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From the editor



England's primary school system has seen a host of changes in recent years, but there's a common thread linking them all – the notion that schools ought to behave more like businesses.

This can most obviously be seen in academies and free schools, but maintained schools are having to be more business-savvy too, as services once provided by local authorities continue to be pared back. There are questions to be asked and debates to be had over the general direction of travel, but ultimately we are where we are. Schools must be run smoothly, whatever the policies of the current government, and it can be a complex business.

Hence, *Primary School Management*. This new publication from The Teach Company largely parks the pedagogy (see our sister magazine, *Teach Primary*, for more of that) in favour of focusing on the various logistical and administrative issues involved in keeping a school's gates open. From staffing to site management, our aim is to offer headteachers and school business managers advice, ideas and commentary concerning those back office tasks without which a school's teaching and learning would grind to a halt – while also helping schools make the best use of their funds at a time of squeezed budgets.

We hope you like what you see – if you have any comments, or ideas you'd like to share with other school leaders, we'd love to hear from you.

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“Bite the bullet and take control”

Vic Goddard

Vic Goddard explains why primary leaders should take a more proactive attitude when it comes to academisation...

We were one of the first single academy converters, becoming part of a group of schools in Harlow that had become single standalone academies under the co-operative model. Two years later we were approached by two local primary schools, Potter Street and Purford Green – one of which had just gone into Special Measures and the other into Requires Improvement.

The driving force for us has always been ‘We don’t want to run anybody else’s school.’ The answers to the issues and challenges in each school are generally within the school itself, if you know where to look.

NO PRECEDENT

It was important to us that the schools kept their governing bodies, headteachers and a sense of their own identity, rather than adopting a ‘franchise model’.

Obviously, a trust board driven by the sponsor, in this case us, is ultimately in charge – but we’ve been consistently open and honest with each other and worked in partnership throughout.

It’s about resource sharing, streamlining and making sure we’re spending money in the best possible way – we provide catering support for the primaries and negotiate on things like insurance and grounds maintenance for three schools rather than one. I’m part of the first generation of leaders to lead more than one school, and we’ve had to make it up as we go along, because there’s been no precedent. There’s a fine line you have



to walk, between making sure the school’s as businesslike as possible without turning it into a business.

However, the most significant gain that’s taken place has been the learning by my staff of what’s actually done in primary school. During the first year of our sponsorship I spent a day in one of the primaries and found that in Y5 and Y6 they were doing geography and learning about four- and six-figure grid references, which was great to see. The next day I observed a Y7 geography

lesson at Passmores in which they were doing... four- and six-figure grid references. It was on our curriculum, but it turned out 95% of the class

already knew it. As a secondary, we’ve learnt as much from them, if not more, as they have from us.

PRIMARIES LEADING?

Primaries shouldn’t underestimate how much they have to offer MAT leaders. The early MAT model was very much based around primaries joining secondary leads, due to the latter’s capacity taking on that extra work. One big hurdle has been pensions and staff P&Cs, but I believe there are now many more primary schools which can assume that decision-making process and form MATs of their own.

I’d love to see primaries approaching secondaries and asking them if they want to join their MAT. I know there are some models of that around the country, but not enough.

My advice for primaries would be to bite the bullet and take control. Ultimately, it’s not something that’s *that* difficult to do, and it doesn’t necessarily represent too big a change – it’s more about being clear as to your ethos, and working together with others and agreeing on things that will make your organisation more efficient and give you more money to put into teaching and learning.

Don’t wait for academisation to happen to you – think about how you can do it yourself in the best interests of your community.

Vic Goddard is the principal of Passmores Academy in Harlow; for more information, visit passmoresacademy.com or follow @vicgoddard

“There’s not enough in the pot”



Former ASCL general secretary turned leadership consultant Brian Lightman talks funding, recruitment and the trouble with grammars...

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What are your thoughts regarding what’s happened in the educational landscape since you stepped down as ASCL general secretary?

It’s been an incredibly challenging year for schools, for a range of reasons. The reforms put in place by the coalition government under Michael Gove’s tenure have begun to be implemented and there’s an enormous workload coming out of that, as well as a great deal of uncertainty about the detail of some of those things.

In the primary sector we’ve seen further uncertainty over what the new assessment arrangements will look like, and challenges arising from reduced budgets and changes to schools finances. Then there are the recruitment issues, which have been a massive problem. Without exception, every school I’m going to is having difficulties with recruitment. In inner cities and rural areas, they’re all struggling and quite a few have got vacancies. I think it’s less acute in primary than secondary, but still there.

Are you aware of any notable or unusual steps heads have taken to maintain their staffing levels?

The difference between the shortages we’ve had in the past and what we’ve got now is that they’re affecting all levels and all subject specialisms – there’s a real issue with recruiting leaders of the right calibre, as well as classroom teachers at the lower end of the pay scales.

One thing leaders can do is try to make working in their schools more attractive. If a school demonstrates a really good commitment to CPD, for example, that will help. Advertising for posts through traditional methods is becoming less effective, but social media is proving to be quite a powerful way of recruiting people, through subject networks, Twitter groups and similar. If people hear that a school is attractive to work in, they might apply.

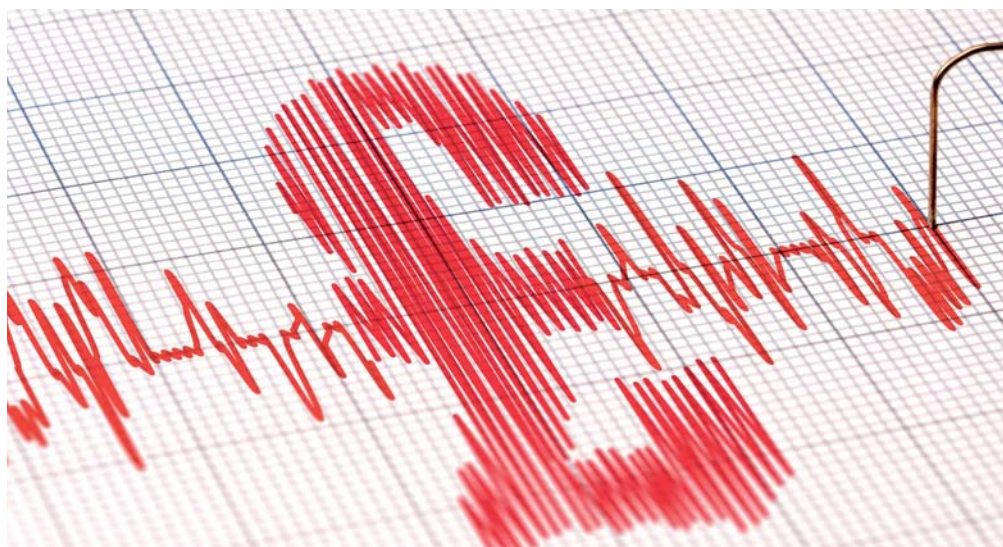
But those are really sticking plasters on the bigger problem, which is that there simply aren’t enough people and still too much negativity around teaching – from media and policy circles, and sometimes parts of the profession as well. It’s incumbent upon us all to talk up teaching and school leadership and tell people what a great job it is.

What do you see as the most challenging development that primary headteachers are currently facing?

One wide-ranging issue is how to make sense of the data that’s currently being

used for accountability purposes and what it actually means. We now don’t have levels, and whether you agree with that or not, this transitional stage is incredibly challenging for primary schools. How do you know that the targets you’re setting or your aspirations are the right ones?

There’s nothing wrong with data *per se*; I’m a great supporter of having lots of data and using it to ask questions. The issue is what it means when the goalposts are moving all the time. What people need is some sort of stability, so we can be absolutely clear when saying ‘These



CAREER TIMELINE

1979
Earns PGCE from University of Southampton and joins Hazlewick School in Crawley as a teacher of MFL

Appointed head of department and latterly head of 6th form at Sondes Place School, Dorking

1984

1989
Joins St Martin’s School, Brentwood as a senior teacher and is subsequently made deputy head

Assumes headship of Llantwit Major School in the Vale of Glamorgan

1995

are the expectations' that the data is actually measuring those.

You've previously written that "Too much professional expertise has been sacrificed on the altar of accountability." [See tinyurl.com/lightman-leader] – what are the main issues with primary accountability, and what needs to change?

I'm not underestimating the difficulty of doing this in some contexts, particularly in challenging schools, but you've got to take control of your data and assessment. Assessment should be part of the learning process and integrated into the teaching and learning that's going on. We have to take that back, and not just allow the government to use it for summative purposes.

Doing that would give us accurate information about how our pupils are progressing and what they've actually learnt, and put us into a position where we can tell our own stories. Ofsted have been very helpful over the past year in trying to 'bust' the many myths surrounding what they require. Schools should be going into inspections saying 'This is what we do and this is why we do it; these are the standards we aspire towards, here's how we assess and here's the evidence we've gathered'. They have their own story to tell, and the most successful schools are already telling theirs.

What's your view of the National Funding Formula?

As lots of people have said, the problem is that there's not enough in the pot. It's the wrong time to try something that will cause some schools to lose out even further. Schools are under enormous pressure, and there's mounting evidence that they're really struggling to make ends meet.

While I'm absolutely in favour of a National Funding Formula, you can't implement it without additional funding. Otherwise, we're likely to end up in a situation where the quality of education in some schools is going to suffer. It's a change that needs to be made, because funding variations around the country



“One wide-ranging issue is how to make sense of the data that's currently being used for accountability purposes and what it actually means”

have gone on for far too long, but it has to be funded.

And we know there's funding there – we've heard a lot about austerity over the last half decade, but within the last year there suddenly there seems to be money for projects the government feels it wants to support.

There's no evidence that they would help the majority of students. For every grammar that opens there will be a secondary modern – which will affect primaries, in that there'll be children who are destined to go into a second class system, if they don't get through into those grammar schools.

What do you make of Justine Greening's performance as Education Secretary so far?

I don't think we've seen very much yet, but that's not necessarily a criticism. The last thing we need, and I think she recognises this, is a load more initiatives. We need a period of stability, but obviously I think we're all disappointed by the grammar school announcement.

What single piece of advice would you give to a recently promoted primary head?

Spend your first term listening to everybody you possibly can about how the school is doing and what needs to be done, and set out a comprehensive plan that will drive everything you do – regardless of what the government announces as its next initiative...

1999
Appointed
headteacher of
St Cyres School
in Penarth

Appointed
general
secretary of the
ASCL – a role he
holds until
stepping down
in 2016

2010

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HOW HEADS CAN OVERCOME 'IMPOSTER SYNDROME'

Getting to the bottom of why even the most effective leaders can feel unworthy of the role

When I became a headteacher at 31, I knew little of the emotional and psychological complexities of the role and what I'd have to do to overcome them.

15 years after being told by my careers teacher that I'd amount to nothing more than a supermarket checkout girl, I became the headteacher of an inner-city primary school. To the outside world I appeared confident and happy, but internally it was a different story. Nearly every day I questioned

myself – *did I have the right to be here? Was my careers teacher right? Did I have what it took to be a headteacher?*

For more than a few headteachers, this is how imposter syndrome works. If they have previously had experiences that have caused them to question their self-worth, they can find it incredibly difficult to internalise their achievements once they've reached the pinnacle of their careers. As a result, they feel an array of emotions – guilt, shame, anxiety, fear and self-doubt, to name but a few.

Without the right support, many heads will adopt behaviours that do little to address the root cause of their feelings. Instead, they will adopt coping strategies that only serve to exacerbate their feelings of inadequacy.

DESTABILISING THOUGHTS

As an executive coach for headteachers, I've found that one of the best ways to help school leaders overcome imposter syndrome is to help them consider their emotional and psychological challenges within the context of Maslow's 'Four Stages of Learning' model (see above).

Maslow's model helps us make sense of the emotional and cognitive processes that accompany new learning experiences – particularly those destabilising emotions and thoughts felt with differing levels of intensity between 'Unconscious incompetence' and 'Conscious competence'. Newly appointed heads will experience this at

the beginning of their headships; they might conceal it well, but established heads can experience something similar when changing schools, or when the circumstances surrounding their role changes dramatically.

In my own practice, I've found that a positive mental and emotional shift can be created when individuals are encouraged to respond to questions that cause them to reflect on their sense of purpose and vocation.

BY ASKING...

- Why am I in this role; what guides me?
- Who do I want to be?
- Who believes in me?

YOU SHIFT FROM...

- Complying with others' expectations
- Being affected by imposter syndrome
- Experiencing self-doubt

TO...

- Acting with authenticity and confidence
- Focusing on the best vision of yourself
- Seeing evidence of your achievements

When school leaders engage in 'inner work' such as this, the 'outer' work becomes less scary. The symptoms of imposter syndrome will soon disappear as individuals learn to fully embrace and accept who they are.



Viv Grant is the director of Integrity Coaching, which specialises in

tackling professional and emotional isolation among school leaders; for more information, visit www.integritycoaching.co.uk

MASLOW'S 'FOUR STAGES OF LEARNING' MODEL

1

Unconscious incompetence
You don't know that you don't know how to do something



2

Conscious incompetence
You know that you don't know how to do something, and it bothers you



3

Conscious competence
You know that you know how to do something, and it takes effort



4

Unconscious competence
You know how to do something and it's second nature

I my SBM

The headteacher and SBM at Hillcrest Primary School in Bristol share what it is that's made their working partnership such an effective one...



I WORK WELL WITH MY SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGER BECAUSE...

TIM BROWSE,
HEADTEACHER

I've been the head of my school for five years now – my business manager Nicky was there long before me. To begin with, she was my general port of call for everyday financial and operational matters – I was too busy and naïve to really focus on our long term financial strategy during my first few months of headship.

We started working more closely when it came to planning a significant spend on ICT. I remember being impressed that she could set up meetings with potential clients very quickly, and we naturally found a rhythm when talking to them; I could focus on the educational side and she on the finances. Over time we both became more aware and increasingly interested in each other's point of view.

A significant change came when I decided that Nicky should attend every SLT meeting, even if we weren't discussing anything financial. For me, that was a real turning point. I'm not suggesting that her eyes were somehow opened and that saw for the first time that

we were 'doing it for the children' – not at all. But suddenly there was joined up thinking across the entire leadership team.

Having a different kind of strategic thinker on board enabled us to solve problems not just together, but often in more innovative ways. Likewise, Nicky found herself in a room each week with people she wouldn't necessarily contact when trying to grapple with a particular problem she was experiencing.

We provided additional context to one another's priorities, which over time served to strengthen the whole school.

In terms of how we

work together, I'm proud to say that she challenges me – often relentlessly. Everyone knows that a head needs to work well with their deputy, but I consider the SBM to be an equally important role. I'd be a far less effective head if my business manager wasn't someone I could go to in the knowledge that she'll be upfront and honest with me. Nicky has heard her fair share of ridiculous ideas, and I trust her judgement.

We don't always agree. But if I get 'my way' in the end with regards to an idea, I guarantee that she will have improved it.

Looking ahead to the future, we both recognise that we're entering uncertain times. I'm not sure how smooth our journey is going to be over the next few years. We've worked closely together for a considerable time, but we're having to work really closely together now! After each spending cut announcement, I realise once again what a good idea it was to ensure our SBM was immersed in all aspects of school development.

As increasingly difficult financial decisions continue to be made, I know my business manager is aware that it's about so much more than just money – and that she'll try as hard as me to make sure our education doesn't suffer any more than it has to.





I WORK WELL WITH MY HEADTEACHER BECAUSE...

NICKY FEAR,
SCHOOL BUSINESS
MANAGER

I've been in post for nearly 10 years, and my role has changed and developed hugely over that time. When I first started, I sat in the main office as part of the admin team looking after the school finances. Now I share an office with the deputy, and feel very much part of the SLT.

Tim is the fourth head I've worked with at this school. In my mind, the way in which we work together illustrates how much the job of both SBM and headteacher have changed in recent years. Prior to Tim's arrival I wouldn't really talk in depth to heads about the school's financial strategy; I just met with an LA financial auditor once a term and then fed back to the head afterwards. So long as we were coming in on budget, everything was fine. The

only time we'd discuss finances would be if the head wanted to start spending.

Soon after he started, Tim took an interest in the long term financial position of the school. Together, we looked at the longevity of our carry-forward (a word soon to be deleted from every school's dictionary) and began to talk about staffing models and where we could make savings. It was clear that these were not to be made at the expense of quality teaching, but Tim was keen, as was I, that we get value for money.

Looking back, it's obvious to me that becoming a more active member of the SLT increased my own capacity to contribute significantly to school improvement. I was able to hear what the other school leaders wanted to achieve and was able to help them achieve it. To begin with I was usually only consulted about whether we could afford something, but this soon changed

and I was able to offer alternative perspectives and solutions to problems that nobody had thought of.

I now feel that I have more rounded view of the school, and I think the other senior leaders would say that they do too. Sitting away from the main office (but still in earshot, so that I'm aware of what's going on) means that Tim and I are able to talk openly about issues and concerns as and when they occur. Tim has an open door policy, and I feel comfortable in knowing that I can go to him for advice or with a challenge, and that he'll always give me a fair hearing.

As for working with Tim, he expects a lot of challenge. He doesn't always like it when it comes, but the fact that he still talks to me must mean that he values it on some level! We're both aware of the changes that are coming, and I know that even when things get really difficult, we'll still value each other's opinions.

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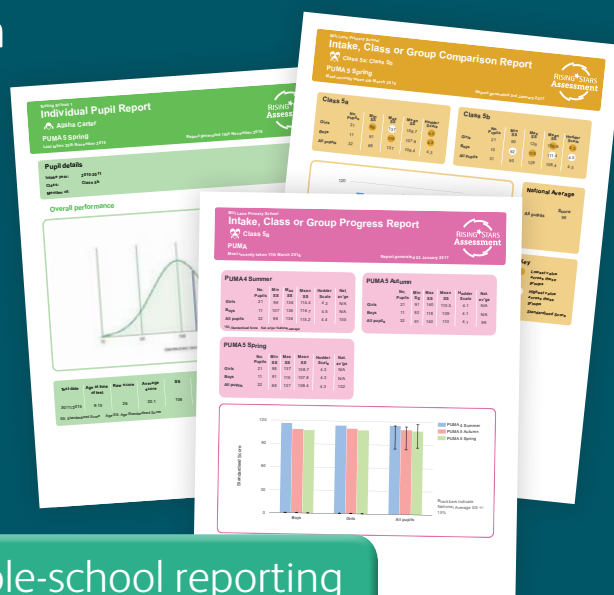
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THE PSM GUIDE TO... School improvement

NOURISH TO FLOURISH

Whether it's a fine wine or a successful school, to grow something great you need the right conditions...

In October last year I spent some time in Niagara-on-the-Lake, one of Canada's leading wine regions. One of the processes I was interested in finding out about was that of making ice wine. The grapes, having already reached full ripeness in October, are left untouched on the vines under a cloak of protective netting until the first deep freeze of the Canadian winter. The harvest then takes place between December and January, when temperatures are between -9 to -13°C.

After harvesting, the grapes are pressed while still frozen. The water in the juice remains as ice crystals during the pressing, and only a few drops of sweet concentrated juice are obtained from each grape. What's important to note here is that specific conditions are

required for ice wine to flourish – and incredible schools are no different. The conditions we create as school leaders in a climate of change is critical to how the school moves forward and sustains that forward momentum.

Case studies of exceptional schools indicate that school leaders primarily influence learning by galvanising effort around ambitious goals, and by establishing conditions that support teachers and help pupils succeed. At our school, Three Bridges Primary, we've focussed our energies on developing a culture built upon collaborative processes, intellectual stimulation, individualised support and leading by example.



BUILD COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

Successful school leaders will actively facilitate the participation of staff in school development. We make use of targeted professional learning communities, research-driven lesson study, teacher-led open lessons and other processes to interrogate learning, support teaching practices, achieve shared goals and develop key priorities. These are characterised by high-trust and honest, open feedback from all participants in a relatively flat leadership structure.

PROVIDE INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION

Stimulate the conversation with readings or visuals that promote reflection and support teachers in examining their assumptions about pedagogy and practice. Allow teachers to identify current areas of excellent practice, and shape the path towards new ones through facilitated group discourse. Allocate time for trying out new ideas without management interference.

PROVIDE PERSONALISED SUPPORT

It's critical that we show our teachers respect by providing appropriate incentives, and structure opportunities for individual and small group development outside of larger staff development meetings. Learning opportunities for staff must support the development of teacher skill; our own optimism, evidence base and enthusiasm should be aimed at encouraging their will.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

As school leaders, we must be living examples of our values and ethos. Our own personal leadership resources permeate every area of the school, from the classroom to the playground. When we smile and acknowledge how lucky we are to have the best job in the world, our teachers, pupils, parents and school community do the same.

Jeremy Hannay is deputy headteacher at Three Bridges Primary School.

ASSESS FOR BETTER TRANSITIONS

The primary to secondary transition can be tough, but with right data the process can be made smoother for all concerned...

How many of us have been party to that perennial conversation about how accurate the prior attainment profiles of students are when they start a new school? I suspect nearly all of us! We all know that we will ultimately be judged on said outcomes. But what exactly do our students know, and more importantly, what have they yet to grasp?

We believe it's important to have a baseline from which to measure the progress our students make from when they first walk into an academy weeks after leaving primary school and embark upon their secondary education. KS3 students across our 12 E-ACT secondary academies are assessed when they arrive using standardised assessments in English, maths and science for the last two years. Assessing on entry to Y7 lets us see what skills and knowledge they possess from day one.

Our teachers use the results of those tests to then teach to the gaps. The question level analysis gives us a clear path for each student to follow to get them from A to B. We also use the data to compare with end of KS2 outcomes, scores from the Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT) and other tests to provide a rounded view of where each student

is on their learning journey. Since the tests have a large national sample, we know that our students are being benchmarked against a cross section of students from a range of different backgrounds and starting points.

That last point is key, since many of our academies are located in challenging areas with a much higher than average proportion of Pupil Premium students and students with English as their second language. Our students take the assessments at the start of the autumn term to act as a baseline, and again in the summer term so that we can check on the progress made during each year. These results are instantly delivered, and the test outcomes analysed at trust and academy level.

