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## From the editor



New year, new term, new...Secretary of State for Education? There were more fresh beginnings this January than usual, as Justine Greening departed a Ministerial post she'd held for 18 months, and a government she'd served since 2010, after reportedly refusing to be transferred over to the Department for Work and Pensions.

Her successor Damian Hinds has since become the subject of much scrutiny and conjecture by an education sector which, if not necessarily lavish in its praise for Greening's achievements, was at least appreciative for a period of stewardship relatively light on major policy upheavals. Some have pointed to Hinds' grammar schooling as a point of contrast with Greening's comprehensive background, but it seems unlikely that we'll see a return of the government's ill-fated plans to open more selective schools – at least any time soon.

What does seem likely at this early stage is that social mobility concerns will become even more central to DfE thinking and decision making than they are already. Having previously served as Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility, Hinds has been known to comment publicly on achievement gaps and the like over the past few years, and was interestingly quoted in 2014 as saying the following: "There is no appetite in the country for a wholesale return to academic selection at 11, for good reasons, but why not have at least one unashamedly academically elite state school in each county or major conurbation?"

Much has come to pass since then, of course, but it's interesting to speculate whether that's an idea he might still wish to pursue, and how much appetite he has for taking a radical approach and shaking things up a bit. We'll find out soon enough...

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser  
callum.fauser@theteachco.com

## Our experts this issue



**Hilary Goldsmith**  
Secondary school  
director of finance



**Jill Berry**  
Leadership  
consultant and  
former headteacher



**Tim Nelson**  
Associate consultant  
at Focus Education



**Anthony David**  
Executive  
headteacher



**Caroline Collins**  
Head of school  
business strategy  
and resources, Miles  
Coverdale Primary



**Julie Price  
Grimshaw**  
Teacher, trainer and  
education adviser



**Will Millard**  
Senior Associate at  
LKMco



**Terry Freedman**  
Education  
technology trainer  
and consultant



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### EDITOR:

Callum Fauser,  
callum.fauser@theteachco.com,  
01206 505111

### GROUP ADVERTISING MANAGER:

Richard Stebbing

### ADVERTISING EXECUTIVES:

Gabrielle Pitts,  
gabrielle.pitts@theteachco.com  
01206 508629

Edward Webber,  
edward.webber@theteachco.com  
01206 505956

GROUP EDITOR: Joe Carter

ART EDITOR: Sarah Mayes

DESIGNERS: Charlotte Weatherley,  
Clare Brasier, David Haddington

ACCOUNTS: 01206 505995

### DESIGN & REPROGRAPHICS:

Ace Pre-Press  
01206 508608

### SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPARTMENT:

Lisa Harvey, lisa.harvey@aceville.co.uk  
01206 505922

### SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES:

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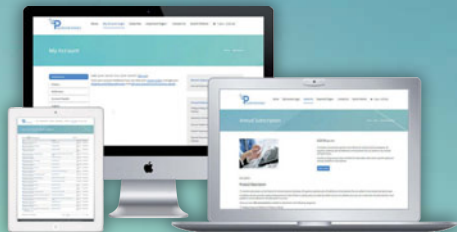
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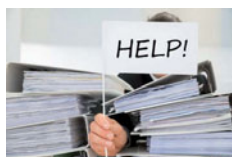
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# “I can remember some cautionary tales”



The former Schools Minister and now head of the Education Policy Institute shares his thoughts on how English schools compare globally, and recalls some ‘hands-on’ policymaking...

**A report produced last year by the EPI ([tinyurl.com/epi-eng-ed](http://tinyurl.com/epi-eng-ed)) indicated that grades earned by secondary pupils in England compare unfavourably to the likes of Singapore, Hong Kong and Canada in maths and English. What factors might be involved?**

That report on secondary school standards essentially found that we’re not in the group of world-leading countries – we’re at or around average, and have been stable at that level since the introduction of the PISA rankings.

