initiatives to make learning stick?

Over the six months or so that the project took, I must have watched between 25 and 30 workers come and go, all playing their separate roles. It amazed me how clearly defined their methods were; how there was no real debate or discussion about which approach would be better than another. Don't get me wrong, they still moaned a lot about how tired they were and blamed the previous workman for anything that went wrong – but in their eyes, there was

no sense of 'Did we get it right today?' as they packed up their tools at the end of the day.

## AN INSPECTOR CALLS...

And then Ofsted came and everyone put on their best clothes and shoes and did their thing. We stayed late at school for two days, working harder than ever, and abandoned our families to make sure that we could answer any conceivable question or possible line of enquiry.

Meanwhile, at home, the building inspector came to visit but there was no sense of panic among the builders, or concern that if things went the wrong way this could be part of a career-defining disaster. After all, they had invited him along in the first place to check their work. The building inspector duly arrived with his tape measure and checked that the roof insulation was of the right thickness and the windows were set at the right depth, then got back in his car and drove off. A relief for me, but otherwise just another normal day applying processes that everyone knows work when building a house.

Back at school, I smiled and waved off the inspection team from the carpark. If an inspection has gone well, the walk from the farewell handshake with the inspectors down to the staffroom to share the feedback with your staff is a lovely moment to savour. Nice things were said and written; we opened the bubbly and celebrated and enjoyed all the stories that inspections always bring, reflecting proudly on the journey over the last two years.

What became clear to me in this brief dual life as headteacher and building site manager was that while we have worked out how to build houses that can stand for centuries, we still lack a shared understanding and confidence of 'what works' in our schools. And while many people you meet make loud and confident claims about what great learning looks like, they are often wrong. Why is it so difficult? We have been teaching children in formal state education for well over 100 years now. Surely we must have worked out the right approaches to use in schools, so that we can get on and do the right things?

At the heart of this conundrum lies one of the biggest challenges for all of us involved in education: learning is invisible. Since we cannot see it happening, we rely on signs we associate with good learning to make judgements about when and

where it is taking place, or visible 'proxies for learning' that are easy to check or measure. They can be outputs – such as assessments, tests and work in books – or inputs, such as planning, certain teaching approaches and types of learning activities. These proxies for learning can become the basis of expectation and accountability in schools and often find their way into checklists, minimum expectation documents and lesson observation sheets for leaders or managers to check.

At the surface level, this sounds reasonably sensible. Leaders should check that the right things are happening in the classroom, just as site managers and building inspectors should check that the right screws are being used in the right way and the concrete in the foundations is the specified depth. But research conducted in recent years has made us question the validity of many classroom inputs as reliable proxies for learning. Learning styles, lengthy written comments for marking, use of mobile technology in the classroom and three-way differentiation in each lesson are all examples of things which have been encouraged or insisted upon in schools, even though their effectiveness is disputed by research.

We must take more care to draw useful and reliable inferences from the outputs of assessment, and more critical evaluation should take place of different inputs if we are to move towards a better understanding of 'what works' in schools. However, this important evaluative and analytic type of school improvement activity is not yet common practice – partly due to the operational challenges that come with running buildings that house hundreds of children, but also due to the chaotic and volatile nature of our education system and the unhealthy relationship with accountability that has been normalised across our schools.



**Tom Rees is the executive headteacher of Simon de Senlis Primary School and education director at Northampton Primary Academy Trust.**

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# CREST SuperStar Awards

A nationally recognised accreditation scheme for STEM project work that is perfect for extra curricular clubs

- Practical intervention that is perfect for science clubs
- Fun and rewarding pupil-led extra-curricular activities packed with rich investigations
- Supports learners to solve real-life STEM challenges through practical exploration and discussion
- Devoted to developing a culture of everyday science

Reviewed by: John Dabell



Every year, around 30,000 pupils across the UK gain CREST Awards through enrichment activities, investigations and enquiry-based learning projects in STEM-related areas. This is the British Science Association's crown jewel STEM programme and provides pupils with sparkling opportunities to participate in hands-on STEM work.

The scheme has been running since 1986 and offers teachers an easy-to-run structure for curriculum enhancement. Crucially, this is pupil-led which means students take ownership of their projects. What the awards do so well is cultivate a strong independent learning orientation that helps pupils develop high levels of persistence, perseverance and tenacity to achieve their goals.