Many of our cohorts achieve average Standardised Age Scores (SAS) in excess of 100, which is admirable given their typically below average starting points. However, the real value lies in being able to identify their gaps in learning and address them, so that every E-ACT student is given the chance to reach their full potential.

Paul Robinson is a regional data system leader at the multi-academy trust E-ACT - visit e-act.org.uk

10 Tips on Testing

Ryan Hibbard, assistant headteacher at St Bede's Catholic Academy, North Lincolnshire, looks at what schools should consider when introducing a new assessment system...

1 Your staff need time

Make sure staff have time to get to grips with your assessment programme and how they should use the resulting data to understand their students better. If you don't allocate time to it, everything else will take priority.

2 Remove the burden of marking

Where possible, take away the marking from teachers. With digital assessments this happens automatically, so see if it's an option for your school. Staff can instead spend their time on more worthwhile tasks, such as analysing the data to inform their teaching.

3 Ask for their input

Involve staff in the assessment process from the start – ideally during an Inset day, or failing that, in a dedicated staff meeting or twilight session. Ask them what they want to get out of the process and any potential difficulties they can foresee.

4 Make it relevant

Provide your staff with the data that's relevant to them and their class or department. Don't burden them with more than they need.

5 Understand the lingo

Standardised assessment data has its own language – standard age scores, stanines, percentile ranks, and so forth. Staff won't always be familiar with the terminology, so make time to explain it.

6 Know what you're assessing

Knowledge of what you're assessing, what you're not assessing and the limitations your assessments may have is key. Data needs to be used carefully.

7 Assessment is only the beginning

Ensure staff understand that assessment is just the start of the process and that it's there to help. The next step is to use assessment data formatively to plan lessons and make adjustments, depending on need.

8 Be open

Explain to your pupils what you're assessing and what the data can be used for. Our students were pleased to hear that the GL Assessment tests we use were ones they didn't need to revise for.

9 Assess all new students

Assess every student who joins your school, whichever year they're in and whatever time of year they start. We were previously reliant on the data provided to us, but with life after levels, it's harder to use a variety of datasets. Try to use assessments that speak the same language for you and your school.

10 Share information with parents

We shared the assessments' parental reports, and our parents liked that we'd demonstrated knowing a lot about their children so soon. They appreciated seeing which subjects their child was likely to excel at and which they might struggle with, which got our home-school relationships off to a good start.

St Bede's Catholic Academy uses the Transition Assessment Package from GL Assessment; you can find further tips on good assessment practice in its guide 'Growing pains', available to download via gl-assessment.co.uk/academy-trusts

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT STANDARDISED TESTS

Standardised tests have acquired something of a bad rap, but can be hugely helpful – if used correctly, of course...

To assess impact the impact of your school's teaching and pupils' learning, it's important to understand what standardised tests are, how they work and the implications of using them.

A standardised test is any form of test that requires all test takers to answer the same questions in the same way, before being scored in a 'standard' or consistent manner. This makes it possible to compare the relative performance of individual pupils or pupil groups. The term is most widely used in relation to large-scale tests administered to sizeable pupil populations.

Standardised assessment tests follow a rigorous development process that involves pretesting and statistical analysis of the results. This allows schools using the final published tests to benchmark and compare their pupils' performance against the nationally representative sample used in the standardisation process.

Standardised tests are a useful way of comparing how pupils are performing relative to others, monitoring pupils' performance over time and in relation to pupils nationally. They enable school

leaders and governors to benchmark their school's performance against other schools within a group, cluster or academy chain and at a national level. They allow performance to be evaluated in core subjects and key skills, and can help identify gaps in learning within a class or more widely within a group of schools – something that can be very helpful in spotting where interventions or teacher CPD may be needed.

Since they involve all pupils taking the same test, standardised tests are generally perceived as being fairer than non-standardised tests. They are best used termly, or at the start and end of the school year, to monitor progress over time and help inform teaching strategies.

HOW SHOULD THEY BE ROLLED OUT?

If they're to produce reliable results, standardised tests must be administered and marked according to the accompanying test guidance, and taken at the point in time for which they're intended, such as at the beginning of the school year. Failing to do so will risk compromising the reliability and comparability of the results.

It's advisable to research the available options to see which will best meet the school or chain's needs. Devise a whole-school strategy for using standardised tests – this will enable a consistent approach and help everyone understand why the tests are being used, the type of information they will produce and how they will be used to inform teaching and learning. It can be helpful to trial tests with one or two year groups over the course of a year before adopting them more widely.

Standardised tests won't measure everything a pupil has been taught in a particular subject. Moreover, they're a snapshot of a point in time, and not necessarily a true reflection of what a pupil knows. They are therefore best used

alongside other forms of assessment, such as homework, peer and teacher assessment and summative tests, among others.

Ongoing in-class formative assessment remains particularly important, since it provides teachers, pupils and parents with valuable, real-time information about what pupils know and can do, and what they need to do to improve.

Rising Stars Assessment's standardised tests include PIRA (Progress in Reading Assessment), PUMA (Progress in Understanding Mathematics Assessment) and new for 2017/18, GAPS (Progress in Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling Assessment). Find out more at www.risingstars-uk.com/standardised



WHAT CAN STANDARDISED TESTS TELL YOU?

There are three main types of numerical information that be obtained from standardised tests which, with the exception of the raw score, can't be obtained from other forms of testing. The three are independent of each other, providing different information about a pupil's performance.

THE STANDARDISED SCORE – This is derived from the pupil's raw score (i.e. the total number of marks that a pupil has scored in the test) and placed on a scale that compares the result with the

nationally representative sample of pupils for whom the test is intended. Most standardised tests will produce scores with a mean (average) of 100 and a standard deviation of 15.

Scores in the range 85 to 115 are considered 'to be expected', or average relative to the national standardisation sample. When interpreting standardised scores, the EEF recommends thinking in terms of thresholds, rather than small differences in numbers. Within those bands, pupil performance can be considered similar, even if their standardised score differs slightly.

AGE-STANDARDISED SCORE – This is the pupil's raw score adjusted for age in months and placed on a scale that compares it with those involved in the standardisation trial. This can be a useful starting point for further work in understanding those areas in which they need support, and the type of help that will be most appropriate.

Note, however, that age is less likely to have an impact on performance in tests designed to assess curriculum knowledge and understanding rather than skills, since all pupils within the year group are being taught the same thing. In curriculum tests, age generally has less of an impact on performance in KS2 than KS1.

READING/MATHS AGE – This is the average chronological age of the pupils who obtained each raw score in the standardisation trial. The reading or maths age can be used as a quick indication of a child's reading or maths ability, as it will show if they are working at, above or below the average for their age and is also useful for monitoring the impact of interventions.

This score can also be valuable as a quick measure for new pupils entering the school, and used to identify whether they're likely to need additional support. Note that reading or mathematics ages are not the same as reading or mathematics attainment.

Most standardised tests will be supported by data analysis tools that enable the results to be interrogated further. Tests of this kind can therefore be

TESTING CHECKLIST

- FOLLOW THE TEST ADMINISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY
- MAKE SURE THAT THE TESTS ACTUALLY ASSESS WHAT PUPILS HAVE BEEN TAUGHT
- ENSURE THE TESTS ARE QUICK TO MARK AND HAVE CLEAR AND EXPLICIT MARKING GUIDELINES
- THE TEST SCORES SHOULD PROVIDE VALUABLE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE OF EACH PUPIL, YOUR CLASS(ES) AND THE SCHOOL AS A WHOLE IN RELATION TO OTHERS NATIONALLY

used to monitor and provide evidence regarding the impact of teaching within the school for parents, governors and Ofsted, and be helpful when comparing the performance of different schools within a chain or cluster.

ABOUT AUTHOR

Camilla Erskine is consultant publisher, specialising in education and assessment



IMPROVE YOUR SCHOOL IN THE ROUND

When it comes to your school improvement plan, argues Jonathan Brough, it's essential to take a 360° approach...

School improvement planning is a tricky beast. Leaders of genuinely successful schools know that rigorous development documentation is vital. Without it, then at best you'll end up with changes that are patchy and piecemeal. At worst, improvements can disappear completely while the school stagnates.

The process of evaluating provision and identifying how to improve involves assembling a complex jigsaw. At the same time, you'll be treading on eggshells (mindful of the professional pride that everyone holds in the work that they do) and dodging the thunderbolts (maintaining compliance with 'On high', be it an LA, trust or ultimately the government).

It can be tempting to simplify the whole process by sacrificing it on the altar of data. It might appear in various forms – 'performance', 'progress', 'big data', 'metadata' – but this 21st century deity can only be conquered with the aid of complex ICT modelling. Successive governments and inspection frameworks have conspired to reinforce data's omnipotence, so that the success of almost every school is each year defined against its latest set of assessment results. Ever-increasing scores are expected as standard, with any given cohort's achievements forming nothing more than the baseline for their successors.

WE ARE NOT ROBOTS

However, our lives and those of the children in our charge are not like that. They are narratives, not spreadsheets. We have emotions, feelings and moral codes; we are not robots. Of course, it's of paramount importance that all children give of their best academically, and that schools have rigorous procedures in place to ensure this happens – yet the contributions that pupils make now as students, and in the future as citizens of mutually supportive, empathetic communities, require skills and talents that can never be judged or monitored by computation alone.

At Hurlingham School in Putney, our development cycle is influenced by three separate groups of stakeholders who come together to make our school the special place that it is – pupils, staff and parents.

Whilst everyone's views are welcomed and valued throughout the academic year, we place particular emphasis on one specific group in each term. In summer we undertake a detailed web-based survey of parents.

During autumn it's the turn of the children, who express their views through the School Council.

However it's in the spring term that we glean some of the most valuable – and telling – information. This is when our focus turns to the staff, including the support and administrative teams as well as teachers. We hold a training day immediately after the Christmas holidays that's entirely dedicated to this and which follows a specific structure.

First, we split up into groups and complete an enjoyable, competitive team-building exercise. At any other time in the academic year this would run the risk of being viewed as something of a distraction from activities with more immediate relevance to school life, but when we've just returned from the Christmas break this doesn't seem to apply. Instead, it feels pleasant to have something akin to a festive game as the first activity after the holidays!

SOME SIMPLE SELF REVIEW QUESTIONS

- What are you most passionate about achieving?
- What has disappointed you in previous terms or years?
- What are the most significant threats to your success?
- What are the biggest risks that you take in school?
- What single thing could the school do to make you more successful?
- What are the biggest opportunities on which you can capitalise this year?

Different clues and pieces of information are provided to every member of each team, and by working together efficiently, collaborating, empathising and communicating with others, results are gained and solutions found. The tasks themselves are not set within a school framework, but instead highlight key collaboration and team working skills that promote appropriate mindsets for both the activities to come and ongoing institutional success.

With the simulation exercise complete (and a box of chocolates awarded to the winning group), the focus changes

to the moral purpose of education, with staff guided to reflect on why they chose to work in a school. The atmosphere in the room then changes quite considerably –

the skills required to complete the teambuilding exercise remain in everyone's minds, but the imperative and calling that influenced colleagues' decision to work in education are also remembered.

We circulate a list of thought-provoking questions, and each individual can choose whether they are going to think about the answers, discuss them with a friend or write them down. If they commit their thoughts to paper, they have the choice at the end of the session to shred their jottings, keep them to inform their next review meeting or pass them on to a member of SLT.

SWOTTING UP

Once a significant amount of time has been spent considering the self-reflection questions, 'Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats' (SWOT) analysis sheets are given out and staff are asked to think about what the school means to them. They then proceed to record any SWOT details they're aware of regarding the school, before the sheets are compiled into a single document for later discussion by SLT.

The 'weaknesses' and 'opportunities' boxes invariably deliver at least two or three golden nuggets of thinking each year that immediately get transposed into subject, key stage or whole-school planning. The document also helps us identify misconceptions that can be rectified at future staff meetings.

Once the compulsory SWOT analysis has ended, we distribute an optional reflection sheet that contains various 'thought bubbles' that individuals can fill with thoughts concerning their school career and responsibilities if they wish. Obviously, we regularly discuss such matters with the individuals concerned as part of our ongoing performance management review process – but the particular atmosphere and comparatively relaxed framework of the self-reflection day often helps to encourage staff to voice opinions and thoughts that are both creative and original.

In this way, it is through recognising and valuing the essential humanity of our key stakeholders that Hurlingham manages to tame the school improvement beast.



Jonathan Brough is the headteacher of Hurlingham School, Putney

SIP CHECKLIST

- Ensure your SIP includes points from children, parents and staff and isn't simply data-driven
- Your SIP should emphasise essential human values, skills and talents
- Staff should remember their moral calling to work in education
- See that your SWOT analysis is thorough and complete
- Encourage staff to think about the school as a whole, and where they see their class and themselves within it

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N. Thompson - Head of English, Speech and Drama, Parkside.

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Buildings & Facilities

A SCHOOL BUILT ON RESEARCH

When the University of Cambridge opened a primary school, its architecture and educational aims were in tune from the very beginning...

How does one create a school where the philosophy of practice and architecture are aligned? What kind of building design suggests a thriving multi-generational democratic learning community that is inclusive, open and welcoming?

The University of Cambridge Primary School (UCPS) was the first building to be completed on the site of the North

West Cambridge Development (NWCD). At capacity, the school houses over 700 children aged from 4 to 11 years of age.

After a competitive process of bidding to build the school, Marks Barfield Architects was selected as the firm most attuned to the task of creating an environment that would respond dynamically to the needs of children and teachers, whilst also offering an open environment for those seeking to learn about transformative pedagogies. The Marks Barfield design team spent time carefully listening to advice given by Dame Alison Peacock, and asking questions about the educational vision.



21ST CENTURY LEARNING

The school's design needed to reflect an open, inclusive pedagogy, as opposed to one that defined and designated certain areas for the majority and others for those labelled as having special needs. Trust was to be at the heart of a school that aimed to be non-hierarchical and highly democratic, where all children would be listened to and their views and preferences taken seriously. Experience shows that when children are trusted and know this, there is a positive impact on all aspects of their learning.

It was therefore vital to ensure that both formal and informal opportunities could be easily created for dialogue to take place between children of all ages and adults. This might occur in the classroom, in shared areas, in the dining hall or outdoors in a range of spaces.

It was intended that families and the wider community should be easily able to find their place in the school and that there should be built-in opportunities for dialogue and exchange – be it in a comfortable and calm dining area at lunch time, at the beginning or end of each day, or as part of celebrations and performances.

Resisting notions of fixed ability, we were conscious that children of different ages would learn in close proximity to each other, offering the potential for younger children to be inspired by older children and for all children to support each other as a learning community. The aim was that learning should take place everywhere. Opportunities for children to surprise themselves and others were to be optimised and enable liberating achievements.

“The idea was to create a school where the education ethos and the architecture are totally aligned, such that learning can take place everywhere. A school that is democratic and, despite being a large 3FFE, can be divided into smaller communities while still being part of a united whole. This led to the circular plan, formed by the three clusters of six classes, plus an early years cluster, creating the unifying central courtyard where the whole school can gather.”

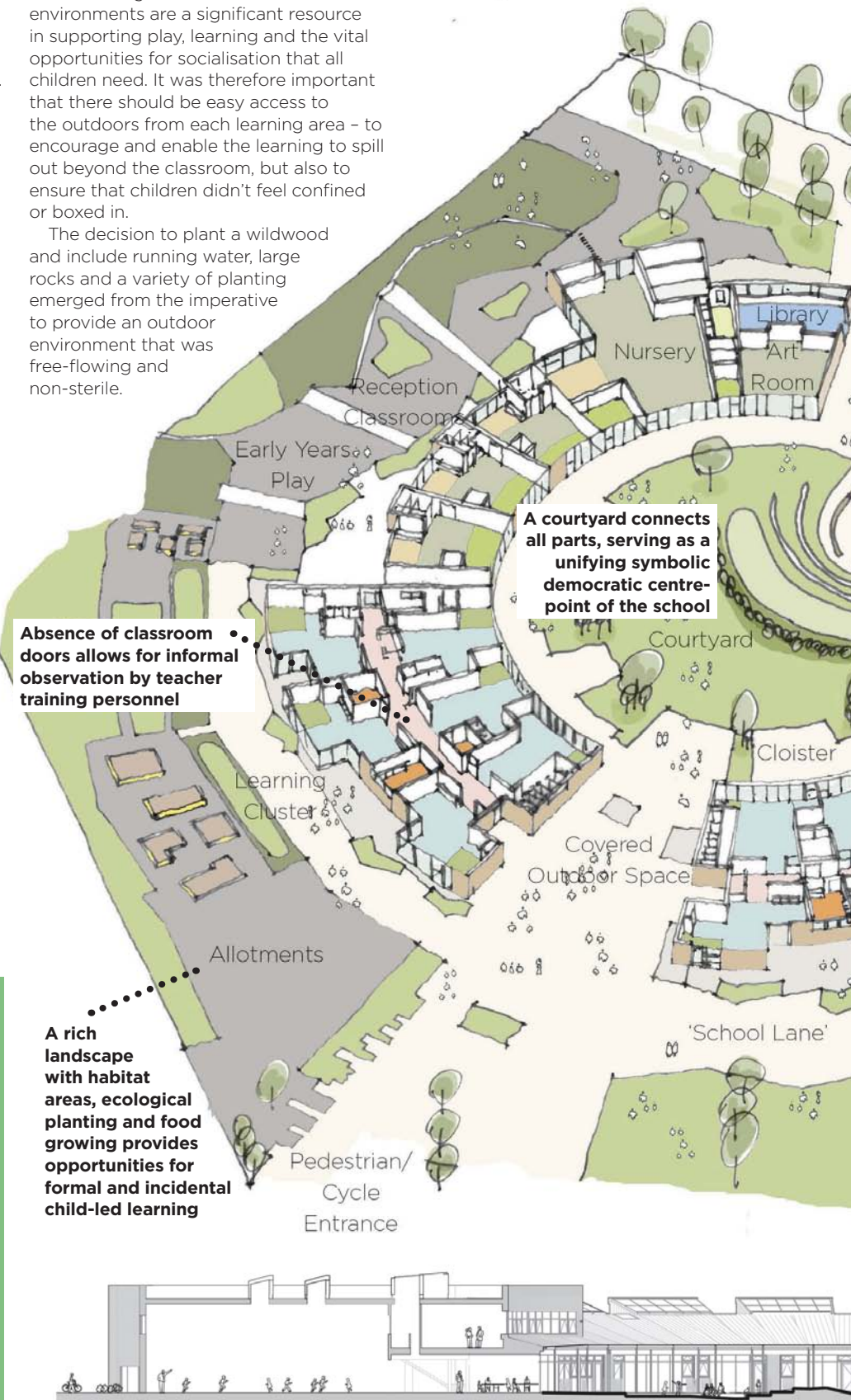
– JULIA BARFIELD, MARKS BARFIELD ARCHITECTS

A PROTECTIVE SPACE

It's well recognised that outdoor environments are a significant resource in supporting play, learning and the vital opportunities for socialisation that all children need. It was therefore important that there should be easy access to the outdoors from each learning area – to encourage and enable the learning to spill out beyond the classroom, but also to ensure that children didn't feel confined or boxed in.

The decision to plant a wildwood and include running water, large rocks and a variety of planting emerged from the imperative to provide an outdoor environment that was free-flowing and non-sterile.

Images courtesy of Marks Barfield Architects (marksbarfield.com)



Articulated learning spaces and classrooms were



"It is not often a headteacher gets the chance to design their own school. It's even less common to work with architects who respond to the educational needs of children through discussion with practising teachers, school leaders and academics who research in this area; essentially bringing professionals together to collaborate for the best outcomes for children."

- JAMES BIDDULPH, UCPS HEADTEACHER

As a University Training School, the UCPS can expect high numbers of adult visitors whose presence shouldn't impact on the children's learning experience, thus necessitating spaces for formal professional learning activities such as seminars and lectures.

The building also needed to provide access to the learning clusters without interrupting activities, by facilitating high visibility of the daily life of the school.

This was achieved via the gallery and windows into the hall, but it was vital that neither teachers nor children should feel that they were trapped in an observation unit, so the decision was taken to imbue the entire building with the ethic of openness. It was intended that anyone visiting the school to study the children's experience of primary education should be able to see this readily without disturbing the flow of learning.

Children need to feel safe and secure in their schools. The broken circle of the UCPS buildings suggests a protective nurturing space. The school areas are not gated or restricted. Although the perimeter of the overall site is fenced, there are many spaces in the grounds that enable exploration.

The articulated classrooms create a variety of flexible spaces for different types of learning activities, while nearby group rooms allow for individual and smaller group activities. The informal learning spaces in the shared learning streets are an extension of the classrooms.

The inherent efficiency of a circle, combined with the principal circulation as an external glazed cloister, enabled the creation of a dining area and additional learning spaces – something not normally possible within the government's area guidelines.

This article is based on an edited extract from the book *A University's Challenge: Cambridge's Primary School for the Nation*, edited by Peter Gronn and published by Cambridge University Press; for more details, visit cambridge.org/unichall



designed to accommodate varying sizes of pupil groups

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR **OUTDOOR SPACE**

Outdoor play can help pupils' health, behaviour and concentration
- Juno Hollyhock outlines 10 ways of using your space effectively

1

BUILD STAFF CONFIDENCE

Taking teaching and learning outside will come more naturally to some teachers than it will to others. Some will have come through initial teacher education routes that don't provide training in this area, so it may be necessary to provide them with some CPD.

2

ASSESS THE RISK

Using your school grounds to pursue outdoor learning opportunities will involve fewer health and safety risk factors than going off site. Risk assessments should still be carried out for all non-classroom based activities, but you can keep these on file as you re-use them in future.

3

WORK OUT THE COST

Even a bare field or tarmac space will instantly offer access to wildlife, textures, surfaces, sounds, smells and space that can't compare with a classroom. You can then add elements such as planting facilities for biodiversity study and growing food for a relatively modest investment.