Some of it may relate to specific challenges in our system, including the low levels of investment in early years, and the fact that a large part of the gap starts very early on in young people’s lives. There may be cultural factors involved too. We know that some studies into the differences in PISA scores have highlighted interesting issues, such as the fact that some students who have only recently migrated from the top performing countries continue to do quite well in countries where the level of average attainment is much lower.

**Are there any fact-finding educational visits you’ve made to other countries that have really stayed with you?**

Some of the visits I’ve made have highlighted the difference in the professional development of teachers in other countries, and the extent of the support, commitment and CPD available there. But I can also remember some cautionary tales about superficial international comparisons, particularly the tendency for all countries to look abroad and assume that there’s something ‘going on’ that must be automatically ‘better’ without understanding the context. I once visited Sweden to look at their evolving educational forms, and discovered when I got there that many

people I’d wanted to talk to weren’t in the country at the time – because they were simultaneously on a fact-finding tour of England looking at our accountability systems and Ofsted, having seen those, rather than their own free school innovations, as the answer to all their problems..

**What are your views on the government’s plans to introduce**

**baseline assessments at age 4 to measure primary progress?**

We think it’s a positive move for two reasons. Firstly, it’ll put more focus on the assessment of children early on in their educational journey, on understanding what their starting point is, and maybe on some of the challenges they face to being able to learn effectively. Anything we can do that relates to early diagnosis and action where people need additional



## CAREER TIMELINE

1987  
Enters the financial services industry, working for JP Morgan and latterly Barclays de Zoete Wedd

Retires from the financial sector to become a research assistant for the Liberal Democrats

1994

2001  
Elected as Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament for Yeovil

Appointed Chief Secretary to the Treasury in the Tory/Lib Dem coalition, but resigns after 17 days

2010



assistance ought to be useful.

We believe that a fair evaluation of schools and understanding of school performance requires looking at the value schools are adding to those education journeys, rather than the raw attainment data of pupils, which might simply tell you what their socioeconomic background is.

It makes sense to judge primary schools and earlier education on progress. Without a baseline, you're only looking at half the picture if you're trying to assess progress between KS1 and KS2.

**In your view, could a National Funding Formula represent a positive step towards tackling nationwide attainment gaps?**

I think it's sensible to have a NFF, since the existing distribution of education funding clearly isn't properly linked to pupil characteristics. Given that we have a national education system in England, it makes sense for there to be a NFF underlying it. However, the degree to which money is redistributed will be limited by the fact that the government won't want certain schools to see big declines in their budgets, and doesn't have lots of new money to put into the system as a whole, so those who should be gaining won't gain a lot.

**What would you most like your time as Schools Ministers to be remembered for?**

There are two big things we did of which I'm very proud. One was my party's role in delivering significantly more funding through the Pupil Premium for disadvantaged pupils, because I think that's one of the biggest challenges we've got in English education – the gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and other pupils. Through the Pupil Premium we put in a massive amount of extra money that was very helpful to schools in disadvantaged areas, and a high level accountability system that gave schools flexibility about the types of policy they could use to close the gap.

I also think we were able to change some accountability measures in education in a way that helped to drive



out some lower quality qualifications that had been used to 'game' league tables, and worked to encourage students – not least those at 16 – into pursuing a wider curriculum by focusing on eight subjects rather than five. By placing more emphasis on progress, schools were given an incentive to focus on improving the education of all of their pupils, rather than the more undesirable incentive there was under the 'five good A\* to Cs' measure, which caused schools to focus only on getting pupils over grade (and accountability) borderlines.

**Can you call to mind any particular incidents or anecdotes to illuminate the policymaking process inside the DfE at the time?**

I can remember when new teacher tests

were about to be introduced for maths, English and logic in 2013. I took my red box home over the weekend, which contained examples of the new test teachers had to take in order to qualify. I tried some of the tests myself, including the logic one, and discovered that I'd got a number of the questions wrong before coming to the realisation that I'd actually been right then and the answers were wrong.