There are six CREST Award levels, allowing students to progress through the scheme throughout their education. Each level requires students to demonstrate particular skills, such as problem solving, independent learning, organisation, teamwork and communication.

The primary activities on offer have been designed so that you don't have to be a teacher or have a science background to run them.

For 7-11 year olds, CREST SuperStar offers children real-life one-hour problem-solving tasks from a varied

selection of challenges.

Each one is devoted to developing children's scientific enquiry skills about the world in which they live. They are all relatable activities too, embedded in rich contexts that children will recognise and be interested in, such as making a wind-up toy, building a bird's nest, testing toothpaste, turning milk into cheese and designing and making a discus.

Pupils use colourful and engaging activity cards. These contain the challenge, along with plenty of ideas for discussion, how to get started, what to test, pointers for sharing ideas and extra things to do. Expertly written, the cards are question-heavy and encourage cognitive conflict. This is delivered via fictional characters Cosmic and Gem. To support these, there are excellent organiser's notes with clear instructions about the activity, what you need, what to do, keywords and safety tips to be aware of.

Children are given a special passport for recording their journey and can mark off each challenge inside. Once activities have been completed, there are special certificates and badges to collect. Finish eight tasks to receive a CREST Award.

You could quite easily incorporate and run CREST SuperStar in your lessons over a term or as part of a science club, so it is very flexible. It is an agile,

ambitious and extremely competent set of resources that is bursting with creativity and insight which will build science capital and a range of transferable skills. The only thing missing is the addition of art into the mix, which would make it a truly cross-curricular resource.



## VERDICT

- ✓ Purposeful, inspiring and engaging dialogue-rich activities
- ✓ Practical opportunities for pupils to gain real-life science experiences
- ✓ Emphasises the process of problem solving
- ✓ Supports skills in creativity, teamwork and time management
- ✓ Promotes autonomy and self-regulated learning

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# The Week Junior

A multi award-winning current affairs magazine for 8- to 14-year-olds

- An uplifting, astute and colourful weekly magazine for children
- A positive, responsible and reliable source of news and information
- Subjects range from space science and endangered species to fashion and football
- A great mix of content, accompanied by amazing photographs

Reviewed by: John Dabell



**H**ow do you get children engaged and excited about news and current affairs? Well, you wouldn't go far wrong by plonking a copy of The Week Junior in their hands, safe in the knowledge that you've given them something creative, meaty, intelligent and trustworthy.

The BBC's founding mission to "educate, inform and entertain" could equally apply to The Week Junior, as it does all three with style. In many ways the magazine reminds me of the glorious Children's Newspaper, founded by Arthur Mee in 1919, which was seen as 'giving our boys and girls a faithful record of what is happening in the world, and a true conception of the things that matter week by week.' That publication ran for 46 years, and I see no reason why The Week Junior shouldn't top that, given the high calibre of its journalism and impressive production values.

It's a fascinating magazine, bursting with features, hot-off-the-press news and various fascinating snippets dotted throughout. It serves up a brilliant mix of content, with plenty for children to get absorbed in. Said features include

reportage from around the world and photos of the week, alongside the week's big headlines, screen listings and the latest science, technology and sporting news. There's also a weekly quiz, fun puzzles, a regular 'book club' item and more besides.

The Week Junior is perfectly suited to media literacy lessons and news clubs, and its content can be readily adapted into thoughtful assemblies and homework activities. It can be used to support subjects across the curriculum and offers a superb way of enhancing, enriching and extending literacy content.

As a magazine, it succeeds in speaking to children at their level and presenting a wide range of material without being condescending or alienating. It presents itself as a fun, yet serious-minded and purposeful magazine that can excite and intrigue.

What I like about The Week Junior is that it's able to see current affairs from a child's perspective and aims to keep its young readers in the loop about what's going on in the world. It's packed with content and packs a punch. It's a weekly treat that keeps on giving, with something amazing on every page.



## VERDICT

- ✓ Sophisticated and challenging, yet accessible and engaging
- ✓ Optimistic, ambitious and pulsating with life
- ✓ Delights and inspires imaginations with its colour and energy
- ✓ Promotes independent reading and encourages an interest in current affairs
- ✓ Readers are guaranteed to learn lots, and will keep going back for more

## SUBSCRIBE IF...

You're looking for an informative, educational and entertaining magazine that can fuel children's media literacy, while supporting their knowledge and understanding of current affairs and news events.