4

EMBED PEDAGOGY

Don't just use your outdoor space for 'one-off' lessons in summer; use it to enhance pupil outcomes all year round by embedding outdoor activities in your school development plan, line management, ongoing CPD, recruitment expectations and appraisals.

5

EMBRACE MULTIFUNCTION

Since the protection of statutory amounts of space per child in was removed in 2012, school grounds have been encroached upon for development, additional classrooms, car parking and other purposes. Make the most of what you have and utilise it to the fullest.

6

CULTIVATE WILDLIFE

Wildlife is attracted to spaces that provide them with the habitats they need to survive. Ensure your growing plots include fragrant fruit and veg that attract pollinators, and you'll help to attract bird life and insect species, as well as improve the success of your crops.

7

SIT COMFORTABLY

Sawn-off logs and tree trunks are perfect for creating small group teaching spaces, circle time activities or amphitheatre-style seating. They can be left out all year round, stacked away when you need extra space and used in the wet with plastic sheeting.

8

ACCOMMODATE YOUR TREES

Start seeing your trees and buildings as lesson resources, rather than objects that just get in your way. Activities involving angles, textures, history and creative writing can encourage pupils to find inspiration in the surrounding built and planted environment.

9

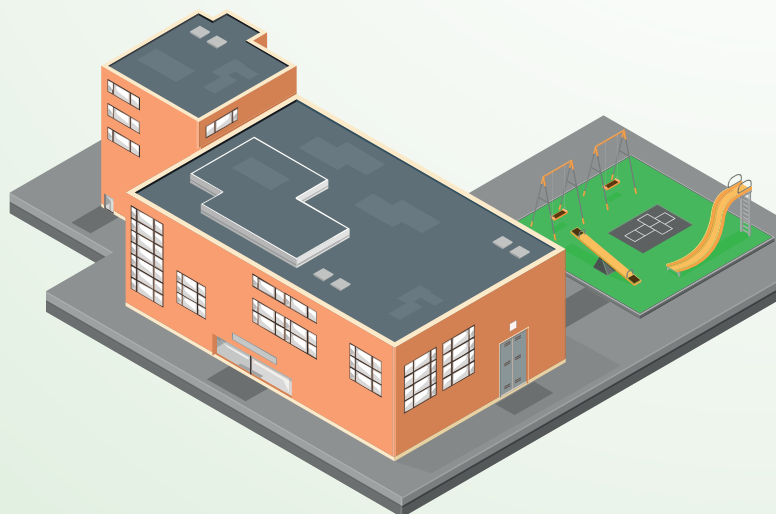
RETHINK YOUR TOPOGRAPHY

If you have the funds to indulge in a little light landscaping, features such as mounds and hollows will increase your square footage and provide rich natural additional learning resources - while also serving as a unique landscape for play and recreation.

10

MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE

Include a transition space where pupils can remove coats and muddy boots before entering the clean corridor; place an outdoor water tap in a convenient place to avoid the need for repeated traipsing; invest in a small shed for storing frequently used outdoor lesson resources.



Juno Hollyhock is executive director of Learning through Landscapes; for more information, visit ltl.org.uk or follow @LTL_Outdoors



“OUR CLASSES ALWAYS GO OUTSIDE”

HEADTEACHER MARGARET JOHNS RECALLS HOW AN OVERHAUL OF HER SCHOOL’S HITHERTO EMPTY OUTDOOR SPACE HAD A TRANSFORMATIVE EFFECT ON PUPILS’ LEARNING OUTCOMES AND BEHAVIOUR...

Located in Livingston, St John Ogilvie RC Primary School has 14 classes and a school roll of approximately 380, with a further 70 pupils attending its nursery. Around two years ago it was invited by West Lothian Council to apply for funding from the charity Grounds for Learning to improve its outdoor space, and was among five successful applicants chosen from 26 other schools.

ADDRESSING AN URGENT NEED

“I’d been in the school for about a year and a half, and recognised that we urgently had to do something with our playground. We had some grass, but it was essentially a vast expanse of tarmac and not very appealing.

We now have a hill that’s had a huge impact both visually and in terms of possibilities for adventurous play. We’ve also had some constructions put up and a huge sandpit built at the bottom of our playground. There were initially some risk assessment issues to take care of, but our LA’s experts were able to assist us with that.”

MAINTAINING MOMENTUM

“We then decided to apply to our LA to adopt a piece of local woodland just outside of our grounds. We wanted to maintain momentum and ensure we were expanding our ability to offer a more organised and progressive outdoor learning pathway.

An outdoor learning development officer joined us, and many of our staff volunteered to do Forest School training. We’re now able to offer different learning opportunities for children who find classroom learning difficult, and our grounds are being used for outdoor learning CPD by other nearby LAs.”

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

“Our staff training initially focused on our pupil support workers. After a couple of months they became strong advocates of the new space and helped bring our teachers round to the idea of moving lessons outside.

I can see which classes will be working outside that day, because they’ll be wearing their wellies and waterproofs – classes will always go outside, regardless of the weather. We’ve had positive feedback from parents, and seen positive changes among pupils in terms of their playground behaviour and interactions between age groups”



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FATHER NATURE

This family-run social enterprise helps schools in London and the South East create growing spaces and outdoor classrooms – the latter of which can include covered learning areas, mud kitchens, bug houses and play equipment made from natural materials. fathernature.org.uk



A&S LANDSCAPE

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The pressure's off – now meet a MAT

With forced conversations now off the table, primaries can take a more considered approach to seeing whether academisation will work for them...

Keeping up with the fast-moving world of education policy can feel like a full-time job at the best of times, but last year was a particularly unpredictable roller coaster ride. Within the space of a few months, schools were told they would all have to become academies; then that they would only have to convert if they were in an 'underperforming' or 'unviable' local authority. Things then changed again when it was announced that while full academisation "remains the government's ambition", it wouldn't be compulsory for any school that was performing well.

The vast majority of schools have welcomed these moves away from compulsory academisation. Without the threat of forced change, many leaders and governors are considering how academisation and formal partnerships might actually help them raise standards and operate on diminishing budgets. They're using the time and space afforded by this policy shift to think carefully about their ethos, values and vision, assess their local landscape and consider the best way of safeguarding the future of their school.

The ASCL recently worked with the National Governors' Association and the education law firm Browne Jacobson to publish three new guidance papers aimed at supporting schools in thinking through their options. The papers explore the potential benefits of working in formal partnerships (such as federations and MATs), explain how academies and MATs are led and governed and summarise how effective federations and MATs operate.

They also suggest a process for schools to follow when planning to join or form a MAT, the key points of which include...

1 Staying as you are doesn't mean the landscape won't change

Many schools are cautious about making any decisions at the moment,



opting instead to wait and see what happens over the next couple of years. It's entirely right for school leaders and governors to be wary of rushing into decisions they may later regret – but they also need to ensure they're keeping an eye on how things are changing and regularly reviewing their plans.

2 Collaborate with other schools

While there's little evidence to suggest that academisation in itself leads to better outcomes (and scant proof of this at primary, in particular), there's a growing body of evidence that formal collaborations between schools can bring substantial benefits. These include opportunities to think strategically together, share expertise, recruit and retain staff more easily and

FURTHER READING

The ASCL's guidance papers for schools considering joining or forming a MAT are available via tinyurl.com/ascl-guidance; the

ASCL also offers a bespoke consultancy service to schools and groups embarking on the process – email consultancy@ascl.org.uk for more details.

tackle budgetary challenges through collective purchasing and other economies of scale.

3 Your choice of partner is crucial

Joining or forming a MAT or federation is a big decision and one that's very difficult to reverse, so it's critical that you choose the right school to partner with or the best group to join. Important questions to ask of any existing or potential group of schools include:

- Does this group share my school's ethos, vision and values?
- Does this group have the capacity to provide the support and challenge my school needs?
- How will the group be led and governed?
- Will being part of the group enable my school to improve and flourish?

Most school leaders and governors thankfully now have an opportunity to step off the roller coaster, consider such issues at their own pace and make their own decisions with regards to securing their school's long-term future.



Julie McCulloch is primary and governance specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders

GET THE MOST FROM YOUR MINIBUS

A school minibus can be more than simply a means of getting from A to B – it can also be a versatile and powerful teaching resource...

At school in the 1970s, when travelling to a sporting fixture the class or team would be split between a number of cars of varying road-worthiness belonging to teachers and parents. A journey of 10 miles could sometimes be spent cross-legged on the floor of the headmaster's VW Camper van surrounded by teammates. Other occasions would see five of us squeezed onto the back seat of an old Austin.

Things have moved on a lot since then, with many secondary schools having long opted to acquire and operate their minibuses on match days and for the odd Duke of Edinburgh expedition. Within the

last few years, however, I've witnessed a significant growth in minibus use across the primary sector, having seen a number of primary schools contact us for the first time.

The main reason for primaries wanting one seems predominantly to do with reaching their swimming targets – having their own minibus means being able to avoid the cost of



“A journey of 10 miles could sometimes be spent cross-legged on the floor of the headmaster's VW Camper van surrounded by teammates.”



hiring coaches a few times per week, or even taxis in some cases. Some primary schools would previously have walked their classes for up to a mile to get to swimming sessions – not nice in the rain!

Once a school has its own minibus, the uses that develop can be very inspiring. We've had SBMs tell us that their new buses have enabled children in areas of deprivation to actually see cows for the first time. One forward-thinking school once told me how they'd taken some pupils' parents out in their minibus to show them free-of-charge activities they could do with their children in the local area, as an alternative to days filled with TV, gaming and fast food restaurants.

I've also heard how a Birmingham primary school in an area with a sizeable non-English speaking immigrant population had organised 'familiarisation tours' of the city for parents to help them get their bearings and settle in.

"IT'S GIVEN OUR TEACHERS FREEDOM"

Having our own minibus has been worth the planning, preparation and financial outlay, tenfold. To have our own transport permanently available has given our teachers the freedom to enrich the curriculum in ways not before possible, and given our sports teams their own reliable transport.

It's meant that we can accept just about every invitation to an event we receive, enabling all children to benefit from small scale or local events pertinent to their learning needs. It's also enabled us to

help families who desperately need the use of a large vehicle for a day. The graphics we designed for our minibus reflect those around St.

Matthew's, so it serves as a great advertisement for our school when we're out and about. We wouldn't want to be without it now.

Jane Thomas
Headteacher, St.
Matthew's Primary
School, Luton

We regularly talk to a number of schools to advise them on various aspects of choosing a vehicle and deciding how they're going to run it.

These considerations will typically include:

1 D1 entitlement

Any vehicle capable of carrying more than nine passengers must be driven by a D1 licence holder. A driver will automatically have a D1 on their licence if they have passed their car driving test before 1st January 1997; any drivers passing after that will need to take a D1 test. Prices for D1 courses vary, but we recommend using a provider that offers a comprehensive package that includes the administration needed to support a test booking.

2 Choice of supplier

We always recommend approaching a specialist education vehicle supplier, where the level of expertise and advice will be far more in-depth than what you'd receive at a general dealer or leasing company. When approaching a leasing provider, ask for proof demonstrating their financial strength – any provider should be able to assure you they have the resources needed to look after your minibus maintenance for the full length of the lease, and that any money they hold for future safety inspections will be held in a secure account.

3 Cluster Groups

For small primary schools, having access to a minibus can be made possible by joining forces with other primary schools in their local area. It's not uncommon for three or four schools to share one or two minibuses, having agreed for a lead school to assume responsibility as the lease signatory.

4 Community use

We've previously come across primary schools who regularly make their minibus available for use by the wider community, for church outings or events organised by local scout groups. You are allowed to charge for this form of use in order to cover your costs.

5 How big?

The largest minibus a school can run is a 17-seat vehicle (containing 16 passenger spaces). Many primary schools will see this as 'half a class' – should they acquire one minibus, they will likely shuttle one class in similarly sized groups to the destination.

6 Lease or buy

Some schools elect to buy a minibus with cash, on the basis that it represents a long-term investment, but a growing number of schools are opting instead for a fully maintained contract hire option. Schools must decide whether they possess the expertise and resources needed to run their own minibus, or if they would rather enjoy the benefits of the vehicle in exchange for a fixed monthly cost, without taking on the risks or uncertainty involved with maintenance or resale value further down the line.

7 Technological advances

Modern minibuses often come equipped with all-round parking sensors, reversing cameras and air conditioning. Wheelchair accessible versions with a wide range of options and potential seating configurations are also available. A good supplier will be willing to work with you to deliver the correct vehicle for your needs.

8 When should you replace it?

If you decide to lease your minibus, an agreement of five years with the option to extend up to seven would be about right. The mileage of a minibus run by a primary school will typically exceed no more than 5000 miles per annum. Obviously the longer you keep the vehicle, the greater its exposure to component failure and general wear and tear. Also bear in mind that a tired-looking minibus will increase the risk of breakdowns and safety issues, as well as detract from the image of the school.

John Couppleditch is sales director at Education Vehicle Alliance; for more details visit evaminibus.co.uk or follow @evaminibus

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Is your school ready for LOCKDOWN?

The past few years have seen a rise in violent attacks on school staff and pupils. Since 2014, assaults involving guns and knives have taken place at schools in Dulwich in London, Dorset in Somerset, Leeds and Bradford. As well as direct attacks on school property, we have also seen cases of armed intruders entering a school immediately following a robbery, pupils being kept in school during a manhunt for a secure unit abscondee, and gun-related activity taking place right outside a school's gates. Each of these incidents prompted the school concerned to go into lockdown.

During an emergency, it's essential that accurate information can be communicated clearly and quickly throughout the school. The law requires schools to have a working fire alarm fitted, but many also use theirs to announce class changes, which can lead to confusion. Bells are also poor at differentiating between lockdown and evacuation scenarios. If there's a potentially violent intruder on school premises, the last thing anyone wants is pupils streaming out onto the playground and gathering at assembly points.

Some schools therefore make use of integrated class change and PA systems, such as Bodet's Harmonys, which can store and broadcast a range of tones, melodies and



pre-recorded voice messages. As well as handling routine school announcements, it enables schools to broadcast specific alerts across their entire site, thus ensuring that staff and pupils know what's happening and what action to take.

There is perhaps little that schools can do to prevent such attacks altogether. However, by making sure that a clear and effective communication system is in place alongside robust lockdown and evacuation procedures, they can at least be certain that they're doing all they can to keep their staff and students safe.

– RICHARD MANBY, MANAGING DIRECTOR
OF BODET CLASS CHANGE SYSTEMS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT LOCKDOWN.BODET.CO.UK OR CONTACT 01442 418 800

HOW **SECURE** IS YOUR SCHOOL?

We might want our schools to be friendly and welcoming, but they also need to be safe for pupils and staff...



WHAT WE DO



JAYASHREE THAKORE

Trainee headteacher, Barham Primary School, Wembley

"We're a three-form entry school with large site. We have CCTV at vulnerable points within the school and an electronic door system which means that certain areas within the premises can only be accessed with a fob. We have a frontline 'sign in/sign out' check for everyone that comes in, and a full-time site manager who's responsible for the maintenance and operation of our access control systems..

Other than that, we have a high culture of vigilance, where members of staff are always looking out for safeguarding issues and potential security concerns. Our senior leaders regularly inspect the whole school building with the site manager to identify any maintenance or security issues that need addressing, and collectively discuss any they find at our SLT meetings."

70%

OF THEFTS INVOLVING 10 TO 15-YEAR-OLDS IN ENGLAND AND WALES TAKE PLACE IN OR AROUND SCHOOLS

- 58% inside school buildings
- 12% in playgrounds, streets and car parks

SOURCE: *Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics*



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REVIEWS OF
YOUR SCHOOL'S
SECURITY
STRATEGY - AT
LEAST ONCE PER
YEAR AT A
MINIMUM**

School security is about keeping children safely in, as well as intruders out. See your site from a child's perspective – if they're determined to leave, what would they try and how can you pre-empt it?



Use of a CCTV system must be indicated by appropriate signage and any footage you record must comply with the data protection act. The Information Commissioner's Office CCTV Code of Practice can be downloaded via tinyurl.com/ico-cctv



DfE-issued guidance on school security can be found at tinyurl.com/dfe-security

Should schools use body cameras?

YES

We use the technology, but only for ID purposes – it's not about crowd control. Our midday assistants were becoming frustrated that they couldn't do their job properly because they didn't know the children's names. They'll know some, but not all of our 1200 kids when they're only in for 45 minutes per day.

The idea came from them. They explained to us what the problem was, suggested it as a solution and asked if they could give it a go. We use them like our CCTV, and to me that's completely logical. It's non-intrusive and makes sense.

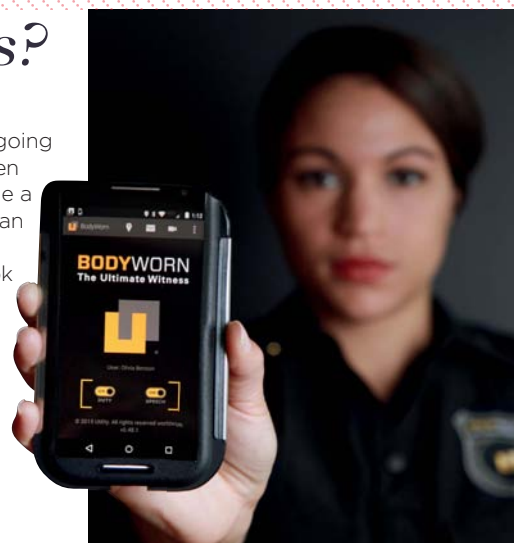
Vic Goddard, Principal of Passmores Academy, Harlow

NO

"Body cameras only capture what's going on with a child at the final stage, when issues at home and school have made a child reach breaking point. Rather than record this behaviour, let's prevent it.

Dedicated school staff need to look for early signs of unhappy children and work closely with them, identifying and resolving issues which might include domestic violence or poor mental health. No teacher should feel unsafe at school – but that starts with making sure children feel safe at home."

Jaine Stannard, CEO of School-Home Support



“I WAS ASKED ABOUT TYPE OF PLUGS I’D LIKE”

Meetings, minutiae and MATs – one head shares his recollections of opening a primary free school...

La Fontaine Academy in Bromley first opened in September 2014 as part of the Department for Education’s free schools programme, having been approved in 2013. As headteacher, I was able to establish the foundations of the school’s culture and ethos.

We are part of STEP Academy Trust, a multi-academy trust made up of 13 schools across two geographical hubs in South East London and East Sussex. This meant that most of the operational matters involved in opening a new school were largely taken care of, allowing me to focus on ensuring the long-term success of the school from those first few weeks.

SUPPORTING MAT

Most headteachers won’t be familiar with the intricacies of opening a new free school. I remember finding myself, soon after my appointment as headteacher designate, attending meetings with architects and technical advisers and being asked about the type of plugs I’d like for the school, and what carpet we

should get for a site that hadn’t even been secured yet as our permanent home.

Also in my diary were meetings with local authority officials, where heads of terms for our temporary site were drafted, negotiated, redrafted and finally approved. I actually quite enjoyed the process, but still frequently felt rather out of my depth.

After a few weeks of head-scratching, however, La Fontaine Academy joined STEP Academy Trust. I’d argue that what followed should serve as an example to all MATs of what ought to be put in place for their new schools.

When opening a new school you’re often operating on limited resources.

“Being a headteacher can be isolating, but even more so when your school hasn’t even opened yet and there are no staff or children around!”



STEP Academy Trust’s purchasing muscle enabled me to invest in more teaching and learning resources than would have been the case otherwise. Having access to the support provided by academy business managers from other schools across the Trust further meant that La Fontaine has been able to operate for two and a half years with a full-time time business manager.

A staff member from another STEP academy has also been with us part-time since we opened, providing us with services we need as a small school while giving her great CPD, given that she’s required to oversee two budgets.

ESTABLISHING CLEAR PRINCIPLES

Being a headteacher can be isolating, but even more so when your school hasn’t even opened yet and there are no staff or children around! Linking up with other





LA FONTAINE'S CORE VALUES

OUR FIVE CORE VALUES WERE DEFINED AS THE FOLLOWING:

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In all we do, we always strive for excellence and beyond.

RESPECT

In all we do, we value each other and nurture a sense of mutual respect.

COLLABORATION

In all we do, we are united to share, support and improve.

RESPONSIBILITY

In all we do, we own our mistakes and successes.

CREATIVITY

In all we do, we challenge each other to be original and imaginative.

headteachers and leaders across a MAT is rewarding, and can stop you from feeling that you have to reinvent the wheel. The access I received to a central bank of policies that could be tailored to my school's needs, for instance, saved me hours, if not days of work. Also helpful was the access I had to shared curricular resources, which let me ensure that there wouldn't be anything missing when welcoming our first cohort.

The school's mission and vision are rooted in a commitment to, 'Providing children with an outstanding education through engagement with local and global communities, and language teaching for them to become citizens who can play an active role in 21st century society.'

With no prior history or baggage to wrestle with, our founding teaching and support staff could spend time going through every aspect of school life to ensure that each one reflected our aspirations. Following negotiations with the DfE we were able to defer the opening of our school by two weeks, which gave us an extended staff induction period that proved invaluable in terms of setting our expectations.

We went through our core values as a team, defining what they should mean, look like and feel like in the classroom and across the whole school, and how they

could be used as our accountability framework (see 'La Fontaine's Core Values'). We also co-created our routines and transition systems as a team. I believe that if they're clearly understood and practised by all before the children start, then such systems will go a long way.

To establish what should take place over a typical day in terms of movements across the school we micro-scripted all key moments, deciding what should happen, how and when. We then practised those moments with the whole team and refined our systems based on collective feedback.

THE PRINCIPLE OF LEADING

Upon opening in 2014, our SLT consisted of myself and my assistant headteacher, and together we led on all aspects of school life. We put plans in place early on to establish a growth strategy of

identifying CPD opportunities for our teachers, and enabling them to assume roles that might not have been available to them in more established schools.

A clear list of roles and responsibilities was then drawn up, with all staff leading on a particular aspect of school life. These ranged from 'Being in charge of the fruit and milk at playtime', to 'Being in charge of the family dining operation'. However small a role might be, everybody had (and still has) one. The principle of being a leader, rather than the actual tasks involved, is what matters most.