I got the Permanent Secretary and chief analyst to both take the test – I think even Michael Gove might have tried some of the questions – and we found that all of us got a number of them wrong. After weighing up whether the answers were actually correct, we ended up abolishing the logic test altogether, because we thought it wasn't very reliable.

2012  
Returns to  
government as  
Minister of State  
for Schools

Joins the  
Education Policy  
Institute as  
Executive  
Chairman

2015

# Now FUNDING

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### WHO? Department for Education

WHAT? Strategic School Improvement Fund (Round 3)

HOW MUCH? £100,000 to £500,000

APPLY BY? Friday 20th April 2018

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

FUNDS? Teaching schools, multi-academy trusts or LAs needing to improve school performance and pupil attainment. The fund aims to support medium to long-term sustainable activities across groups of schools, prioritising those involving school-led provision. School improvement activities eligible to receive funding include those relating to leadership development, governance, teaching methods and approaches, financial health and efficiency.



### WHO? The Tree Council

WHAT? Trees for Schools

HOW MUCH? £100 to £700

APPLY BY? 31st March 2018.

WHERE? [tinyurl.com/trees-schools-18](http://tinyurl.com/trees-schools-18)

FUNDS? The planting of trees during National Tree Week 2018 (24th November to 2nd December). Applications are open to all UK schools with pupils aged 16 or under, and applicants must be able to raise 25% of the planting costs – ie. the trees themselves and any supports or aids (stakes, guards, fertiliser and so forth) where needed.



### WHO? The Royal Society Education Outreach Team

WHAT? Partnership Grants

HOW MUCH? Up to £3000

APPLY BY? Applications reopen in February 2018

WHERE? [tinyurl.com/rs-partners](http://tinyurl.com/rs-partners)

FUNDS? Equipment to run a STEM investigation project in conjunction with an individual currently working in a STEM-related profession (research or industry). Applications must be jointly submitted by teachers or support staff at the main school and the STEM professional. Eligible projects must look to improve understanding of recent STEM developments and perceptions of those working within STEM industries.



### WHO? British Ecological Society

WHAT? Outreach Grants

HOW MUCH? Up to £2000

APPLY BY? Opening January 2018

WHERE? [tinyurl.com/bes-outreach](http://tinyurl.com/bes-outreach)

FUNDS? Projects and public events intended to engage the public with the science of ecology. Projects should be aimed at a non-academic audience, involve direct interaction and must have links to regional, national or international ecological research. The funding can generally not be used to cover staff salaries, equipment or specific skills training, and will only be awarded to schools that engage in outreach among their wider local community.





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# THE PSM GUIDE TO... School improvement



## “I’D JUST BURST INTO TEARS”

Childline recently announced that it receives 38 calls per day from young people affected by anxiety; ‘Jessica’, now 17, tells us how the condition affected her time at school

*Names have been changed*

I was 13 when I first became aware of my anxiety and what it was, but looking back, I’d had it from around Year 5. It wasn’t obvious at first. I just knew that I could get quite panicked, and that certain things would set me off. Over time these feelings got worse to the point where they became quite debilitating.

I became known as ‘the cry baby’, because there’d be days when I’d just burst into tears for no obvious reason. I’d feel increasingly tired and reluctant to go out to places with my family and friends, turning down invitations to birthday parties and things like that. I barely wanted to go out at all.

At times I’d really want affection, craving hugs from friends and wanting to be around them. At others, when I wasn’t feeling so great, I’d actively push people away and distance myself from them. Looking back, I now recognise that this was a defence mechanism.

Things became worse at secondary. At the school I went to, mental health was a taboo issue that no one wanted to

talk about. Teachers just glossed over it, telling us that we were too young to really know what was happening to us. I assumed a kind of 'counsellor' role among my peers who were going through similar things themselves, because they felt they had no one else to talk to.