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Call 0330 333 9494 | Visit [schools.theweekjunior.co.uk](http://schools.theweekjunior.co.uk)

# HOW CREATIVE IS YOUR CURRICULUM?

Schools have to contend with a packed curriculum, concedes Lucy Starbuck Braidley – but leaders still have the option of letting staff flex their creative muscles when planning lessons...

**Y**ou'd probably struggle to name a teacher who doesn't love the creative aspect of planning. Yes, sometimes the workload, form-filling and the sheer volume of it all can seem a bit much – but for most, the actual process of formulating ideas for lessons is the lifeblood of teaching. It feeds one of the core joys of the job; sparking children's interest and creating hooks that see their learning flourish. Those are the moments that keep us going through the stacks of marking and drawn-out staff meetings.

This important creative aspect of teaching has a flipside, however, which is meeting the demands of curriculum management. There are times when these two aspects of planning seem to be working against each other. There's no doubt that the demands of the current National Curriculum are more prescriptive than ever – especially in KS2, where the level of subject content required can seem stifling at times.

It's clear in this era of education that both class teachers and SLT need a firm handle on what's being taught and when, particularly in schools with mixed year group classes that need rolling programs or larger schools looking for consistency across classes.

So what can SLT do to ensure teachers are able to remain creative and responsive to their classes, whilst also ensuring control over coverage?

involved, but SLT should make a point of actively involving teachers in their curriculum mapping. What subject areas feed into their existing knowledge base? What topic areas reflect their personal passions and experiences? What can be done to tap into these knowledge hotspots and make the most of them?

Resist the temptation to micromanage your staff. Instead, look for spaces in

the curriculum where teachers can flex their creative muscles and remember the joy of planning for learning. English, in particular, is an area where the same curriculum learning can be met through a wide variety of stimulus, genre and key texts. Be brave and give your teaching staff the flexibility to make choices that work for them and their class.

Let staff take the lead. Some teachers may love using the same planning year after year, while others might need space to diversify if they're to stay fresh. Don't be too static. Yes, the learning goals need to be the same, but if you're looking to maintain quality across classrooms, a compromise isn't always the answer.

With a curriculum so chock-a-block with content to cover, make a point of allowing teachers to use their creative skills by layering up content coverage. Not everything needs to be taught discretely; giving teachers the freedom to see these opportunities will allow them to plan their class' time more effectively.

There's obviously a balance to be struck here, but making it clear to staff when and where they can put their own stamp on things will help foster a culture of creativity in your school. The result will be enthusiastic teachers with ownership over, and pride in what they do. Surely that's a risk worth taking?



## One step removed

There may be a temptation for those now out of the classroom – and therefore one step removed from the planning process – to get stuck into curriculum planning as a way of staying



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



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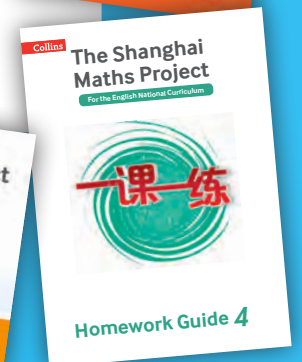
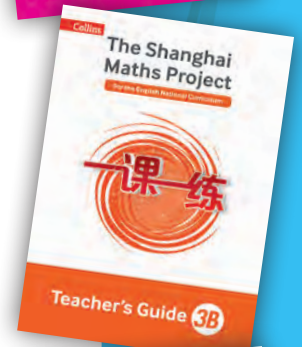
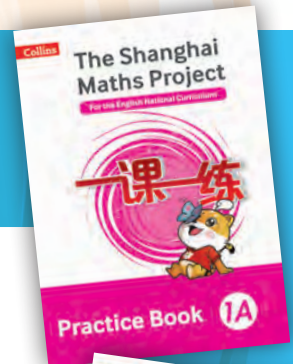
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Chapter 2: Addition and subtraction within 10

**Partitioning tree**

5 (whole) → 2 (part) + 3 (part)

**Adding on a number line**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

$3 + 4 = 7$

**Subtracting on a number line**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

$8 - 6 = 2$

**Bar model**

whole: 8 (whole) → 5 (part) + 3 (part)

**Adding and subtracting on a number line**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

$2 + 7 = 9$

$9 - 4 = 5$



**Written by leading  
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