From 70 children, we now have over 210. Our team has grown from nine staff to over 30 in two years. We knew when we opened that our school was extremely unusual due to its size, so we agreed that we should always keep the following question in mind – what will this school look like when full in six years? This focus on growth has enabled us to set ambitious, but realistic goals.



Dr Sebastien Chapleau is the founding headteacher at La Fontaine Academy, Bromley; for more information, visit lafontaineacademy.org or follow @FontaineAcademy

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DON'T SCRIMP ON YOUR ICT TRAINING

Schools need to maximise the learning tech they already have – and for that, you need the right know-how...

VISIT: **BESA.ORG.UK** FOLLOW: **@BESATWEET**

At the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA), we have closely monitored schools' expenditure for decades – and lately we've found that after years of growth, ICT budgets are now being hit hard. ICT budgets in primary schools were down last year by 4.1%, compared with a 3.7% increase the year before.

In such a climate, schools need to get the most from the ICT products and services they already have – yet our latest annual 'ICT in Schools' report suggests that many primary ICT leaders believe that schools can do much more on this front.

A sample of 803 primary ICT leaders were asked what their key challenges were, and overwhelmingly they pointed to the need for some 50% of primary teachers needing greater



training in ICT. That number's diminishing over time (in 2014 it was 60%), but it's evidently still a serious concern.

Perhaps the greatest concern expressed was the need for primary teachers to be trained in e-safety. 51% were seen as requiring such training, in areas from cyberbullying to counter-radicalisation efforts. E-safety concerns also seem to be hampering digital development in schools, with schools expressing wariness at adopting cloud computing, for example, and citing 'e-safety' as a factor. Given the prevalence of EdTech in schools, from classrooms to management systems, e-safety affects everyone, not just staff based in ICT.

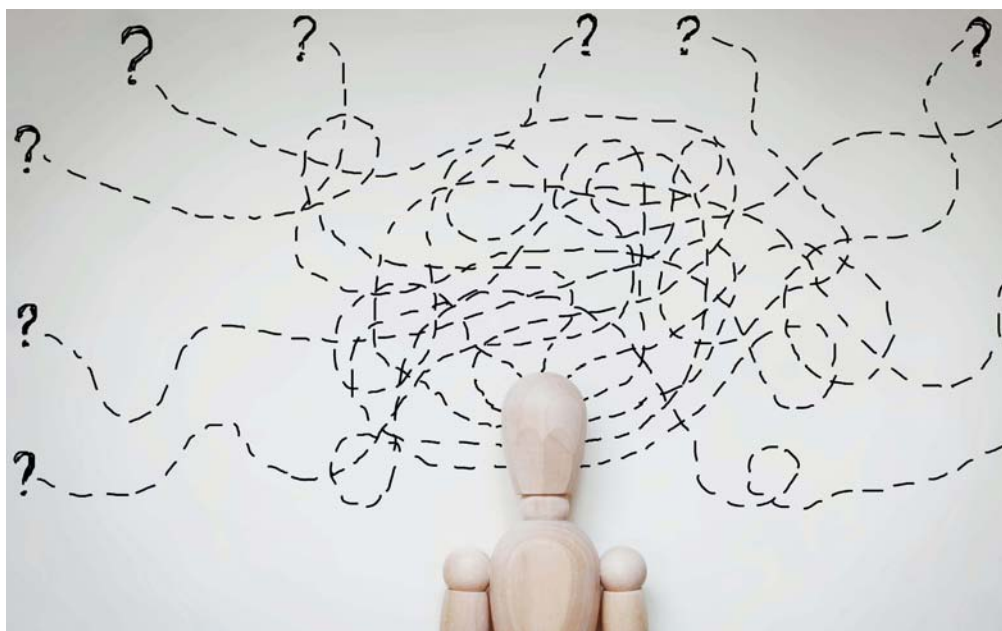
With the online world continuing to rapidly evolve, schools need to organise regular training sessions so that teachers can be kept up-to-speed with new websites, new jargon and emerging online threats.

Training is something that many suppliers will gladly provide upon request – after all, it's in their interests that their products are used to greatest effect. A pattern we frequently see at BESA is schools making substantial expenditures on ICT hardware and software, but then failing to follow this up by embedding it into their teaching practices and ensuring that teachers know how to use it properly.

Teachers should, of course, remain at the heart of every classroom. But technology can be a great enabler, giving teachers rich insights into pupils' learning and allowing them to deliver personalised lessons that simply wouldn't have been possible even a few years ago.

If schools are to realise this, however, then greater training in ICT is essential. At a very low cost, such training could assist schools in unlocking their existing ICT resources in ever richer and more innovative ways.

Patrick Hayes is the director of BESA – a trade association serving manufacturers and distributors of educational supplies, resources and equipment across the UK. To find out more, visit besa.org.uk or follow @besatweet



AVOID ONLINE OVERKILL

Put everything online in a rush and confusion will inevitably follow, says the Bad SBM – so take a more considered approach...

The SLT meeting starts, and first up for item one is a new system aimed at helping parents track their children's homework. It'll involve a three-year contract, albeit one that doesn't cost much, and you're told some other schools use it as well. You agree to buy it, and parents are emailed details of how to log in and change their passwords.

Two weeks later, colleagues are arguing that the school should purchase a further web-based tracking and assessment system that will allow parents to see 'live' data regarding their child's outcomes. Doing so won't break the bank, so it's nodded through and you sign up. Parents are again emailed details of how to log in.

Soon after that, your catering provider announces that they're introducing a new online payment system. Parents can now pay for their children's school lunches via the web. Once they have a login and password.

Two weeks pass. Your literacy leader asks SLT if the school can adopt an online reading support programme. Your school development plan states that 'literacy is a focus area', as is 'use of technology'. Beyond that, the SDP doesn't go into specifics (which is why it was difficult to cost when being drawn up), but everyone at the meeting nonetheless enthusiastically agrees to the new reading solution. Parents are emailed yet again with details of this wonderful new online

tool and a guide showing them how to log in.

(Oh, and don't forget that all this comes on top of multiple maths apps, MFL apps and homework websites the school already uses, all requiring their own user accounts).

Time passes. You find yourself one day chatting to someone at the local secondary that most of your Y6 will transfer to. You mention in passing the online resources you've started using, and discover they use similar resources themselves – but that none of them share the same platforms as yours. You start to wonder what a parent with one child in Y4 and another in Y7 must be experiencing. Exasperation, probably.

We mustn't forget that parents are often busy people, and that trying to stay on top of multiple 'support' systems can actually make it harder for them to be actively engaged in their child's education.

So before you buy that new online system for tracking your school's payments, grades, reading comprehension, SATs resources or whatever else, please spare a thought for the parents. They might be designed to 'help', but they're not always the solution you think they are in practice.

The Bad SBM is a pseudonymous school business manager who tweets as @Bad_SBM

Secure your VLE

Keep the data stored in your virtual learning environment safely under lock and key with these tips from Sam Blyth

Virtual learning technology can bring huge benefits to schools, deliver significant cost savings and make for a more flexible and engaging learning environment – but it can also involve security issues.

Given that virtual learning environments (VLEs) enable students to use personal devices in the classroom, and require the storing of economic, administrative and personal data before they can be used, it's crucial to put robust security policies in place and communicate them to your stakeholders.

Forward planning

Schools must set user privileges (for teaching staff, administrative staff and pupils) appropriately, so that everyone can access the material they require while minimising the potential for deliberate or accidental misuse of the network. At the very least, access to VLE-stored data should be limited to authorised staff, students, governors and PTA members, all of whom ought to use strong passwords that are changed at regular intervals.

Cloud computing services or managed service providers can reduce the risks that might lead to damaged or lost data. Savvy schools who know they're not necessarily security experts will enlist managed service providers to make sure their

data services are reliable and secure, but it's vital that you can trust the partner you choose. Look for assurances of uptime (periods when the device or service is working and available) and security guarantees.

Remote learning is on the rise in many schools, with students increasingly using devices at home for educational purposes. Some pedagogical approaches, such as the flipped classroom model, revolve around the principle that learning can be done at any time or place. This can present a security challenge, but there are some simple steps you can take to ensure your security policy isn't compromised.

In most cases, taking care over your access permissions will prevent issues with pupils inappropriately accessing your VLE or other school systems from home, but the most important weapon in ensuring your security policy is observed is the parent or guardian.

An open approach

Parents should be engaged as much as possible in the technical side of their child's safety. Drawing up a simple, 'common sense' version of your ICT policy and making it readily available is a good first step. Also vital is an open approach to data collection and storage – it's the school's responsibility to tell stakeholders how to keep, store

and share any information they hold, so make sure

your policies are up to date and shared sensibly.

Another approach can be to appoint a member of staff to liaise with parents with regards to your VLEs and security and assume special responsibility as a parent advocate, to help parents feel more involved. Your security shouldn't be the responsibility of just one person, however. It takes a range of staff and parents to keep the school's and pupils' personal data safe – you may find that some of the most useful awareness and support comes from your administrators and business managers.

GET PARENTS ON BOARD

1 Make a simple and readable version of your ICT policy readily available. Avoid using guidance that's lengthy, jargon-filled and supplied without a glossary.

2 Regular items in school newsletters can be used to inform parents about smaller policy changes.

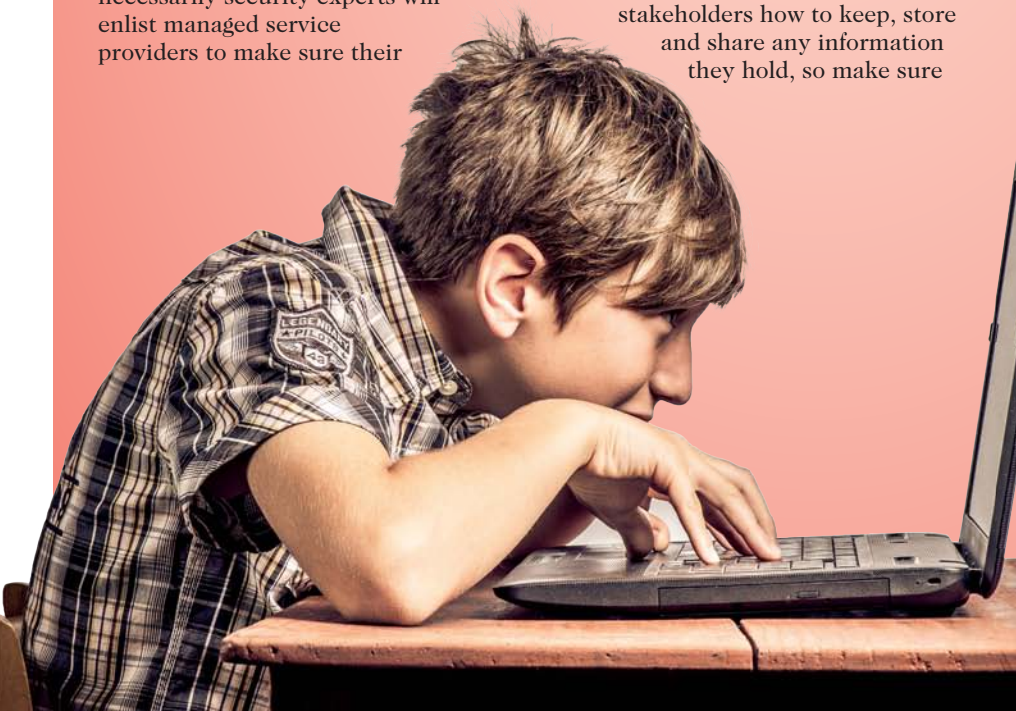
3 To get a better practical sense of what remote learning should entail from the parents' perspective, request that your ICT team bring in a small, select group of parents when drafting the policy.

4 Distribute parental leaflets on the safe and secure use of tech by pupils, which outline what to do if they have any questions about their role in supporting their child's ICT security.

5 Encourage use of VLE apps, such as the Canvas Parent App, to engage parents and make them more familiar with the service and how it's used.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sam Blyth is director of schools and further education at the learning management system provider Canvas; for more information, visit canvaslms.com or follow @canvasLMS





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How to buy...IWBs

VISIT: YPO.CO.UK FOLLOW: @YPOINFO



As the interactive whiteboards in your school approach the end of their working lives, what factors should you consider when replacing them? YPO's category buyer for ICT, Amy Shelley offers an overview of what schools should bear in mind...

WHAT'S NEW?

IWBs and projectors have been around for some time, so what sort of specification and performance do the latest interactive flatpanels offer?

Newer flatpanels tend to carry lower maintenance costs compared to older models, and offer marked differences in image and sound quality. Traditional IWBs use projectors to display images, which means factoring in the costs involved with replacing bulbs that can last anywhere between 2000 to 8000 hours. Even if you opt for lamp-free projectors you can expect lifespans of up to 15,000 hours.

Interactive flatpanels employ LED screens, which means no lamps, and typically have an estimated working life of 50,000 hours, with no loss of brightness. Moreover, all projectors require cleaning, whereas flatpanels only need a light dusting of the screen. The flatpanels offered by YPO start at full HD resolution, going up to 4K, and most feature integrated speakers, making it easy to display visuals alongside audio.

THE CYCLE

Should you replace each unit as and when you need to, or replace the IWBs in every classroom all at once?

The need to replace one or two due to technical issues might be unavoidable, but if your budget allows for it, keep in mind that you'll almost always receive a more competitive offering by aggregating your demand for such equipment. Manufacturers will be more inclined to offer price reductions or other added value options for large orders.

Combining the costs of delivery and installation will further reduce the overall price you can expect to pay, so as much as possible, weigh up the benefits to be had from fitting out your school's entire complement of IWBs all at once.

If you require any help or advice regarding your IWB requirements (or indeed any other Audiovisual needs you might have), don't hesitate to email YPO at consumerelectronics@ypo.co.uk.

BEST VALUE

All public sector procurement exceeding the EU tendering threshold (£164,176, according to The European Public Contracts Directive 2014/24/EU) requires a full tendering process. The spend on this type of equipment within school may not hit that threshold, but there should still be due diligence done to ensure that best value has been achieved and that the route to market is fully compliant.

This will usually take the form of a three-quote process, but purchasing from a public sector buying organisation such as YPO will remove that requirement, since our frameworks are already fully compliant with all public sector procurement regulations.

We can also ensure you receive best value by conducting further competitions through our frameworks with all suppliers who have previously been successfully awarded. That means that we can manage the entire process for you, from quotation right through to site survey and installation.

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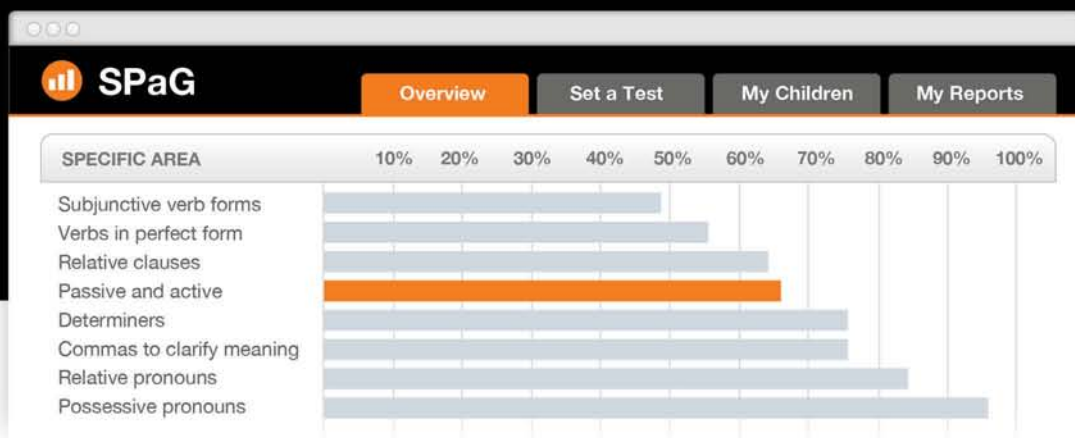
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Community Engagement

GET YOUR MESSAGE OUT



Take charge of your PR and watch your school's reputation grow...

This might sound bonkers, but it was a school with a seemingly poor reputation that caught my attention and ended up being the one my children attend today.

Doing what every parent does when they don't know any better, I asked other parents about schools in the area. There was one school nobody seemed to mention – it was a stone's throw from my home and there was always the same response when I asked about it. People seemed to think it was a bit rubbish – but when pressed, no-one could say why. None of the people who had an opinion on the school had visited it, knew anyone who went there or had even read anything about it, so I decided to investigate.

Since then the school has invested time and much enthusiasm into their PR and marketing, and it's reputation is finally starting to reflect the actual magic that happens there every day. I tell people to get their oldest in now, because it's soon going to be oversubscribed.

When we discuss PR and marketing with regards to schools, there seems to be a level of distrust, even disgust from many, as if this should solely be the realm of the private sector, the commercial and the corporate.

However, savvy schools are realising that this area is absolutely vital – not just if you want to keep pupil intake high, but also if you want to maintain some control over the story that's being told about your school.

Providing you can back up your claims with substance, when times are good your reputation will be good too. People will want to come to the school. Pupils, parents, and members of staff will be well-informed about all the great things that are happening, and feel proud of their choice to join the school community. When things go wrong, this good stuff you've been consistently broadcasting could be what people remember, in spite of any efforts on the part of some to damage your name and good standing.

Your school can be seen as a 'first choice' among local families if you articulate and market your unique selling points while keeping them firmly grounded in the experience of the school community. In a landscape of increasing competition, where academies, free schools and perhaps soon new grammar schools will catch parents' eyes, building networks and partnerships with others in the sector and local business could make your school stand out.

Maintaining a good reputation within the local community can lead to further excellent partnerships, some of which might even lead to alternative revenue streams – a big help when funds are at a premium. Future partnerships might also open up opportunities for your students in universities, business and beyond.

Penny Rabiger is head of membership at the Challenge Partners collaborative network of schools, a school governor and serves on the steering group of the BAMEd Network – follow @Penny_Ten



6 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR MARKETING

Simon Hepburn offers some advice for primary school leaders looking to make a bigger impact with their marketing and PR...

1 Be careful when using names

Have a clear policy when it comes to use pupils' names and likenesses in your marketing activities. I'd recommend offering an opt-out on images and an opt-in on names, but only use names when a child has done something special.

Mention your stories in any paid adverts you place, and be sure to refer to them when speaking to prospective parents. To get a sense of what this might look like, check out the blogs, videos and other promotional activities undertaken by Whitefield Primary School in Liverpool at whitefieldprimaryschool.co.uk.

2 What's your USP?

Make sure that you and all staff know what makes your school special and different – what's your unique selling point? If you're not sure, consult a range of stakeholders – your teachers, governors, PTA, parents, the pupils themselves – to find out.

5 Embrace social media

Social media doesn't have to be something to fear. Find out what services your parents use (eg. Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest) and share your good news – but also be sure to monitor what people are saying about your school and respond promptly and positively to any feedback or criticism.

3 Back up your claims

Identify those stories and parental comments that prove your school is different and record them in various forms of media, be it text, audio or video. If possible, try to involve your students in the recording process.

6 Stay in the loop

Read the local press and share your great stories with local journalists who regularly write on school issues through letters and press releases – but don't expect them to run every story!

4 Distribute your stories

Once you have the material for those stories, share them widely both internally and externally. You could do this via a blog on your school's website or through emailed or printed newsletters. You could even set up your own internet radio channel, or 'TV station' via a streaming video feed or YouTube channel.

Simon Hepburn is the Founder of Marketing Advice for Schools, which provides schools with marketing training, consultancy, inspiration and advice; for more information, visit marketingadviceforschools.com or follow @mktadvice4schls

Fund your services by pricing them

Sharing the resources you have with other schools can benefit everyone, so don't be squeamish about selling yourself...

My tenure as head began on the day the school converted to an academy, so I can't make comparisons to how things might have been before, but the support we currently receive from the borough is minimal – hardly a surprise, as 90% of the schools in our LA are academies. We don't have a raft of service-level agreements to buy into – even if we wanted to – and the collaborative forums that used to be facilitated by the LA have all but disappeared.

Under these circumstances a school can quickly become isolated, which is a great shame. I've always been a big believer in inter-school working, be it on CPD, sharing resources or joint projects with children. So we've chosen to do something about it.

I used to work in a Teaching School that provided the Outstanding and Improving Teaching Programmes (OPT and IPT), and know how valuable they can be. When considering sending four of my team on the OPT, however I quickly saw the difference between what it was going to cost and what I had left in the training budget. My solution was to do it myself. For free. And so we now offer the Developing Excellent Teaching Programme.

Covering costs

So far we've had over 23 delegates from 12 different settings attend, giving colleagues at St Mary Cray and other schools the chance to work together on CPD. It wasn't cost-free (we've still had to pay for my time and that of the AHT) but it was excellent value for money for us and everyone involved. Feedback has been really positive, and we hope to continue offering free training opportunities for colleagues at other schools, since ultimately everyone benefits.

Not everything we offer comes without cost – we also offer paid-for services. When we discovered that

SEMH / behavioural expert Sue Byron was leaving the LA, we recruited her to work in our school and she's made an immense impact. But taking on an additional salary required some creative thinking, so Sue now offers a service to eight other local schools, all of which pay for her time – we charge a rate that covers costs, rather than making a profit. That lets us break even and ensures that other schools whose vulnerable children and families need support can also benefit from Sue's expertise.

Get creative

Guest speakers is another example. We've offset the costs of bringing in experts to talk to staff by selling additional places to other local schools and agencies. Again, by pricing very low and not seeking to make a profit, we've been able to afford some amazing training and ensure the benefits aren't just restricted to St Mary Cray.

Some schools are wary of charging each other money, and I completely understand – but if we didn't take this approach, the CPD we want would be unaffordable to us and to others. No school will ever have the budget to completely fulfil its wishlist (especially in the current financial landscape), but with a little creativity, you can bring more services within reach.

Adam Lowing is headteacher at St Mary Cray Primary Academy in Orpington





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HOW SHOULD YOU POLICE THE PARENTS?