In year 8 a friend told me things about her personal life that I soon realised, even at that age, that I wasn't qualified to be helping her with. We approached our head of year, who directed us to the deputy headteacher. She then gave us a lecture about how she understood the stresses of school, but that we ultimately had to make sure we were prepared for our exams. The conversation veered away completely from addressing this girl's problems, to how important it was to get the right grades.

At the time, I thought that doing this 'informal counselling' for friends would be helpful for me too, but when I got to Year 11 I reached a peak, where the weight of bearing everyone else's problems as well as my own got too much for me. It was a lot for one person to carry. It was around that time that I ended up calling Childline.

It was a selective school where quite a lot of pressure was put on pupils. A close friend of mine had mental health issues that resulted in her being admitted to a specialist unit. When she returned she was told that her problems were too much for the school to deal with, and was kicked out just before we took our exams.

At my primary school the staff were more attentive. They'd contact my mum if they saw I'd had a 'strange day', for example, but I do think they could have helped even more by asking questions more often. Kids are much more likely to open up to a teacher after talking to them for a while. If they could have set aside more time for that to happen, it would have been great.

There are still days when I can feel the effects of an anxiety attack. It's not 'gone', but I can function with it and get on with my life. I can recognise when my anxiety is getting bad, remove myself from situations I can't change and generally stay more positive.

 @NSPCC

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



## PLEASE DON'T STOP THE MUSIC

It's time for heads and policymakers to stop starving music education of resources and start paying attention to the tremendous good it can do, writes Paul McManus...

**A**t Music for All, we offer grants to individuals and community organisations to assist with obtaining instruments and music lessons. Our interactions with schools usually occur when a school is contemplating removing or reducing music from its curriculum – which is something that seems to be on the rise.

A few years ago, our community grant scheme typically didn't get grant applications from schools, but rather from local projects such as music community projects, ensembles and so forth. The fact we're now seeing an increase in applications from schools to help support their music provision demonstrates the impact that budget cuts are having in this area. Around 15% of our community applications now come from schools, and increasingly, even music services.

Early last year, for example, we gave 19 acoustic guitars to a school in Birmingham, which was about to stop teaching music to its pupils, and you can find many similar stories on our Facebook page ([facebook.com/musicforallcharity](https://facebook.com/musicforallcharity)).

I sit on a number of music education bodies, including the Music Education Council and the National Music Council, and am in regular contact with the Musician's Union and Incorporated Society of Musicians. While we're not representative of teachers as such, I sit on those bodies with my charity hat on to make sure we're aware and involved with what's going on politically.

To a certain extent, primary schools have always varied in terms of the music provision they offer – from those with a

teacher who's not really a musician but does their best at providing some kind of musical experience for children, through to others that either employ teachers with training in teaching music or have visiting peripatetic teachers that provide it for them.

It's fair to say that this variance has never been greater than it is now, because in some schools the money simply isn't there for that visiting tutor any more. From the music services we deal with, we've learnt that many peripatetic teachers are on self-employed contracts, due to the lack of LA funding that music services are now having to deal with.

There are well-trodden arguments that say making music can make you better at maths, but I prefer to concentrate on other factors – that music is, in itself, is wonderful thing to do, and can bring out the creativity in children while helping them to socialise and interact with their peers. It's amazing how truancy levels can be reduced in some schools just by having kids take part in music projects that they enjoy.

School is where most of us will have our first experiences of music making. If creative subjects get continue to be marginalised schools it will be a sad day.

**Paul McManus is the chief executive of the Music Industries Association (MIA) and its charity Music for All**

 @mfacharity

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



# Summative testing is being overused

Without clarity as to its purpose, primary assessment will only sap teachers' time and not tell us what we need to know, says Will Millard

In November last year, a report titled 'Testing The Water', published by LKMco and Pearson, found that teachers spend too much time conducting summative assessments – i.e. those which seek to test pupils' knowledge and skills across a larger area of learning. As a result, formative diagnostic assessments that show teachers where pupils need additional support are being sidelined.