We look at how schools can prepare themselves for difficult exchanges with children's carers that threaten to spill over into legal action

A key challenge for education professionals is managing difficult situations involving parents. These can include dealing with angry parents at the school gates, but could also involve responding to comments made online or in correspondence.

Difficult interactions with parents bring with them the risk of reputational damage, regulatory investigations, distress to staff and risks to personal safety. It's therefore vital that schools have detailed and effective policies in place for dealing with such matters and mitigating the attendant risks.

KEEP RECORDS

From a legal perspective it's important to maintain a record of specific incidents, or all interactions with frequently difficult parents. That way, in the event that a complaint or allegation is made against the school or a member of staff relating to an interaction, there will be evidence available to defend your position. Maintaining such records

also means that if a situation becomes serious enough to warrant taking legal action against a threatening or abusive parent, you will have evidence that gives you a better chance of obtaining the relevant order from the Court.

The most basic procedure school leaders can implement to protect the school and its staff is to require those who are involved in, or witness to, such incidents to prepare a written statement. These should always be made following any incident that involves threatening, intimidating, violent or abusive behaviour. Where there are ongoing concerns regarding the behaviour of parents or guardians, you should require statements to be made after all interactions.

Written statements should always note the time, date and location of the incident, as well as the names of those present at the time. It should then set out the details of the interaction, how the professional involved responded and their reasons for doing so. The statement should be completed as soon as possible after the incident.

School leaders may find it helpful to draw up a reporting template for staff to use in such instances, set specific requirements for how these are to be filled in and name a designated senior leader who must be notified of any incidents. Where behaviour is violent, threatening or intimidating, this should be reported to the police. Schools have additional responsibilities for reporting any safeguarding concerns to Social Services, which should be reflected in the relevant policies.

MALICIOUS CORRESPONDENCE

A related concern is malicious or threatening correspondence from parents, which presents a slightly different set of challenges. Your policies and

procedures should require that any malicious or threatening correspondence be retained. If it is threatening or intimidating, or gives rise to child protection concerns, it should be reported to the police or Social Services as appropriate.

Then there is communication via the internet. A key difference that can arise here, however, is that such communications are frequently public, with greater potential for libellous or defamatory statements to be made.

School leaders may be reluctant to pursue legal action against parents – understandably, given the potential to damage relationships with the parent body as a whole. Nevertheless, defamatory or libellous statements can have a severe effect on the school and on any individuals involved, so you need to ensure that any such statements are removed. The first step set out in school policies here should be to seek specialist legal advice.

A solicitor will be able to advise you on the options available given the specific circumstances, and how to escalate the action you take appropriately to ensure the best result at the lowest cost – financially, in terms of the relationship with the parent body, and in terms of the relationship with your employees.

Finally, school leaders should ensure that their policies and procedures generally reflect current legislation and best practice, so as to minimise the chances of conflicts arising with parents in the first instance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matthew Poli is head of commercial and employment law at Palmers Solicitors; for more information visit www.palmerslaw.co.uk or follow @PalmersLaw



Dear Parents/Carers,

We have had a number of issues with food being stuffed into the overflow of the boys' toilets. On previous occasions the food had not been traceable. However, last Thursday a large Cornish pasty wrapped in tin foil caused flooding in the boys' toilets. Please let us know if this was part of your son's lunch box.

Thank you

Y1 are getting creative. For 13th December, please could your child bring a named shoebox (no lid) and a 3-pronged stick.

Standards of Driving

Some parents are driving in a hazardous way around the roads adjacent to the school. Some drivers who are themselves parents appear to completely disregard other families and children in their haste and in the manner of their driving.

Parking continues to be a bone of contention, and there is still a regular minority of parents who insist upon parking on the zigzag lines, which is both selfish and dangerous. May I remind you that there should be NO PARKING on this road!



6 WAYS NEWS

School newsletters tell you a lot about the relationships schools have with families. They can be empathetic or authoritarian, chatty or direct. They can inform and engage parents, or confuse and distance them.

Occasionally they can be perfect pieces of storytelling about the peculiar challenges of school life, as in the left example.

While there is huge interest in how schools can better engage parents in their children's learning, newsletters have been largely overlooked as part of the process – yet newsletters play an important role in school-home relations. Displayed on your website, they will form part of your public image and give prospective parents a view of what your school is like. In pupils' homes, they can stick around for a long time on fridges and noticeboards.

Looking at newsletters from primary schools across the UK, it's clear that some schools can fall into a rut in the way they communicate with parents. Here, I'm going to present six common newsletter styles and offer some ideas on how they could be improved. All the examples used are based on real primary school newsletters.

UNCLEAR REQUESTS

When you want parents to do something at home or bring something in, it helps to tell them exactly what you want them to do and why. Such requests in newsletters can sometimes be a little obscure, as with this mysterious item.

Unless it's imperative to keep it a secret, letting parents know what's happening will make it more likely that they'll comply with your requests. This is especially important when it comes to home learning – research shows that parents want specific information on how to support their children and why it is important. The 'Daily Reading' excerpt on the opposite page will be more effective than basic reminders that simply say 'Read to your child regularly'.

AUTHORITARIAN TONE

There will undoubtedly be times when the behaviour of some parents in and around school is of serious concern, such as in the newsletter item shown here.

The overall tone of this newsletter item is highly emotional and authoritarian. It clearly shows how frustrated the school is with the situation, but this sense of frustration isn't necessarily a good thing to communicate to all parents. It risks undermining the school's authority rather than reinforcing it, because it emphasizes a lack of control and composure.

Sometimes items such as this will sit beside invitations for parents to attend school shows and events where the tone is welcoming and friendly, which could undermine how those invitations are viewed. It's always worth thinking about whether your newsletter is consistent in tone – if you need to give out strong messages about parking or similar matters, consider making more direct approaches to the parents concerned.

TO BETTER LETTERS

School newsletters are a well established and widely used way of communicating with parents – but could yours be doing more?

JARGON

Most professions are full of acronyms, and we can all sometimes forget that the professional terms we use are not always clear to others. Schools are no exception – my research found these types of terms are used in 60% of primary school newsletters.

It's always helpful to reduce the number of acronyms you use, or at least provide a glossary. Ensure that the message you want to convey is understood by all parents, including those with English as an Additional Language (or 'EAL', of course) and others who have lower levels of literacy.

COMPLEX SENTENCES

Similar to having too much jargon, using longer words and complex sentence structures in your newsletters will affect how readable they are.

In my research I found that primary school newsletters typically required an average reading age of 12 to 13 years, with some as high as 13 to 15 years. If you want your text to be understood by a wide audience, the recommended reading age level is 11 years. If you want your text to be understood by a 'universal' audience, then you should aim for a reading age of 8.

POSITIVE TONE AND PERSONALISED PRAISE

Most schools use a positive tone in some or all parts of their newsletters, which is a good style to build on. Newsletters that thank parents for their support and regularly cite individual children's good behaviour and achievements help to build a sense of school community and partnership with parents.

Have a quick scan of your newsletter to see how often words like 'thank', 'celebrate' 'exciting' 'invite' and 'pleased' come up. Comparing this with the frequency of terms like 'stop', 'must' and 'should not's should give you a good idea of how you're doing on this front...

AGGRESSIVE VISUALS

Also think carefully about the use of authoritarian signs or symbols, such as the road hazard sign, red 'no parking' sign and block capitals. In the example above, the message in the text appeals to parents to help their child's transition to reception class. However, the addition of the hazard sign changes this communication and sends an implicit message that parents are themselves a 'hazard' and therefore unwelcome in the classroom.



Y6 are having an extra PHSE session this week after their SATs in the KS2 classrooms.

Daily Reading at Home

Children who read at home regularly make the most progress. A little and often is the best approach. Please hear your child read every day for at least 10 minutes, following the words with your finger as they read. They will reap the benefits!

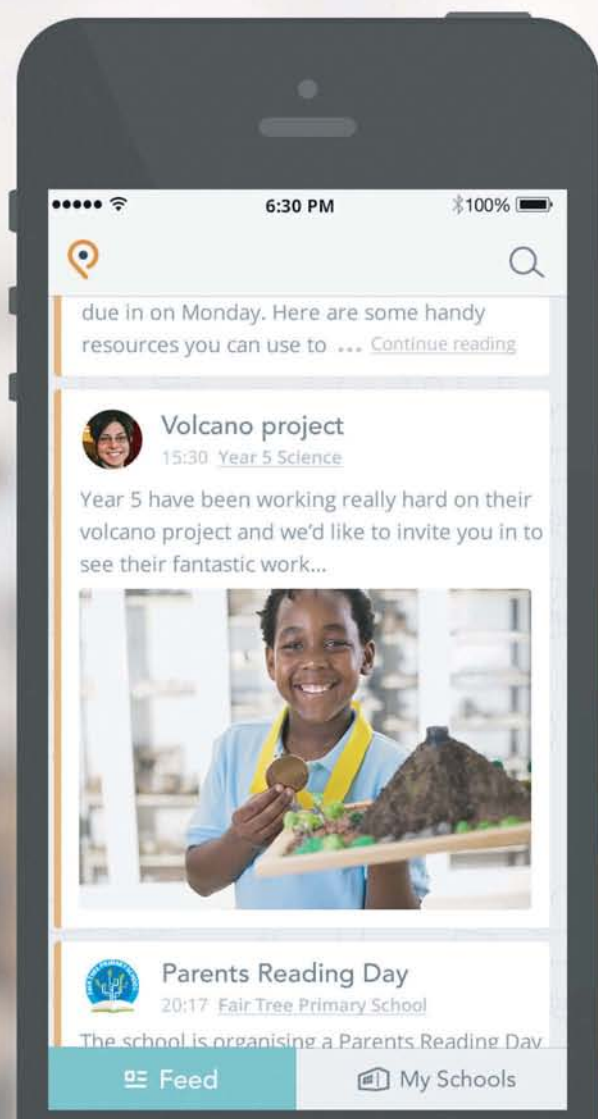
Please help your child settle in by leaving them at the classroom door. Thank you.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joanna Apps is senior lecturer at the Research Centre for Children, Families and Communities, Canterbury Christ Church University; she also edits the twice-yearly 'Parents in Education Research Network' newsletter, which highlights the latest international research on parental engagement in children's learning and education from birth to 18 – subscribe for free by emailing pern@canterbury.ac.uk

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Human Resources

COMPLIANCE MYTHS AND FACTS

How can heads ensure they're not spending time on so-called 'requirements' that aren't actually needed?

It can be difficult to keep track of your statutory obligations and time-consuming to record and report what you've done – especially when there's so much else to be getting on with.

Instead, set aside some time for reassessing your school's priorities and getting the basics right. Here, we separate some common compliance myths from those requirements that can't be ignored...

Schools must have a curriculum policy covering each subject taught

FALSE This is a common misconception, but it's easy to spot where the confusion might come from. It's not mandatory for schools to hold a curriculum policy, but if you choose to have one, how you write it and what you include are entirely up to you. That said, whether you're in a maintained school or an academy, the DfE requires that certain information about your curriculum be published online, including the curriculum content for each subject in each year, and how parents can find out more.



Tom Ball, 19, is currently doing a level 3 support teaching and learning apprenticeship at Brookside Academy, having first been informed of the place by a tutor at nearby Strode College



**“IN SIX YEARS
WE’VE HAD 29
APPRENTICES”**

Ofsted requires schools to have certain information on their websites

FALSE Another frequent area of confusion is Ofsted’s role regarding school websites. The inspectorate will be checking your website for statutory information before you even know a visit is coming, but it doesn’t actually stipulate what needs to be there. So long as your website is compliant with the list of requirements set out by the DfE (which differ for maintained schools and academies – see tinyurl.com/dfe-web-mt and tinyurl.com/dfe-web-ac respectively), the inspectors will be happy.

Schools must pass a parent’s phone number to the LA whenever a pupil is removed from their roll

TRUE As of 1st September 2016, maintained schools must now share much more information with their LA when a pupil is removed from the roll than was previously the case. This includes an emergency contact telephone number for any parent with whom the pupil normally resides, the parent’s address and the grounds for deleting the child from the admission register.

This short true/false exercise highlights just a small selection of the misconceptions and lesser-known requirements school leaders have to juggle when ensuring compliance, but it demonstrates some of the potential pitfalls. If you’re in any doubt as to what you have to do, always seek advice – not just to make sure you’re fully compliant, but to also avoid using up time that could be better spent elsewhere...

Marianne Pope is a senior researcher at The Key – a provider of information and online solutions to the education sector. This spring sees the launch of its ‘Compliance Tracker’ tool, designed to help schools and MATs track their statutory obligations; find out more at tinyurl.com/key-comp-track

Sandra Bartlett, Business Manager at Brookside Academy, explains how employing apprentices has proved rewarding for Brookside Academy

Since 2010 we’ve employed apprentices across our school in a variety of roles. Today, apprentices can be seen working with staff, children and parents in our nursery, classrooms, offices and sports clubs.

Brookside Academy is the largest primary school in Somerset with a mix of two- and three-form entry, two nurseries, holiday clubs and specialist provision for 30 children with additional physical and complex learning needs. This puts us in a strong position to offer a range of roles suited to apprentices, be they straight out of school, people with academic experience or those seeking a career change.

We began our apprenticeship journey in our nursery, with two school leavers who were taking level three childcare qualifications. We’ve since built a strong relationship with our local FE provider, Strode College, identified many more opportunities to make apprenticeships work for our school and provided a secure route to potential employment and education for our community.

Without our apprenticeship opportunities, young people from our local area would have had to travel further afield to gain experience in working with children with complex needs or helping to run after school clubs. Having the extra staff has also allowed us to offer families a wider choice of hours and holiday

activities for children with disabilities.

The key to running a successful apprenticeship is ensuring that recruits are a fully integrated part of the school workforce. Initially it was a challenge getting staff to remember that our apprentices were much more to the school than students on work experience, but they now attend the same meetings and training as our teachers, coaches and business team. I’ve seen a high level of professionalism from them from day one, and we’ve benefited greatly from their positive attitude, skills and willingness to learn.

In six years we’ve had 29 apprentices through our doors, many of whom have stayed with us when contracts and permanent roles have become available. They have come to us through a variety of routes, but all have said that they didn’t hear about our apprenticeship opportunities through their school. The places are well-publicised in FE colleges, but I believe there’s greater scope for us to work with local secondaries and promote it as an option for younger people.

I highly recommend that schools look at providing apprenticeships for their local community. At Brookside, we appreciate the ambition, ideas and energy of apprentices, and are proud of the way our school has been able to offer a quality route into employment in education.

“Are your staff up to scratch?”

James Hilton looks at how heads should negotiate the choppy of waters of staff underperformance...

Being a school leader can be very rewarding. It's an opportunity to help shape lives, and what greater privilege could there be than that? However, at times it can also be very stressful.

I've spent 23 years in senior leadership positions and 15 as a headteacher at large primary schools. I've had the privilege of working with some immensely talented teachers, but dealing with staffing issues, and underperformance was one of my biggest headaches.

The phrase 'tackling underperformance' sounds clear and suffused with moral imperative, but remember that it can have long-lasting consequences. The closer the relationship between the individuals concerned, the harder and more painful it is to do – yet regardless of your closeness or distance, there are some golden rules you should observe:

Don't put off the issue

You won't be not doing the member of staff any favours by putting things off. Nor will you be helping yourself, because the issue(s) will just become increasingly harder to address. Most of all, you'll be doing your pupils a disservice – after all, they only have one shot at their education.

At the same time, avoid taking action whilst feeling cross or emotionally charged about an issue. Your response must be about hard facts based on evidence, not emotions. Park your personal relationship with the individual, be it positive or negative. Could this be a temporary 'blip' in performance? If so, try to understand the underlying causes. Are there any temporary extenuating circumstances? Does the member of staff have a training need?

Stay focused

Don't make generalisations and avoid lumping in other things that may be annoyances beyond the immediate cause of concern – 'And another thing!...' Document everything that's said so that there can be no misinterpretations as to what's been agreed.

Set clear, realistic and time-specified targets with built in support. If you're going to set improvement targets, make sure to include some strategies on how to improve or you will damage your own credibility!

Be humble

Also question yourself. Be prepared to accept the small possibility you may – just may – be in the wrong. If so, be humble. You can't be expected to know it all. Being a compassionate leader will earn you respect; resilient schools are built on trust and relationships.

Finally, however hard it is, try to avoid taking things personally. It's usually little to do with you, and more to do with the position you hold and the seat you sit in...



WE MUST DO MORE TO KEEP FEMALE LEADERS

Sarah Hardy looks at what schools can do to stop the exodus of female staff with good leadership potential...

Look around your school and you'll likely see more women in your workforce than men. In a profession that's estimated to be 73% female that's not unexpected – but look again, this time at how many women in their 30s make up your school's staff and where they are within the staffing structure. How many of your SLT are women in that age bracket?

It's not that schools are necessarily losing their women, but rather that schools are losing women *with children*. One in four of the teachers leaving the profession last year were women between the ages of 30 and 39, right around the age that many of us opt to start a family. On average that's 6000 teachers per year – and when we know that we're currently struggling to recruit new teachers, we're surely heading to crisis point if school leaders don't act on this quickly. Because at the moment, only about 50% of those 6000 leavers ever return.

DAMAGING IMPACT

Women leave university free and excited by the world of work. We consider our futures and see teaching as a career that will one day – when we admit to ourselves that we might want children – be a family-friendly career. We struggle in our first few years; lessons go wrong, we have difficult children in our classes and find that the workload is a challenge. But we maintain a good balance between our work and personal lives, while meeting wonderful friends and colleagues on our journeys who keep us going and encourage us to take those next steps into leadership.

Then things change. We re-evaluate our lives and many of us leave the profession – some temporarily, some forever. Why? I recently talked to a (male) headteacher colleague of mine about how hard it is being a working parent. He told me he rarely sees his two children awake during the week, and that his wife had left the profession because as a family, they couldn't

both live this way with young children.

Another school leader I spoke to, who left after having her first child in her 30s, told me that, "The demand is just too high for me to feel I can be a good mum too."

Too often, school leaders don't think about the damaging impact that life today can have on a family just starting up their life together. Many of us in our 30s and early 40s don't live close to where we work, particularly if that's in London, as we can't afford the high mortgages and deposits. So we commute – me included. It's a hard day that involves leaving the house at 6am and not returning until after dark every night.

I have family nearby to help out with late meetings and events, a husband who has flexible working and I myself only work part time, but not everyone is as lucky. When the average childcare place for a child under 2 is priced at just over £6000 for 25 hours per week, returning to work is not a viable option for many. In London you can add a further £2000 a year onto that. One teacher told me that she was left with just £375 from her salary after paying for childcare and travel to work, and that not seeing her daughters of an evening was no longer worth it.



HORROR STORIES

I'm an executive head, and my childcare for three days at nursery for my son is over a third of my salary. For those paid at the lower end of the leadership scale, this just isn't feasible. Add to that the horror stories I've heard about the treatment some working parents face, and it's clear we're failing to make this the career-friendly profession we thought it would be in our NQT days.

A middle leader with over 20 years experience once told me, "My school doesn't pay parents who need to stay home with their children who are off sick. I had to choose between a day's pay and my child. I chose my child and a scour of the *TES*."

That sentiment was backed up by a subsequent comment told to me by a recently retired deputy head: "I told my young teachers to call in sick and not say it was their children who were sick, as our head made life hard for you if you took time off to be a mother to poorly children."

So what's happening nationally to help working parents remain in schools?

WomenEd

A grassroots network of women supporting each other through local and national events – see womened.org and @WomenEd. You can also find a series of WomenEd-themed posts on Staffrm at tinyurl.com/staffrm-womened

DfE-funded projects

These include the regional networks that make up the Women Leading in Education project (see tinyurl.com/dfe-wlie for details) and the DfE's 'Equality and diversity school leadership projects' (tinyurl.com/dfe-equal-diverse)

Return to Teaching Support

Part of the government's 'Get Into Teaching' initiative – find out more at tinyurl.com/return-to-teaching

HOW CAN SCHOOL LEADERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Be an innovative and creative school leader – it will help your staff retention and encourage women who are great leaders stay with your schools. Below are practices I've seen pursued successfully in schools with a number of 30 to 39-year-old women in leadership roles:

Part-time working

This flexes to the needs of the employee rather than the school, doesn't change mid-way through the year and is available to men as well as women – though currently only 9% of male teachers work part-time, compared with 27.2% of women.

Enforce the government's workload recommendations – you can find details of these at tinyurl.com/dfe-workload

Allow PPA time

This might include letting staff take their PPA or leadership time during an afternoon off-site, allowing them to pick children up from school and then work once their children have gone to bed.

Adopt flexi-time

Some staff could start at 7.30am and finish at 3.45pm on certain days, for example.

Workplace nurseries

Negotiate staff rates at local nurseries; at a minimum, organise access to childcare vouchers.

Amend your meetings

Try to ensure that these suit the needs of the leadership team of the day, not the school's historic patterns.



Sarah Hardy is executive head of the TBAP Teaching Schools Alliance; for more information visit tbap.org.uk/tsa or follow @TBAPTSA

HEALTH AND SAFETY? DON'T GO MAD

Risk assessments needn't be onerous or limiting – just ask the head of the school where pupils get to use furnaces and shotguns...



Mike Fairclough is the Headteacher at West Rise Junior School

There is a misconception among the teaching profession, the media and the general public, that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the government and Ofsted are all against the idea of children being exposed to danger within schools. Too many people believe that schools are prevented from giving their children experiences which involve risk.

The reality is that every school can take risks and engage in 'dangerous' activities, in the same way that I have done at my school for years – there are no individuals or organisations stopping them from doing so. The reality is that the government, Ofsted and the HSE would love to see schools embracing danger, and are in fact encouraging them to do so.

DISPELLING THE MYTHS

In 2016, the former HSE Chair, Dame Judith Hackitt, and I set out to dispel these myths, working with the BBC, *The Times* and other national publications to get our message across.

In one interview, Dame Judith, then representing the HSE, was asked whether certain activities were banned in schools. Said list of 'banned' activities included children playing with conkers, having snowball fights and others around which some which common media myths have been perpetuated over the years. Dame Judith made it clear that these activities had never been banned by the HSE, and that any suggestion they had been was rather the product of misrepresentation in the national press.

She and I continued to try and explain in the media that coping with risk and danger is crucial to a child's education, and should become a key part of the school curriculum. She said that children were suffering under an 'excessively risk-averse' culture in schools that wasn't adequately preparing them for later life, and emphasised that children should instead be encouraged to climb trees and

play games where there might be a risk of injury.

Later, in a speech she gave at the Royal Academy of Engineering, she further criticised this risk-averse culture in schools, describing it as 'nonsensical' and calling for an end to what had become a 'bureaucratic culture of fear'. She then proceeded to state that, "Overprotective parents and risk-averse teachers who do not enable children to learn to handle risk will lead to young adults who are poorly equipped to deal with the realities of the world around them, unable to discern real risk from trivia, not knowing who they can trust or believe".

COTTON WOOL CULTURE

The only people preventing children from having these important experiences are those who decide on what activities a school gets to pursue – and too often, those decisions stem from people's fears and a willingness to believe everything written in newspapers.

This is surely no longer acceptable, given that the most senior organisation responsible for health and safety in the country actively wants us to embrace risk and danger with our children in an intelligent and conscientious manner. Yet somehow, despite a huge volume of accurate and positive national press coverage on the subject, many headteachers, teachers and parents still believe in the media myths. I've even written a book [*Playing with Fire: Embracing Risk and Danger in Schools*, published by John Catt] which explains in detail how they can deliver activities such as those described opposite within a school setting.

Ultimately, the only people who can change the cotton wool culture surrounding children at school are headteachers and other senior leaders. I hope that they seize the HSE's message of permission and ditch those negative beliefs in favour of the truth. It really is down to the profession now...





HERE'S WHAT WE DO (AND YOU CAN DO IT TOO)

CHILDREN AT WEST RISE JUNIOR SCHOOL ENGAGE IN THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES, OFTEN ON AN AREA OF ADJACENT WETLAND WE LEASE FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITY



Smelting

Every child has the opportunity to smelt tin and copper to make bronze. The children work leather bellows that fire the earth furnace we've built, and as they pour the molten metal into various moulds, their eyes light up with excitement and wonder as the metal hardens. Within minutes, the children will have made their own medallion or arrowhead out of bronze.



Archery and shooting

Every child gets to use bows and arrows that they have made themselves, firing their arrows at various targets. We also teach our children to shoot clay pigeons with shotguns and engage in target practice using air rifles. Many children also learn to hunt with gun dogs and find out about ferreting for rabbits.



Lighting fires

By regularly lighting and tending open fires, our children know that they will provide much needed heat when it's very cold and that they can be used to boil kettles to make hot chocolate, coffee and tea. Every child further learns to cook over an open fire, preparing stews and fish.



Dyeing and spinning

The children learn how to make natural dyes from elderberries and other plant materials collected on their way to the wetland, which are then used to dye wool provided by our flock of sheep. The sheep themselves will have been bottle fed as sock lambs by the children back at the main school site the previous year. Once dyed, the wool is spun using spindles which the children will also have made.



Herding

As well as sheep, we also rear a herd of Asian water buffalo on the school land. The water buffalo will usually make their way across the land to see what the children are up to during the activities they're engaged in, adding to the children's sense of awe and wonder at the world.



Rain or shine

Whatever the weather, our children will be working outside. They will frequently be chopping wood, flint knapping and foraging in the rain; some of the smaller children may be knee-deep in puddles of water as they trek across the land.



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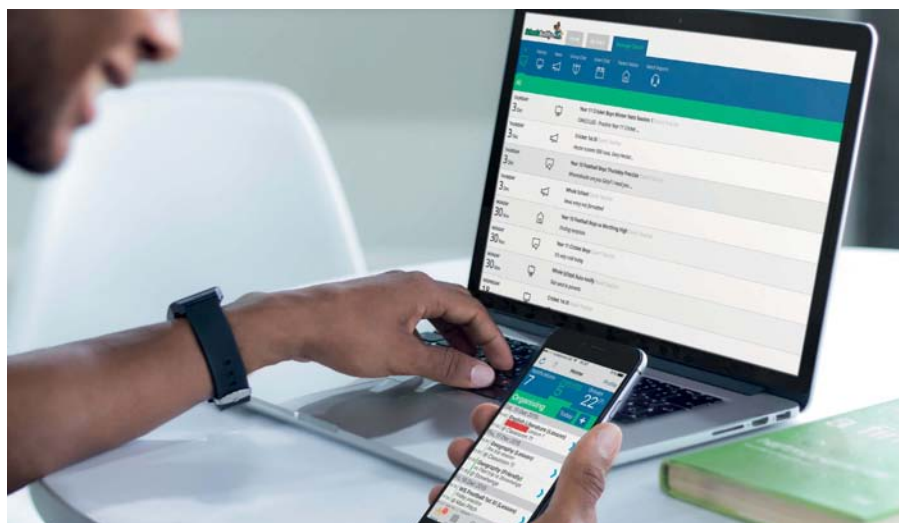
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www.teachwire.net/teaching-resources



What can SchoolsBuddy do for your school?

Gary Hector tells us how SchoolsBuddy can help streamline and simplify those essential admin tasks not typically covered by your management information system...



What is SchoolsBuddy, and who is it aimed at?

SchoolsBuddy is a module-based software solution for primary schools that can be used for many different purposes. Examples include the organising and administering of parental communications, fee payments, after school clubs, parents' evenings, sports teams, school lunches and more besides. It can also save schools money by helping them consolidate their administrative systems.

What does SchoolsBuddy offer that nothing else does?

There are other systems on the market that feature some elements of what SchoolsBuddy offers, but none that provide all the elements that SchoolsBuddy has in one package. Staff only need to use a single system, in which all the elements are linked together. When obtaining parental consent and payments for school trips, for example, SchoolsBuddy can send notices out to parents for viewing on web browsers and mobile devices and collect their responses via the same means. The fee can then be automatically added to the payment balance a parent has with the school, which they can easily view and pay, all via SchoolsBuddy.

In what specific ways can SchoolsBuddy save a school money?

It enables systems to be combined, reduces the number of SMS messages that need to be sent, cuts down on the cost of printing forms and newsletters and saves administrators time. If a school uses multiple systems for its communications and fee payments there's an instant win to be had there, since the combined cost of those will be more than SchoolsBuddy. Schools that rely on SMS notifications can save as much as £1500 per year; the push notifications of our iOS and Android mobile apps can either replace SMS entirely, or allow schools to reserve it just for emergencies.

What's the feedback from parents been like?

Parents love the simplicity of only needing to use one system to give their consent, check event information and make school payments. Parents often prefer this digital method over receiving and having to return paper slips, which can often get lost.

Parents can also be informed when school teams or organised visits will be returning late, as teachers travelling with the children can use their mobile device to access the SchoolsBuddy app and issue a

push notification giving notice of any delays.

What does the process of setting up a SchoolsBuddy system typically involve?

Very little – we integrate with many management information systems, including Capita SIMS and RM Integr8. Once a school's enabled a connection with SchoolsBuddy, we simply pull the data and everything's ready to go.

What have you done to ensure it's easy to use?

SchoolsBuddy has been designed within the last three years, so we have a more modern user interface than most. It's a clean UI that uses counters to indicate new invites, notifications, events and groups, and makes things clear and easy for parents to understand. We've also recently added a 'single sign-on' function, which lets staff log in to SchoolsBuddy using their Office 365 or Google for Education credentials if their school supports either of those.

What's the most surprising or unexpected use you've seen SchoolsBuddy put to so far?

We've found that many schools have started using the system as a staff communication tool, creating staff-only groups for distributing notices and events to approved members. It's possible to set up custom user groups in seconds, making it easy to establish different groups for different purposes, such as for communicating within specific year groups or subject areas. Some schools are now asking to use our sister product ClubsBuddy for staff lunches or their externally run holiday clubs.



To find out more, call 01903 898 119, email info@schoolsbumuddy.com or visit schoolsbumuddy.com

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GET A YES FROM GOVERNORS

With proper planning, you can keep your stakeholders on board through those tough budgeting decisions...

Headteachers have traditionally led on schools' teaching and learning, but with the increasing marginalisation of LAs, they now also have to tread the less familiar ground of running a business. One of the best business decisions a headteacher can make is to employ a good SBM, empower them to lead on the operational and strategic business aspects of the school and make them part of SLT.

Your SBM will need to know as much as possible about the school's core business of teaching. An SBM who's able and willing to understand your school improvement framework and key priorities will be far better placed to help you and SLT determine which decisions are affordable and sustainable for the school.

With dwindling budgets forcing schools to make painful decisions, it's important to develop a business perspective of your own that will help you both work together more effectively. That might mean having to look at the school differently, and being aware that what was done in the past may not be affordable in future. The sooner you recognise this, the more you can do to proactively plan for it.



A basic budgeting principle is that income and expenditure must balance, which means starting with two choices – increase income or decrease expenditure, though in all likelihood you'll need to do both. The best way to increase income is to ensure the school is fully subscribed by responding to demographics, and through actively marketing the school to ensure optimum pupil recruitment.

With around 70 to 80% of your expenditure likely to be going on staffing costs, it's a key area to examine when looking at decreasing expenditure. Make sure your curriculum and timetable are planned efficiently, with all teachers working their full contact allocation. You can't afford to pay for un-timetabled hours.

While you wait for your funding allocation to come through, your SBM can be building a budget based on the worst case scenario (say, 1.5% less than last year's budget) and simulating different scenarios, such as an increase in class sizes and reduction in teaching time. This might be unpopular – but so is school insolvency.

Don't rely on one-year budgets. Insist on producing three-year, or even five-year budget forecasts. Talk to staff, parents and governors about the school's funding. Making them aware of the impact that funding changes will have on your school will help key stakeholders understand and accept any difficult budgeting decisions that the school must face.

The planning of your school improvement priorities needs to happen in conjunction with the drawing up of the school's budget. If something isn't affordable, either it can't happen or something else will need to be cut. All potential initiatives should be looked at while keeping value for money in mind. Will the solution in question be the best way of spending money in order to achieve the required results, or could there a better value solution?

Nickii Messer is a school business leadership consultant and trainer; for more details visit nickiimesser.com or follow @NickiiMesser



HOW TO PLAN YOUR PROCUREMENT

If you need to overhaul your school's procurement arrangements, you won't get far without a proper strategy, says Nicky Gillhespy....

When a school becomes an academy, it has to start thinking about procurement for things that were previously 'just there'. I work at a school in Sutton that became an academy in September 2016. We belonged to a fairly small LA and made sure that we looked at what we'd be taking on beforehand.

We caused some upset within our LA for doing so, but we began setting up our own contracts prior to converting – for HR services, payroll services, photocopying and many others. When carrying out procurement for a school there's no way anyone, even the best SBM, can cope with doing more than a couple of things at a time – you need a staged plan.

Start off with a few quick wins – energy, photocopying and IT supplies, for example, where changing suppliers can be done quite easily and most likely save you money. In Sutton we have a group of SBMs that share good practice with each other. We meet every term to swap our good and bad stories, which I use as a bargaining chip when getting initial quotes – “If you do a good job I'll recommend you to other Sutton schools.”

We try to use local companies where we can for smaller jobs, but not for areas

such as payroll. I've heard bad stories of people using standard private sector payroll systems, trying to make them work in education, so we now ensure that we only get quotes from companies that specialise in educational payroll systems.

After you've done it once, changing your existing providers again should be less involved, because much of the work will already have been done. I was recently doing a procurement exercise for fixed wire testing. The last company who provided us with the service gave us everything electronically, so instead of obtaining three separate quotes I was able to send out the relevant details to various companies, and received a number of quotes within 24 hours.

Put a system in place for keeping track of different contracts and don't let things roll over without reviewing them – otherwise you risk getting tied in for another year. We use system called Every (weareevery.com), which includes a price comparison site we use for ICT and stationery supplies. Always make sure you're comparing like with like, particularly when getting quotes for specific models of technical equipment.

Nicky Gillhespy is an SBM based at a primary school in Sutton and an NAHT National Executive representative

Find the money you don't have

Could your school be working smarter when it comes to generating revenue?

Income generation within schools shouldn't be a fragmented, ad-hoc activity, but an area of key importance to be approached strategically. With government funding harder to rely on, sensible schools aren't taking chances on the hope that their funding situation will improve. Instead, they're proactively identifying ways of sourcing independent revenue that can contribute towards their essential activities and day-to-day operations.

However, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Some schools send staff to fundraising workshops; others buy into grant databases, engage external consultants or even employ their own in-house marketing and revenue generation staff. Yet all this activity can be taking place with only a handful of people within the school able to clearly explain what the plan is, and what any income generated will actually be used for.

Make your projects resonate

The first step is to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities that can be influenced and threats that need to be challenged. Determine what the school actually needs in the short and long term, in line with the school development plan, while reviewing your budget. Then consider how those needs

can be presented in a way that will attract the interest of potential donors, grant providers, sponsors, parents or the local community.

Take time to understand which areas of school life resonate most with stakeholders and promote them. Trying to generate income 'for classroom IWBs' won't hold the same appeal as the imperative to 'raise literacy and numeracy attainment'. You might need IWBs to do that, but they're ultimately a by-product of the overall goal.

Get your story straight

With your key projects identified, interrogate the case for each one by asking pertinent questions. What exactly is the issue and why is it a problem? What needs to be done to address it? What difference will the additional income make, and how will any success be measured? Doing this internally should make promoting those projects among your stakeholders much easier. The more people can repeat the same consistent story, the more often it will be heard. New funding opportunities may then start to materialize, or at least become easier to identify by a wider group of ambassadors for your school.

Go for low-hanging fruit

Income can be generated through various means, including fundraising initiatives, grants, donations, sponsorship, organised events, clubs and lettings. Identify which will likely generate the maximum amount of income versus the minimum amount of effort. Focus on activities where existing expertise and resources within your school will enable a quick win.



Nazli Hussein is a freelance school business manager with experience spanning independent, maintained, academy and free schools; for more information, visit sbm-support.me or follow [@sbm_support](https://twitter.com/sbm_support)



POST-SATS CELEBRATIONS

Should schools offer their pupils a treat after the intensity of SATs season?

A 2016 ComRes survey of 750 Y6 pupils found that **59%** felt some pressure to do well; **28%** felt 'a lot of pressure'

48%
OF PUPILS, HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO THE SAME SURVEY 'DID NOT MIND' TAKING THEIR SATS

The government recently announced plans to introduce new KS2 multiplication tests, which Y6 pupils will be expected sit alongside their SATs. The new tests will be rolled out in 2019, making the current Y4 cohort the first pupils to take them.

Do post-SATs celebrations give those tests too much importance? SATs aren't GCSEs or A levels; you don't need them for a job. You don't even need them for secondary school, where the preference is for them to do their own (more accurate) cognitive ability testing.

SATs are a means for the DfE to hold schools to account (and, if they fall short, a justification for publicly taunting them and flushing their head down the toilet in best bullying tradition). The school's results are published and praised or vilified, not the individual pupils – yet. Celebrating something which should be played down to avoid stress can risk making too much of it.

Other disapproving voices will simply criticise schools and children for daring to have a good time when they should be working harder and longer to catch up with Singapore, Finland or whichever world education location is currently flavour of the month with PISA and the DfE. But as Plautus wrote – everyone likes a classical justification – we should 'Celebrate the occasion with wine and sweet words.' Admittedly, writing in Ancient Rome he wouldn't have been specifically referring to SATs, and on reflection, getting lashed is definitely not an acceptable way to conclude SATs week (at least not for the pupils).

For me, however, a post-SATs hooley is



an important and innocuous rite of passage for frazzled teachers and pupils. That's assuming that every child who wants to be included is included, irrespective of their ability to pay, and that the chosen activity is appealing for every child taking part – you'll find some suggestions on the opposite page.

PTAs can help with funding post-SATs rewards – mine buy a book of his or her choosing for each leaver. If you have to come up with an educational justification, make it believable. Post-SATs celebrations can't be about 'building rapport' with the pupils, for example. It's May. You've had them for eight months. If rapport hasn't

LEARNING JOURNEYS

WANT TO REWARD YOUR PUPILS WHILE GIVING THEM A CHANCE TO LEARN AND GROW? HERE ARE FIVE OPTIONS WORTH LOOKING AT...

LEGOLAND® WINDSOR RESORT

As well as 55 rides and attractions across 150 acres, LEGOLAND® Windsor Resort also has a dedicated Education team that hosts 12 LEGO-related school workshops for KS1 to KS4 covering literacy, drama, space, numeracy and more besides. legoland.co.uk/education



STUBBERS ADVENTURE CENTRE

Situated in a picturesque 130-acre site, this adventure centre's on-site facilities include watersports, land-based activities and motorsports. They also host specialist outside learning activities such as woodland construction, which requires students to combine their imagination and assembly skills. stubbers.co.uk/lotc



CELEBRATE GOOD TIMES



happened yet – well, they're just not that into you.

You could, though, engage in some rapport-building at the start of the year when fundraising for your May do. Or why not just loudly and unapologetically proclaim it as a jolly, and that the 'educational benefit' might be learning the vital lesson that we work to live, not the other way round?



ABOUT AUTHOR

Kevin Harcombe is headteacher at Redlands Primary School, Fareham

THEATRE TRIP TO SEE A PLAY OR MUSICAL

WOW FACTOR: Awesome. Everyone included equally.

COST: Pricey, especially if you have to travel.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS: Storytelling, dance, music, drama, etc.

TEN-PIN BOWLING

WOW FACTOR: Quite cool. You get to hurl heavy things and knock down objects with a satisfying clatter.

COST: Moderate

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS: Hand-eye co-ordination; numeracy; teamwork

EVENING CIRCUS SKILLS SESSION, FOLLOWED BY PERFORMANCE TO PARENTS AND FISH & CHIPS

WOW FACTOR: They get to learn juggling and clowning, spin plates, and walk a high wire at least 60cm above ground.

COST: £300 approx. for circus skills person for two hours; they supply the equipment

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS: Resilience, practice, persistence, performance.

PICNIC FOLLOWED BY WATER PISTOL BATTLE ON THE SCHOOL FIELD

WOW FACTOR: You eat food and mess about with water. Perfect. What could possibly go wrong?

COST: Parents all supply some food, so effectively free

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS: Of water pistols? You're kidding, right?

YOUTH HOSTEL ASSOCIATION

YHA's hostel network can provide schools with affordable accommodation in some of the country's most inspirational locations, alongside various 'bolt-on' activities that span archery and fire lighting, right through to theatre experiences and city tours.

yha.org.uk/schools-trips



RINGSFIELD HALL ECOACTIVITY CENTRE

This eco-minded activity centre occupies 14.5 acres of woodland and meadow and hosts stays ranging from half a day to 5-day residentials – the latter of which see children study ecological concepts to better understand the systems behind life on Earth. **ringsfield-hall.co.uk**



SCOUT ADVENTURES

Drawing on over a century of scouting heritage and expertise, Scout Adventures organises inspiring outdoor learning experiences for young people and adults alike, by creating tailor-made residentials that are both fun and challenging, while delivering specific skills and learning outcomes.

scoutadventures.org.uk



LET'S TALK QUANTITY VERSUS QUALITY

Could bigger class sizes be the answer to the recruitment crisis?

If someone asked you whether it would be best for teachers to teach smaller classes, or bigger classes with more planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time and/or a higher salary, what would you say? Would it affect the quality of teaching the pupils received and the outcomes they achieved?

The English education system, when compared with others around the world, could be described as good, but stuck. Becoming 'world class' may well require us to think differently about a number of our current practices. More pay for teachers to attract and retain the best, and more training for teachers to help them get better and better, could be paid for by increasing the size of classes.

I understand the argument that schools need more money, but I sense there will be little extra in the pot over the coming years (or even decade). In practical terms

it may be difficult to increase class sizes due to the physical capacity of many classrooms, so consider this more an exercise in comparing options and seeing which might be most desirable.

ASSUMED AVERAGES

Let's start with some base data and assumptions. There are four classes to be taught, each with one teacher and 30 pupils. The pupils are taught for 25 hours a week. The teachers teach for 20 hours and have five hours PPA time. Each teacher is paid a salary of £35,000. These figures might not match your particular circumstances, but they're reasonable assumed averages (see fig 1).

The first thing to note is that whilst there's 100 hours of lesson time across the four classes, there's only 80 hours of

teaching available. Each teacher needs some PPA time. Let's add a fifth teacher who will have 20 hours contact time and 5 hours PPA, so that those four classes have a qualified teacher in front of them at all times (see fig 2).

This is one possible leadership decision – others might involve taking on unqualified teachers, extra TAs or opting for shorter school days. By opting for an additional teacher, our total wage bill has increased to £175,000, which I've fixed for the remainder of this article.

GAUGING THE QUALITY

Now, how would you feel about having a class of 40 pupils, but twice as much PPA time for the teacher – 10 hours a week, rather than 5 (see fig 3)?

There will be issues of classroom

fig 1



fig 2



fig 3



discipline to think about, and a need to re-imagine assessment and marking, given the demands of the larger class size – yet the teacher would have far more time outside the classroom to collaborate with colleagues, plan schemes of learning and analyse assessment data. Would this option be appealing?

Let's push things further (see fig 4). Two classes of 60 would see the five teachers each teaching just 10 hours and having 15 hours free for collaborative planning, assessment and professional development. Would this have a positive or negative overall impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes?

Here's where things could get controversial. Imagine two classes of 60 pupils, but with only three teachers teaching 16 to 17 hours per week, in place of the 'five teachers' model (see fig 5). In this model each teacher is paid an extra £20,000 and upwards.

It would essentially eliminate the teacher shortage problem we currently have overnight, since we would only need about 60% of the current number of teachers. Assuming those teachers don't burn out and retention rates stay good, the profession would become increasingly difficult to get into as institutions and settings become choosier about who to

let in. What would that do for the quality of teaching in our class rooms?