School leaders feel under pressure to produce 'up to date' data for Ofsted, despite Ofsted stating it doesn't expect to see tracking data presented in any particular format. Yet the stakes attached to school inspection are so high that many schools are undertaking regular summative assessments from a perceived need to have such data to hand, just in case inspectors come knocking.

Schools also sometimes overuse summative assessments in the hope they'll provide formative information. While it is possible to use some summative assessments formatively, it's not always efficient. A practise SATs paper might reveal questions pupils struggle with, but may not help the teacher understand the root issue.

Overuse of summative assessments can additionally sap teachers' time, contribute to already substantial piles of marking and cause a narrowing of the curriculum. Teachers may feel short-term pressures to focus on teaching content they know will be tested, rather than follow a broader curriculum with a longer-term pay off. Furthermore, by dictating both how and what pupils learn, a focus on summative assessments

reduces teachers' (and pupils') enjoyment of teaching and learning.

In 'Testing The Water' we call on leaders to support teachers in using assessments with a clear and specific purpose. In practice, this means establishing a clear division of labour between diagnostic formative assessment that's embedded into day-to-day classroom teaching, and occasional summative tests that help identify pupils' attainment levels, benchmarked against their peers and national standards.

The report cites St Matthias Primary School in Tower Hamlets, which exemplifies this approach by using a careful mix of techniques. While these vary from subject to subject, common strategies include daily 'do nows',

which test pupils' knowledge of recently taught content, giving teachers information about what has and hasn't been learnt. Teachers then use 'check its' to test pupils' knowledge of particular topics three weeks after the content was first taught, showing the teacher what pupils have retained. By prompting pupils to retrieve content they've learnt previously, these assessments help to embed pupils' knowledge.

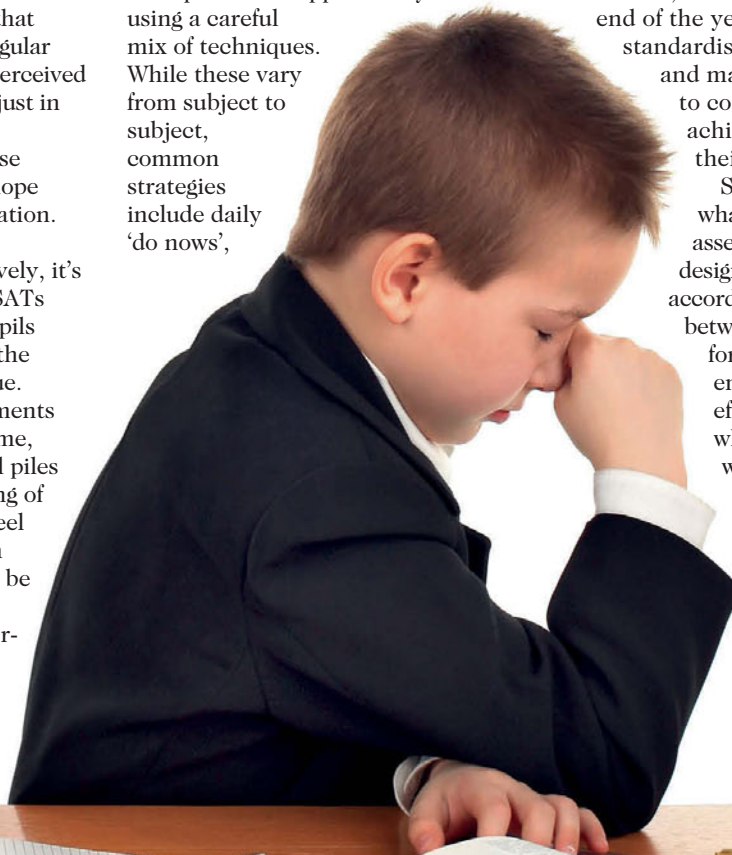
St Matthias pupils take termly summative assessments in writing and maths, multiple-choice quizzes at the end of units in humanities subjects and science, and then larger quizzes at the end of the year. Pupils also sit standardised assessments in reading and maths, enabling the school to compare pupils' achievements against those of their peers nationally.