ALIEN CONCEPT

I'm not sure which option teachers would prefer – we tend to stick with the status quo, and sometimes for good reasons. Governors and parents may also have a thing or two to say. For parents, the thought of their child being taught in a class of 40 or 60 is an alien concept. Classes of approximately 30 pupils are hardwired into our view of schooling.

Large classes are not what we do, or have done in England; in other parts of the world they are commonplace. Parents understandably equate a smaller class with greater care and personal attention for their child, which can be easily – but

mistakenly – conflated with better teaching and better outcomes for pupils. Independent schools use small class sizes as a powerful marketing tool, but research suggests that class size is far less important than the quality of the teacher.

For governors with mounting budgetary concerns, however, this may not be the moment to experiment – even less so if said experiment might lead to a backlash from parents, negative publicity and reduced pupil numbers.

It's easy to demand more money. One option for providing more of it is to raise taxes, which is never that popular with the electorate. Another option is to increase money for education by diverting away from other government departments – health, social services, defence and so on. Expect some tough choices ahead.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen Tierney is CEO of the Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust in Blackpool, Chair of the Headteachers' Roundtable and author of the book *Liminal Leadership*, published by John Catt. This article is an extended version of a post that originally appeared on his blog www.leadinglearner.me; follow him at @LeadingLearner

fig 4

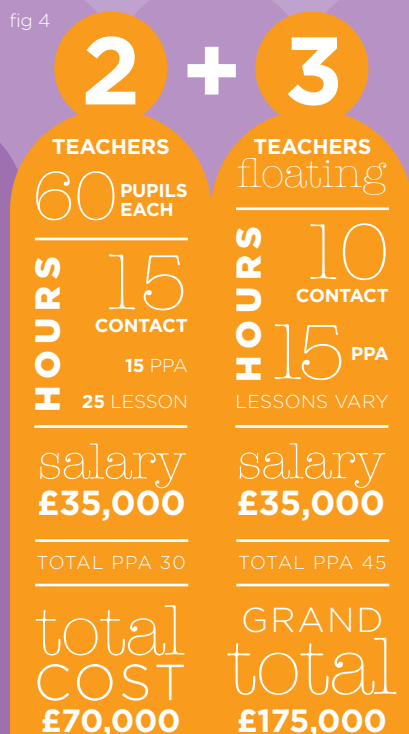
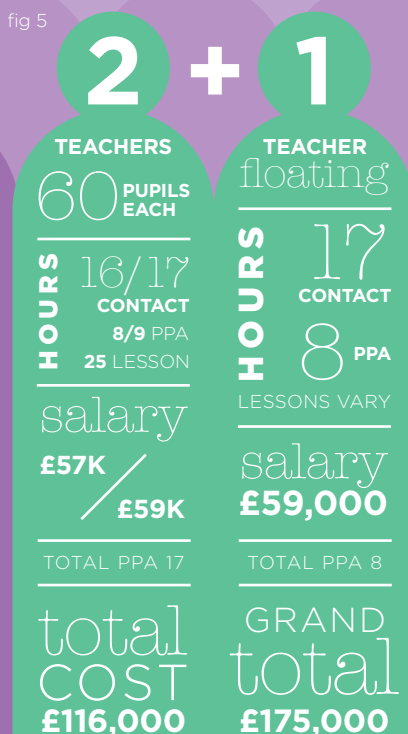


fig 5



HOW SHOULD YOU SPEND YOUR PUPIL PREMIUM?

HAYLEY DUNN, BUSINESS MANAGER, WINDMILL PRIMARY, TELFORD

The Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) has been around for a while, having been introduced back in 2011/12. It is a precious funding stream for schools, serving the most disadvantaged families and communities, and can form a significant element of delegated funding.

Just one pupil becoming eligible can make a significant difference, especially to small schools. The PPG is based on a per pupil rate for eligible registered pupils, as shown in the table opposite. The rate structure recognises looked-after children (LAC) as defined in the Children Act 1989 as those in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, an English LA, and children who have ceased being looked after by an LA in England or Wales due to adoption, a special guardianship order, a child arrangements order or a residence order.

Service Children are pupils between reception and Y11 recorded as an 'Ever 6 Service Child' or in receipt of a child pension from the Ministry of Defence; the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) was introduced in 2015 and is based on taking up the full entitlement of 570 hours.

PPG provides funding for two government policies – to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities to reach their potential, and to support children and young people with parents in the regular armed forces

THE BIG ISSUES

The first and biggest issue for me is that schools are only paid PPG funding for pupils registered to claim free school meals – it doesn't include pupils who are eligible but not registered. How can schools address this?

If you know you have pupils who are likely to be eligible but not registered, put in place an incentive for families to check



“A great way to capture useful PPG information is to encourage parents to fill out the forms on induction day”

their check eligibility. You could, for example, offer an age-appropriate book to the child upon their family's completion of the form. It's possible to purchase a pack of 10 picture books for £10, representing a £1.00 investment per child – if you then have one pupil entitled from that point on, it's a great return on your investment and the child gets a useful book to keep.

A great way to capture useful PPG information is to encourage parents to fill out the forms on induction day. Allocate a member of staff to help with completing the forms, and don't stigmatise any pupils or families filling them out.

Another effective time to remind parents of their potential eligibility is when notifying them that their entitlement to Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) is ending as their child moves from Y2 to Y3.

Those can be useful short-term fixes, but what's the long-term answer to making sure that PPG is being claimed appropriately?



SPENDING PPG EFFECTIVELY

If the eligibility policy outlined above were changed, it would see funding going to the pupils and schools who need it and are actually entitled to it. Time and money could be saved by reducing the administrative burden on schools to maximise uptake and undertake the checking process.

The second issue is that the year-on-year increases in Pupil Premium that we saw from 2011/12 through to 2014/15 are long gone. The rates haven't changed since 2015/16, putting pressure on schools to continue providing interventions and resources to ensure that gaps between PPG and non-PPG pupils are minimised, at the same time that the amount provided per pupil has remained stagnant.

If PPG forms a significant part of your funding, then proper oversight of the data and evaluation by the SLT and your governing body will be essential. Ensure your PPG is spent effectively on pupils, and measure their progress and attainment. Identify distinct pupil groups and moderate the data.



UPLOAD YOUR STRATEGY

As of September 2016, maintained schools have had to publish their Pupil Premium Strategy Plan on their school website (the publishing requirements of academies and free schools vary according to funding agreements). For the current year, this must include:

- The school's PPG allocation amount
- A summary of the main barriers to educational achievement faced by eligible pupils at the school
- How you plan to spend the funding on addressing those barriers and the reasons for your approach
- How you intend to measure the impact of your PPG funding
- The date of your school's next pupil premium strategy review
- How you spent your PPG allocation over the previous academic year.

Source: 'School funding: Pupil Premium' briefing paper (tinyurl.com/pp-briefing)

Further guidance from the DfE regarding PPG can be found at tinyurl.com/dfe-ppg-info

PPG RATE 2017/18

PPG ELEMENT	AMOUNT
Primary (Reception to Year 6)	£1,320.00
Secondary (Y7 to Y11)	£935.00
Looked after children	£1,900
Service children	£300.00
Early years Pupil Premium	£302.00

Compare the attainment and progress of PPG pupils against non-PPG pupils. Gaps should be closing – if they aren't, then consider whether the interventions and resources you have in place are effective. Benchmark your school data by comparing it to national figures, but also locally, whether that's through your multi-academy trust, a local network or by collaborating with similar schools in your area, and identify areas of local need and demand.

PLAN AND REVIEW

The Education Endowment Foundation (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk) has devised a toolkit that outlines various strategies for utilising PPG money. It provides a useful rating system of cost and evidence strength, to help teachers and schools select the right strategies for their pupils and identify potential levels of impact.

Track what has worked well to date in

“Ultimately, the PPG process should be embedded in schools' annual tracking, monitoring and evaluation”

your own school, but don't assume it will always work for the next pupil or group. Monitor the effectiveness of each strategy. Ensure that intervention is swift. If it's not making an impact, change it. When planning and monitoring your school budget, separate out your PPG – this is something that can easily be done by using a sub cost centre

on most finance systems.

Ultimately, the PPG process should be embedded in schools' annual tracking, monitoring and evaluation; a fluid process that ensures progress and attainment.

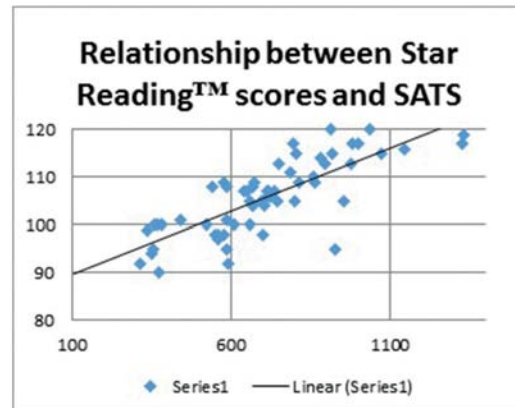
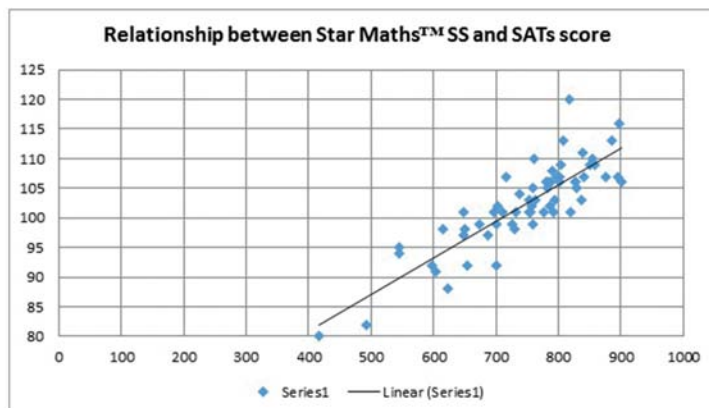
I think it's no coincidence that the PPG sits outside of the incoming National Funding Formula. I would expect to see it continue in its current form until the end of this parliament, though we're well past the days of significant year-on-year rate increases. Beyond 2020 – who knows...



“My teachers have more information than they’ve ever had”



Deputy headteacher Gary Alexander is keen on using technology to reduce teacher workload – hence his enthusiasm for an assessment tool that can do it all...



Read my full story at www.renlearn.co.uk/gary-alexander



I am deputy headteacher of Battle & Langton CE Primary School – a two-form entry primary school on the south coast. Back in 2014 I was keen to move on from the old assessment procedures we'd been using, and saw the abolition of National Curriculum levels as the ideal opportunity for us to innovate our practice.

I first stumbled across the power of Renaissance Star Assessments when looking at using Renaissance Accelerated Reader to support our reading provision and organise the school's library. I was after a tool that would remove the burden of teacher assessment, whilst still providing us with strong and reliable information about the pupils' learning. I needed macro level information around group progress, the percentage of children 'on track' to achieve end of key stage expectations and granular details of the next steps in learning for individual children.

We initially introduced Star to Years 3 to 5 on a six-month trial basis. The children completed the short and painless computer-adaptive tests, after which our teachers received information about their learning instantly. Once we had a basic handle on the resulting information, our teachers began to realise that it usually confirmed their own perceptions of each child's attainment. Following the initial trial, other teachers became agitated that they

were still filling in 'APP style' sheets, whilst the trial year groups has received their information with minimal workload. The time being saved was huge.

Over the first full year, where we launched with years 2 to 6, Star Assessments became our only formal assessment tool. Teachers were still informally assessing day-to-day – how else would they teach? – but there was no formal recording of these judgements needed. Still, this was the first year of the new, 'more challenging', SATs tests, and our Star data couldn't accurately predict anything.

SATS CONFIDENCE

After the results came in – and once primary headteachers across the country had finished weeping – I did a correlation study of each test, comparing the SATs scores to the preceding Star scores, and found a strong correlation (0.86 in maths, 0.79 in reading). This reassured me that Star could give a very accurate indication of KS2 performance.

The problem was that nobody knew where to draw the 'pass' line. I looked at the two sets of data and worked out what children needed to score in Star to be able to pass their SATs, which gave me a benchmark to work backwards through the years. We now have a system in place that

judges attainment very accurately, and can tell me at any point in the year which children are on track to meet the expected standard at the end of the year (given typical progress). That gives me the ability to predict SATs scores this year with much greater confidence.

As well as robust attainment data, Star gives me relative progress information that allows me to see instantly how children are progressing compared to all children using Star across the UK who began the year at a similar point. This is similar to the DfE's 'value added' measure, in that it groups children according to prior attainment and judges their progress against an average for the group. That way, I can see how much progress my high flyers are making when compared to all other similarly able pupils tracked by the system – very powerful.

I believe we now have as good a system for assessing reading and maths as is possible in these times. My teachers have more information than ever on their pupils' learning and progress, combined with a lower workload. Our children, parents and governors receive robust information when they need it, and I have greater confidence in my judgements of how the school is performing.

RENAISSANCE®

To find out more about Star Assessments, visit renlearn.co.uk, contact 0207 184 4040 or email answers@renlearn.co.uk

BECOME A MEDIATION MASTER

As head, it's your job to put things right when your staff come under fire or break the rules...

The best route to a happy, successful workforce is to cultivate a school filled with people of integrity, who are committed to the same values and vision, which will go a long way to avoiding potential complaints, misunderstandings and allegations.

Nevertheless, even in the best schools and with the most effective leaders, people make some terrible choices, requiring headteachers and senior leaders to clear up the mess. When troubles arise, there are some key principles worth bearing in mind...

DON'T GO IT ALONE

First, seek the advice of those paid to know what to do in the relevant situation. If it's a safeguarding concern, contact the LA's designated officer, do what they say and stick to it. In other matters, follow the advice you receive from your LA or academy trust. I further made it a rule to tell my chair of governors everything, before anyone else had the chance. You might also consider discussing things with your union.

KNOW THE RULES

If the matter is presented as a complaint, make sure you know your school's complaints policy thoroughly and have a clear view of what needs to be done at each stage. If some other policy, procedure or protocol arises when seeking expert advice, follow it to the letter.



MAINTAIN A DISTANCE

Creating a professional distance between you and those for whom you're responsible is vital. There's nothing more awkward than needing to have a difficult conversation with someone you were having dinner with at the weekend, or whose Facebook page you were posting to last evening. With professional distance comes clear boundaries, and senior leaders need to decide where these boundaries lie. I opted not to 'friend' colleagues on social media and wouldn't talk much about my family or private life – it made those few difficult conversations I had to have far easier.

STICK TO THE FACTS

When one colleague has raised a genuine complaint against the other, don't let feelings dominate the conversation. Find out what's been going on and ask those involved to be as specific as they can. Emotions may be running high, but you must focus on the facts and get both sides of the story.

FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS

To help defuse situations, I ask at the start of any meeting, 'What's your best hope for what will happen as a result of this meeting?' It seems like an obvious question, but people will often arrive with a hurt or anger that must first be calmed. That simple question can focus people on the solution, rather than the problem.

AIM FOR A WIN-WIN

Except in cases of clear professional misconduct, I always aim for both parties in the dispute to leave the room with a harmonious working relationship still intact and the values of the school fully upheld. Solutions where justice is done, dignity is upheld and high expectations are reinforced benefit everyone – not least the pupils in our care.

Bruce Waeland is a former headteacher, a trained Ofsted inspector and educational consultant; for more information visit bdxeducation.com or follow @HTBruce



When it comes to your vision for the school, be choosy as to who gets a say, advises leadership coach Sonia Gill

I'm often asked if a vision should be created as a whole school team or by a smaller group. One school of thought says that the whole team should create the vision, because it will create greater buy-in. The other holds that it should be down to the leader and their team. Let's look at each in turn.

A WHOLE TEAM VISION

Many settings will set aside a day (sometimes longer) for the whole school team to create a vision, and may involve parents and children. Everyone gets a say, which hopefully means they're more likely to buy into it, since they're part of its creation.

I've seen some examples of where this has been successful, but they're quite rare – more often than not, it doesn't work. There's naturally a lot of compromise when working in large groups, which will dilute the vision, and whilst everyone might 'agree' with the end result, no-one will be passionate about it. I also don't think that creating a vision should be a one-day team event, but sadly this is often all the time that's available.

A head once told me how their whole school had created their vision – how they'd involved children and parents, and the kinds of days they ran to create it. I wanted to know how they had done this so well, but then, as a throwaway comment, she said "I can't remember what the vision was now" and my heart sank. All that wonderful work, but the vision hadn't even stuck with the head, of all people!

A VISION CREATED BY LEADERS

The alternative is that leaders create the vision – not in isolation, but with a group, usually consisting of other leaders. I've found it takes a few days of fairly intense (but good) thinking to create a vision that's strong.

This is typically much more effective, because they will create a vision they really believe in. The trick is to then communicate it well so that most people, if not all, get on board. In every setting I've supported, the whole school has been inspired and excited by the school's vision, even though not everyone was part of the creation process. I can recall only one instance in a certain school where a teacher decided they weren't signed up to where the school was going.

There's an art to creating a powerful vision, but sadly few schools have a vision that does the job it needs to – inspire your team to action towards a common purpose. Once you have this, you'll find it breathes energy into your school. I've seen it done many times, and it's incredibly powerful.

If you're planning to work on your vision as a whole school team, then your intention is honourable but it probably won't get the result you want. Instead, set aside time with your leadership team to craft your vision. Done well, it will give you all the buy-in you could hope for and energise your school.

Sign up to Heads Up's free 'Create a Great Vision' course at tinyurl.com/heads-up-vision

Get up to speed with governance

Schools can expect some changes following the publication of this year's Governance Handbook – so what's new?

In January this year, an updated version of the Department for Education's Governance Handbook was published on the UK government's website alongside a new competency framework for governors. The handbook outlines good practice in governance in all school and academy contexts, and is recommended reading for everyone involved in the governance of maintained schools and academies, plus those that support them.

The terminology relating to governance has become much more complex as more schools move into multi-academy arrangements. We therefore now see references to 'boards' instead of 'governors', and to 'executive leaders' rather than 'headteachers' or 'principals', which makes for some clunky phraseology at times.

New competencies

The main difference you'll notice with the new handbook is that it's now structured around six key features of effective governance that align with the competencies in the new framework:

- **STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP** that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** that drives educational standards and financial performance
- **PEOPLE** with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity
- **STRUCTURES** that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- **COMPLIANCE** with statutory and contractual requirements
- **EVALUATION** to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance.

The National Schools Commissioner, Sir David Carter, has emphasised that this competency framework isn't a checklist, and certainly not a hurdle to be overcome before someone can be recruited as a governor. Instead, it's intended as a tool that can be adapted to the context of different schools and

governance arrangements. It outlines the skills and experience that those responsible for governance should be working towards, and provides a framework to support their training and development.

A bit of a turnaround

Another change is that the handbook now references the need for diversity on boards, emphasising that "Boards should be alert to the risk of becoming dominated by one particular mindset or strand of opinion." It goes on to cite the contribution of parent governors, stating that "The board as a whole should take steps to understand what parents think, while acknowledging that anyone on the board who is a parent themselves has valuable knowledge and perspectives about the school(s) to bring to bear in discussions and decisions" – which is a bit of a turnaround from the government's proposal last year to remove the requirement for academies to have parent governors.

Other key changes to note include an expanded section 2.2 that highlights the board as the key accountable decision-maker in the organisation, plus a reminder in section 4.1.2 of a recent statutory change that now requires all maintained school governors to have an enhanced criminal records certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service. There's also renewed emphasis on the role of the chair in ensuring board effectiveness, and further emphasis on the need for boards to have an effective clerk or 'governance professional'.

Ruth Agnew is a National Leader of Governance, chair of a maintained primary school and director of RMA Governance, which provides governor training and consultancy services across North West England; for more details, visit rmagovernance.com or follow @ruthagnew



EMPOWER YOUR MIDDLE LEADERS

The term 'middle leadership' encompasses more now than ever before – but if those holding such roles are to perform well, we need clarity as to what it means...

Over the past year or so, an increasing proportion of my work in schools and talks at conferences have focused on middle leadership. It would be safe to assume that this trend is reflective of the increased importance being placed on this particular 'tier', of late.

So important has the role become, the National Association of Head Teachers' general secretary, Russell Hobby, was quoted last year as saying that "Middle leaders have more day-to-day impact on standards than headteachers," given that they are, quite simply, "Closer to the action."

He wasn't alone in his thinking. Ofsted has taken a similar stance on the issue, noting that "The role of the middle manager is crucial to the steady and sustained improvement of schools." Ofsted believes that headteachers and senior managers provide the 'vision', whereas middle managers affect those long-term changes that help to "Raise standards and improve the quality of education."

But with the term 'middle leadership' becoming ever more wide-ranging – in many settings it still refers to subject and/or phase leaders – how can the education sector ensure that it receives the consideration and resources necessary to guarantee that those operating in the role can perform to the best of their abilities?

DEFINE WHAT THEY DO

I have previously visited settings where core subject leaders and phase leaders form part of the SLT, albeit because people sometimes have additional leadership roles. In other settings foundation subject leaders aren't considered middle leaders at all. Instead, middle leaders will be the 'core subject' leaders (typically English and maths, but not science – often the forgotten core subject), and perhaps the EYFS leader as well.

The introduction several years ago of the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership by the National College for Teaching and Leadership was certainly a step in the right direction, designed as it was to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to lead a high-performing team in a school and improve classroom practice. Anything that helps to instil confidence and drive performance should be applauded – yet in reality, it's all a bit messy.

Before a conference, I always check the delegate registration list to see who the audience are and decipher their roles within schools. When it comes to middle leadership conferences, I've welcomed RQTs who'll be shadowing their music coordinator over the next term, through to deputy

headteachers who are also English and curriculum leads for both KS1 and KS2. The 'middle' of school leadership is evidently very broad indeed.

This is something that school leaders may want to think about. Exactly how is middle leadership defined in your setting, and what difference do your middle leaders make to pupil outcomes? Are they actually leading anything? When working with any school leader, I'll often ask them to consider the impact that they have on the children – for example, by prompting them to reflect on the question, 'Why is that child better at maths since you took over as maths leader?'

In schools where the leadership is effective and middle leaders are clear about their roles, they can give specific examples in response to these types of questions. They know what's working well, what they need to improve, and how they plan to do so.

On the other hand, it's equally common

“The role of the middle manager is crucial to the steady and sustained improvement of schools”

to come across situations in which so-called 'middle leaders' are in no position to answer such questions – which, unsurprisingly, tends to have an overwhelmingly negative impact on performance. The most effective middle leadership occurs under the most effective senior leaders.

INSTIL THE RIGHT SKILLS

It's also important to touch upon the quality of support and training provided to middle leaders by senior leaders in settings across the country. It's worth calling to mind at this point a quote from leadership guru Jo Owen – "Too much work on leadership focuses on what happens at the top of an organisation. This is a significant issue. Rules which work at the top of an organisation are not

relevant to someone setting out on the leadership journey...

Managing transition from one level of leadership to another is always a challenge."

Senior leaders are responsible for identifying the potential in class teachers and moving them into middle leadership

roles, yet the skills required are often very different. The people skills needed to teach a class of 7-year-olds are hardly comparable to those demanded of someone hoping to change the practice of a 57-year-old colleague! Similarly, the maths knowledge needed to teach reasoning to Y6 will be quite different from that required to analyse RAISE data or LA data sets.

A research study by Jo Owen previously compared the skills of teachers with those of city traders and civil servants in a range of areas, awarding scores out of 10 to each. Teachers scored comparatively well for people skills (9) and organisational skills (8), but typically fell short in analytical skills (6), action focus (6), initiative (6) and appetite for risk (4). (The city traders scored just 2 for

people skills, while the civil servants scored a lowly 1 for risk appetite).

As soon as we move colleagues into a middle leadership role, that latter set of skills are demanded of them. We must ensure that they're well-versed in analytical skills to be able to sort through data. They'll need to focus on actions to help lead improvements and possess sufficient initiative to get on with leading without constant recourse to SLT.

And that's before we even touch upon the need for a well-balanced risk appetite to ensure they're empowered to try new ideas and make changes based on evaluated outcomes.

BE CONSISTENT

In schools where middle leadership is effective and actually improving outcomes for children, senior leaders will have previously put in place policies, provision and practice which supports their middle leaders in developing the key skills they'll need to progress from their class teacher role.

Middle leadership will be clearly defined within the setting and occupy a clear place within the school's leadership structure. The focus of the sector over the coming months, even years, must now be on defining the role itself and fine-tuning the responsibilities that go with it. Adopting a consistent approach to supporting and training middle leaders will go some way to resolving many of the problems described above.

As Mike Cladingbowl, former Ofsted National Director, once put it, "Middle leaders are enthusiasts for their subject, good managers and administrators – but to be truly effective, they embrace the more challenging characteristics of leadership, which are to do with vision, strategy and a drive towards improvement."



Tim Nelson is a consultant for Focus Education, having previously worked as a headteacher, a local leader of education and an Ofsted inspector; for more information, visit focus-education.co.uk

BECOME A BETTER LEADER

What are the key attributes today's leaders need to handle the demands of headship?



AMANDA GODFREY

A successful career in the classroom will provide most headteachers with a firm foundation in understanding teaching and learning, but the business of managing and leading a school has changed enormously in the past 10 years. Schools are now essentially small businesses with significant autonomy and great responsibilities, meaning headteachers need core expertise in finance, HR and technology. They must also understand the legalities of data protection, contract procurement and a host of other areas that a classroom career simply won't have prepared them for.

APPLY YOUR VALUES

The management skills required for running a school might have changed beyond all recognition, but the essential leadership skills have remained consistent. Leaders must still possess the communication skills necessary to engage and inspire children, parents, staff and the wider community. They need interpersonal skills that will enable them to share their values and principles with others.

The best headteachers have always been able to do that, but the ways in which they do so have changed. Relying on an unquestioning respect for authority rarely carries a headteacher far these days. Instead, their interpersonal and communication skills have to be more sophisticated if they're to motivate, inspire and persuade.

Managing staff is the most complex aspect of a school leaders' role. Every headteacher aspires to leading a happy, productive team that feels respected and looked after – but actually achieving this in practice requires skill and dexterity. The challenge is to keep your approach rooted in fairness and transparency, but with a personal touch that recognises and respects individual difference.

The temptation might be to write complicated policies that set out responses to every conceivable situation, but this quickly becomes fraught with difficulty. Instead, headteachers need

strong principles and clear values that they can apply to the many and varied situations they'll face.

KEEP YOUR BEST TEACHERS

Combine legal HR obligations with performance accountability and staff shortages, and you have a challenging environment for heads. A teacher exhibiting poor attendance or performance may be difficult to challenge in the timescales parents expect or the school needs, due to the lengthy process of challenge and support agreed with unions and because it's hard to replace teachers mid-term.

Teachers might request part-time work, or adjustments to their roles at different points in their careers that present real challenges to leaders trying to meet the needs of individual staff, colleagues, children and parents. A teacher's requirement to work part time may be directly at odds with a parent's expectation that their child will have a single dedicated teacher, for example.

The root cause of these issues tends to rest with the ongoing shortage of good, experienced teachers. Quite simply, too many teachers are leaving the profession – 13% in their first year, 25% within their first three years in the classroom – thus leaving the profession with a dearth of seasoned staff and future leaders. A school may be able to recruit fewer experienced teachers, but they still need a balanced staff cohort with members who can lead and mentor those who are early on in their careers. Without enough experienced staff, the development of new teachers will suffer and just exacerbate the problem.

If we're to solve this issue, we have to find new ways of keeping our best teachers. Giving them roles that excite and inspire them is part of the answer, but we can't ignore the basic need to

“A teacher's requirement to work part time may be directly at odds with a parent's expectation that their child will have a single dedicated teacher”





ON THE
WAY TO
SUCCESS

enemies in this area – always willing to try harder or do more until they physically can't do any more; often rejecting the support of published schemes, preferring to believe that they know their class best and can plan better themselves.

As a profession, we have to recognise that sometimes accepting 'good enough' will actually allow us to be better for longer, though this will require a culture change at every level. Ofsted has to recognise the importance of sustainability. Leaders must learn how to support their teachers to be not just be 'the best they can be' but rather 'the best they can sustain'. And teachers need to learn that they can't do it all.

QUESTION YOURSELF

The best leaders will continually ask what really makes a difference, and be willing to challenge some of the things they have always done if they're not having a positive impact. A certain level of bravery and confidence is needed to truly focus on what's important for the children. It's easy to get distracted by other demands, be it marking homework, managing parents' evening, organising PTA events and so forth.

But as leaders, we should always be asking ourselves, why do we do this? Does it make a difference? How long does it take? What will happen if we don't do it? Is it worth it? And of course, we need the DfE to lead the way.

Only then can we be sure that our school leaders are getting the best possible value out of the resources available to them, and are providing the most effective leadership and the best learning opportunities they can for children.

make their jobs more manageable. The workload must be practical, the hours proportionate and the demands reasonable. School holidays alone don't compensate for working 50-hour weeks on top of whatever family responsibilities they may have.

'GOOD ENOUGH' IS OKAY

Schools now do more than they ever have, but headteachers have to ensure that any ancillary work can be sustained. The profession can't afford to train teachers who subsequently burn out and leave the profession prematurely.

Teachers can often be their own worst

Amanda Godfrey is executive head of the Spiral Partnership Trust – a community of schools working in collaboration to provide exceptional education. For more information, visit spiral.herts.sch.uk or follow @spiralexechead

THE 3 ELEMENTS OF LEADERSHIP

GOOD SCHOOL LEADERS NEED A WIDE RANGE OF SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO SUCCEED, BUT A BALANCED TRIANGULATION OF THESE THREE SPECIFIC ELEMENTS ARE ESSENTIAL:



1. KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

As a leader, possessing the right knowledge, skills and experience is key to managing the business of running a school.



2. DEEP UNDERSTANDING

Headteachers must also have a deep understanding of teaching and learning, so that the many decisions they make on a daily basis are all informed by pedagogy.

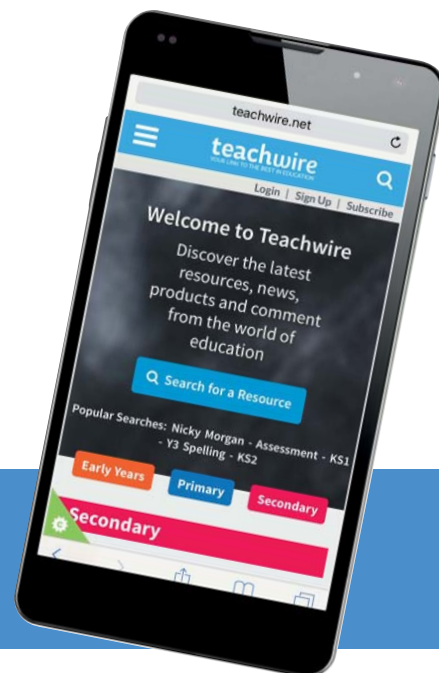


3. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

What distinguishes a true school leader is the emotional intelligence they can bring the role. Leaders need a vision, strong principles and beliefs, and an understanding of colleagues' motivations.

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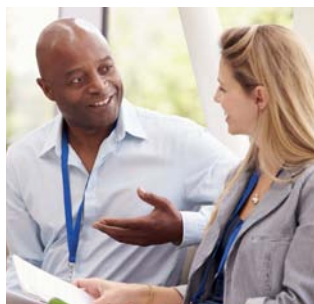
Michael Tidd wants your feedback – but not if it's based solely on data...

Discussion



You can't measure wisdom with tests and scores, argues Debra Kidd

Advice



Julie Price Grimshaw recalls what she learnt from mentoring trainees

Resources



Head to Teachwire to download six of the best KS1 SATs resources for the maths reasoning paper.

What's trending

1

Ideas to engage reluctant writers

2

Teaching the selfie generation

3

Are you ready to be head?

4

Stop eating your shoes!

5

Can we still afford glue sticks?



“Stop using bad business practices”

Mark Wright – Director, AMiE

If they want to attract and retain primary teachers, school leaders need to be more human and less corporate...

Teachers are becoming as precious as gold dust – perhaps because there isn't enough sprinkled in their pay packets for the job they do and the hours they work.

Research into teacher retention by the National Foundation for Educational Research, however, has found that pay isn't the key to retaining teachers; job satisfaction, being valued by supportive management, feeling part of a school community and being proud of where they work are all more likely to make teachers stay. Leaders should take these findings on board.

Too many schools have become unattractive places to work precisely because they fail to make teachers feel valued or supported. The rise of a corporate approach to delivering education – where ‘results’ are all that matters and ‘failure’ often leads to punitive measures – has been well and truly ushered in.

The 1988 Education Reform Act introduced market-led processes and solutions into schools. These led to the high stakes accountability of a corporate ‘compliance’ culture, prompting many leaders to adopt top-down, coercive leadership styles to ensure they stayed in their jobs. More recently we've seen the academy model, under which a number of academies have adopted corporate approaches associated with their business sponsors.

Numerous school leaders report feeling trapped in a system that's squeezing the life out of both themselves and their learners, as highlighted in the recent ATL-AMiE



report, ‘Business as usual: the increasing corporatisation of education leadership and management’ (see tinyurl.com/amie-business). The report summarises the impact that following a business agenda has had on leadership thinking, and points out what needs to change if we're to create workplaces that teachers actually wish to work in.

University of Warwick research cited in the report shows that many individuals in middle and senior leadership received no support upon entering management. While many leaders remain committed to the

moral purpose of education, excessive workloads combined with a lack of support and professional development make it difficult for them to live up to their values.

Business practices can be beneficial if they are conducive to learner outcomes and teacher well-being. Companies across the private sector are increasingly reaping the benefits of building trust in their workforces rather than fear, and are gradually recognising the need for incentives that encourage staff to join, stay and develop. There is good corporate practice out there that can benefit primary schools and teachers if similar models are adopted.

The problem is that too many of the business practices imported into primary education have been the wrong ones, such as micromanagement, performance-related pay and cut-throat competitiveness.

These are divisive and dehumanising approaches often adopted for short-term performance gains, but are strongly associated with increased staff mental illness, high sickness rates, reduced collaboration and workplace bullying.

They are approaches that have prompted people to leave the profession, served to widen inequality of educational outcomes (due to the priorities placed on pupils expected to perform well in assessment) and are symptomatic of an ethical vacuum that's harming pupils, staff and the profession.

Mark Wright is the director of AMiE – the leadership section of the ATL union representing school leaders and managers. A new AMiE booklet, ‘Leading in Tough Times’, explores different types of ethical leadership and how a leader's ethics may be tested. For more details, visit amie.atl.org.uk or follow @atl_amie

NOW HIRING

Are you recruitment ads working as hard as they could be? Eteach's Katie Newell offers some tips...

Doing it wrong

OUTSTANDING TEACHER AND KS2 HEAD REQUIRED

Jxxx Junior is an 'Ofsted Good' rated primary school looking to appoint an Outstanding Head of KS2 with a commitment to outstanding teaching and learning.

The successful candidate will have a proven record of inspired teaching and leadership with a dynamic approach and disciplinary record for highly motivated students.

As a full time class teacher and the key stage head you will have the responsibility to lead your teaching and support team to ensure the highest standards as well as lead excellent and progressive thinking in all areas of the curriculum. As well as a track record of excellent organisational skills you will have experience in supporting and training staff as well as responsibility for mentoring and nurturing. The successful applicant will have a firm belief that all children can achieve there very best with the right teaching.

There is an expectation to contribute to the wider life of the school and local community with enrichment events and extra-curricular activities. The successful candidate will have a PGCE, BEd or Schools Direct qualification with teaching experience.

Jxxx Junior was established in 1964 and prides itself on being the hub of the local community. A three-form entry school, our school was founded by Sir James Taylor who believed that excellent education should be accessible to all. After teaching himself for over forty years he founded the school to provide high quality education for the local families who worked in the local factories and townships.

We offer an onsite canteen with locally sources ingredients. Starting Salary is based on experience and TLR eligibility - Jxxx Junior School operates its own pay scale.

Safeguarding Statement: This appointment is subject to the satisfactory completion of all pre-employment checks, including an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check and Secretary of State Prohibition Order check.

For an application form please email info@jxxx.sch.uk or post a request letter to:

School Office
Jxxx Junior School
123 Counting Lane
Janton
JN12 5AB
Or telephone 01234 567890

Excessively long text

Our research shows that teachers scan an advert for 30 seconds and only read on for 1 minute 39 seconds if interested. Your first 300 words should therefore contain the most important information; adverts with bullet points and clear titles get the best responses.

Confusing criteria

Think like a candidate and use carefully chosen vocabulary – you only need to include three or four bullet points. Teachers won't want to apply if they don't fit the criteria, so specify 'necessary' versus 'desirable' skills.

SPAG errors

Teachers will spot any basic errors, which might indicate you've invested minimal time in starting this valuable conversation with your next potential team member.

Emails and numbers

Schools need to critically analyse every penny spent on recruitment for cost effectiveness. 'Apply now' buttons on online adverts carry a counting mechanism you can analyse to see which advert, agency or job board was your best source of candidates for that type of job. Different media routes reach different teacher types, so use a variety. No recruitment campaign decision should be made without evidence of which spending gave the best return on investment last time.

Complicated to apply

Asking candidates to download a form or call for a pack and post it will only result in you losing the most sought-after candidates to competing schools.

Getting it right

Motivate first

Begin with the job title, salary and location. Adverts with salary or bandings and location are found more easily online and attract 20% more applications.

Obvious contact options

Obtaining the name and contact details of interested teachers is your goal, so avoid the delays that paper forms will cause. Application forms should be optimised for phones and tablets – if you don't have access to the Eteach Online Application System (included within our annual licence) or similar software, ensure that candidates can easily complete and submit their application electronically.

'Search optimised' text

Include several job titles that will function as keywords. Over 65% of jobseekers start their searches online, so vary the phrases you use – 'computer science', 'technology', 'ICT teaching role' and 'computer technology', for example. Use the Google Trends tool to identify common searched-for terms.

Engaging brand messages

You must compete with other schools to attract and secure talent, so detail the benefits of working at your school. These might include opportunities for progression, CPD workshops, mentoring, car parks and any charters or awards.

Emphasise your USPs

Tailor your school's unique selling points to each vacancy. This is an advert, so make an effort to write it in a way that sells your 'product' – the role. Why should they choose *your* school?

Test the process

Apply for your own job role to evaluate the candidate experience. Even fantastic adverts will yield poor responses if candidates can't easily apply for them.

PRIMARY CLASS TEACHER AND HEAD OF KEY STAGE 2

Thriving Oak School is a two-form entry primary school that opened in September 2014. We are looking for a passionate, nurturing and talented teacher to join our dedicated team.

- School: Thriving Oak School, Pencilton
- Start date: 1 September 2017
- Salary: £25,250 - £32,000 or National Pay Scale plus TLR
- Contract: Full Time and Permanent
- Job Expires: 28 April 2017 @ 11.59PM
- NQTs Considered: No

HOW TO APPLY

The successful candidate will have the exciting and unique opportunity to shape a KS2 curriculum which is bespoke, challenging and fit for the needs of 21st century life. As we are a new school, this vacancy is ideal for an experienced and innovative practitioner looking for a teaching role with input into the teaching schemes and purchasing budget decisions that will help to grow our offering as a local community school.

We believe in giving the best to our students through investing in our staff. We offer mentorship and coaching, as well as funding and release time for CPD. We voluntarily subscribe to The Fair Workload Charter and hold an Investors in People award. We offer a cycle scheme and discounted gym membership, plus termly teambuilding outings. There is the potential for senior leadership progression for the right candidate.

Potential candidates are warmly invited to visit the school or to contact the headteacher for an informal conversation.

Colleague Benefits:

- Childcare vouchers, cycle scheme and reduced gym membership at our neighbouring sports facilities
- Free parking for all staff
- We also have an additional two days in which the school is closed during term time to recognise and reward the commitment of our staff

About you:

- We are looking for an inspirational teacher with a proven track record of pupil progress
- A teacher who embraces creativity, innovation and is always reflecting for very best practice
- Holder of QTS through a PGCE, GTP/Schools Direct or equivalent
- Previous experience of leadership and budget management preferable, but not critical

About us:

- Our staff feedback tells us we have a team who feel trusted and listened to with a healthy work-life balance
- Our campus is set upon a grassy three acres with outdoor learning and enjoyment encouraged.
- The excellent behaviour of our students and our resistance to any unnecessary paperwork means staff can really focus on teaching and learning
- All of our team have a bespoke CPD programme in place and share best practice across year groups

FIND OUT MORE AT OUR SCHOOL CAREER SITE

The deadline for applications Friday 28th April 2017. Interviews will be held on Monday 15th May 2017

Safeguarding Statement: This appointment is subject to the satisfactory completion of all pre-employment checks, including an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and Secretary of State Prohibition Order check.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Eteach is a specialist provider of education recruitment services, working with over 7,500 schools and colleges. Its recently published white paper, which highlights the challenges and potential solutions for schools recruiting and retaining staff in the current landscape, can be downloaded via bit.ly/eteachMar17

I FELT LIKE A COMPLETE FOOL

Being an effective leader means keeping calm in the face of frustration, as The Primary Head knows all too well...

I have one recurring nightmare. I'm normally shouting or screaming at a child who is coolly ignoring me, rendering me completely ineffective. I started having these dreams when I became a deputy, and they've continued into my headship.

I'm no dream expert, but it doesn't take Sigmund Freud to work out their deeper meaning – as the level of my accountability has increased, so has my unconscious fear grown about failing to inspire anyone to follow me. In my dreams I'm haunted by disobedient and passive pupils; in reality, I'm constantly trying to keep the adults in my school united and on the straight and narrow.

When I started teaching I quickly got into a groove of being disappointed that the children weren't 'performing' and then getting cross. I remember my first head, after a lesson observation, challenging me to not raise my voice for the rest of the term. I gave it a go and was genuinely surprised at how much more pleasant teaching was. It gradually dawned on me that if the children weren't 'performing', it was most likely down to my own poor performance as a teacher. And then I became a leader.

I hear tales of 'old' deputies or heads who had tempers. Colleagues have regaled me with stories of red-faced fury being unleashed on staff by ex-senior leaders. That managerial style was never part of my own personal succession plan, and I listen to such stories with wonder and astonishment, for I still try to adhere to my first head's challenge.

Well, apart from this one time...

THE INADEQUACY OF 'LOSING IT'

As a deputy, I'd called a meeting. While we waited for the final member of staff to arrive, I suggested we start without him. Someone then nervously informed me that this person wasn't coming because he felt the meeting had been called at too short notice.

I carried on, finished the meeting

in about 20 minutes and everyone went home on time.

The next day I asked to speak to the non-attender during assembly. I was very calm, and said that I was disappointed he had chosen not to attend a meeting the deputy had called, and hadn't informed me that he wasn't going to bother turning up. I can't remember exactly what he said, but he remained adamant that 48 hours was too short notice, and told me that he'd be complaining to the chair of governors that middle leaders were having too much pressure put on them.

At this point, words like 'professional courtesy', 'respect' and 'basic set of good bloody manners' may have come out of my mouth. I was now standing and also shouting. I may even have thrown a whiteboard pen at my desk in frustration. He, it must be said, remained beautifully calm and asked me to stop shouting in a way that made me want to make his head explode. I remember thinking then, *I think I've lost this one...*

I've no idea how it ended; I think he just left. I know I felt like a complete fool. I licked my wounds and considered the way forward. That was almost 10 years ago, and to this day I remember the feeling of inadequacy brought on by 'losing it'. I fail to see how it's apparently worked for so many other leaders before me.

I've been cross. I've sworn at, shouted about and berated incompetence at all levels, but I've never directed it towards an individual. For me, dealing with mistakes, incompetence, rudeness, bad decisions and other people's stress are dishes best served cold – and a cool Head is better for everyone.

The Primary Head is the moniker of a headteacher currently working in a UK primary school. Follow him at @theprimaryhead

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