School leaders must identify what it is they want to use assessments for, and then design appropriate assessments accordingly. Clearly delineating between assessments that serve formative and summative ends will help improve the efficacy of these assessments, while keeping teachers' workloads to a minimum.

**Will Millard is a Senior Associate at the policy research and campaigning organisation LKMco**

 @LKMco

 [lkmco.org](http://lkmco.org)



# GET BETTER WITHOUT THE BUREAUCRACY

Good self-evaluation is the backbone to a great school, writes Tim Nelson – and done well, the process will be more helpful than onerous...

It's long been the case that good schools carry out self-evaluation in every aspect of their work, but it's not always been performed as objectively and systematically as is expected nowadays.

In 2004, David Miliband – then Minister for School Standards – gave a speech to the North of England Education Conference titled 'Personalised Learning: Building a New Relationship with Schools' (see [tinyurl.com/school-relations-04](http://tinyurl.com/school-relations-04)), in which called for schools to work with a sharper focus, less bureaucracy and greater autonomy – an approach that continues to gain ground today.

One of the main components of this new relationship was self-evaluation, with links to Ofsted inspections and 'single conversations' with school improvement partners, and it remains at the core of the systems adopted in schools over the years since.

## SELF-EVALUATION AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The result of this newer system has been to ensure that the school leadership team maintains a greater connection with self-evaluation as a tool for improvement. At the root of that connection are a number of questions, particularly:

- How can we simplify school leadership
- What is the essence of leading a great school?

It goes without saying that at the heart of great leadership is a relentless drive to achieve the best for your children. Time and again, leadership focused on children and great outcomes trumps all other motives.

This can be seen most clearly when there are challenges and vulnerabilities within a school and the community. Evidence shows that driven and

decisive leadership really makes a difference. As Roy Blatchford, founding director of the National Education Trust, noted in 2014, "Leaders set out to see the best in people and dwell on the positive, while at the same time being single minded in rooting out mediocrity."

The same could be said of leadership across a range of different sectors and contexts, but there are some



distinguishing features of educational leadership – not least the focus on pedagogy and getting the best outcomes for all children (i.e. equity).

## OFSTED AND SELF-EVALUATION

When Ofsted visits a school, its evaluation criteria is clear. It's looking for evidence that demonstrates how well the school is performing – that it's closing gaps, and ensuring that all children achieve their very best. The starting point for the inspection process is the school's own self-evaluation; this self-evaluation will be the first glimpse that inspectors get of how the school views itself.

Self-evaluation has previously been cited by many schools leaders as one of the most time consuming and challenging tasks they face. At its heart, however, the questions that self-evaluation raises are actually quite simple:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- How does that compare with any benchmarking or national comparisons?
- What must we do next to secure further improvement?

## WHERE TO START?

There's no right or wrong when it comes to the starting point for self evaluation. Leadership teams need to find what works best for them. That said, one strategy that many leadership teams have found useful is to start with the criteria they will be judged against.

The shared debate and discussion that a leadership team will have in the course of agreeing the current 'state of the nation' vis-a-vis their school is at the very heart of self-evaluation. Having undertaken this task as a leadership team, you can be sure that the leaders involved will have grasped the bigger picture and understand how the sections of the inspection criteria dovetail together – for example, that what you assert about teaching should correlate with outcomes. For many, this process is the most useful part of self-evaluation.

Where many schools seem to get stuck is by trying to write their self-evaluation as a group. This is because the written product will merely be a record of the

discussions and debates you'll have had as a team. The critical process is to share the criteria and decide the best fit; who actually writes the self-evaluation summary is slightly irrelevant.

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

When it comes to writing your self-evaluation, keep it simple. It can be helpful to frame each statement in a similar way, by stating your judgement, how you know and defining what comes next. Here's an example:

*'Written feedback is consistently good. Evidence from book scrutiny and discussions with children support this, because children can talk about their successes and next steps with the majority of pieces of work evidencing pupil response to feedback. To further improve we need to ensure that this good practice is seen in all areas of the curriculum, not just in English and mathematics.'*

The length of your self-evaluation will vary, depending on the complexities within your school. It's important that you don't feel the need to include every detail in your self-evaluation. The simplest way to keep your summary short is to signpost to other sources of evidence, such as detailed evaluations of teaching, evaluation of pupil outcomes, CPD records, analysis of pupil groups and so forth.

Once complete, it might be useful to ask a colleague outside of your school to read your self-evaluation, and ask them whether they can see clearly how the strengths and next steps are aligned to the inspection criteria. When looking at a self-evaluation summary, ask yourself the following.

Is it concise and succinct, clearly signposting evidence? Is it evaluative, rather than descriptive or repetitive? Is it a regularly updated working document? Is it shared? Is it linked to the inspection criteria? Is it linked to the improvement plan? Is it honest?

Writing your self-evaluation is an important leadership task. Your self-evaluation summary, along with the school's website, will be the first glimpse

that inspectors have into the reality that is your school.

Self-evaluation contributes to school improvement by providing an accurate assessment of how well the school is performing and what it needs to do next. It leads to the identification of improvement priorities and to evidence-based school improvement planning, which in turn will result in clear benefits for pupils.

## GET THE LANGUAGE RIGHT

**Writing about your own school is far more challenging than writing about someone else's. In your school there are emotions, heartaches, dilemmas, human beings, all of which can make it difficult to write in a dispassionate way. Where possible, try to use evaluative language – you might find the following phrases helpful:**

- 'Because of... this meant that...'
- 'Data indicates that... because...'
- 'The progress of... compared with national shows...'
- 'The impact was... as a result of...'
- 'Evidence from... showed us that...'
- 'Feedback from... resulted in...'

Conversely, try to avoid phrases like these:

- 'It seems like...'
- 'We are not sure why...'
- 'We think that...'
- 'Obviously...'
- 'Clearly...'



**Tim Nelson is a former headteacher with over 25 years' experience in primary education, and has previously worked as a local leader of education, an Ofsted Inspector and mentor for trainee inspectors. He is currently a full-time consultant for Focus Education**

 @focusededucation1

 [focus-education.co.uk](http://focus-education.co.uk)







# STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Fiona Aubrey-Smith sees how by joining together, one group of schools were able to become greater than the sum of their parts...

**W**ith schools increasingly focusing on what their future might look like as part of a partnership or trust, the journey towards attaining, and sustaining provision that's rated outstanding is becoming increasingly complex. What works in one school might not necessarily work in another, making the choice of partner, and the implications of that partnership, vital if their future is to be a successful one.

How, then, should groups of schools looking to develop a shared common vision – one that strives for outstanding provision, whilst also responding to the unique features of each school within the group?

## DISTINCT VALUES

The Brindishe family of schools in south east London consists of three very different schools, all rated outstanding by Ofsted, and all with national reputations for innovation and excellence. Led by executive headteacher Dame Vicki Paterson DBE,

each school retains its own personality, community and staffing, but also a distinct set of values and shared beliefs that unite the schools in the purpose of serving their shared local community.

Each of the individual schools – Brindishe Lee, Brindishe Green and Brindishe Manor – has reached the status of outstanding rating from very different starting points. More significantly, each has a very different 'feel'. One is a close-knit community school, one a traditional local family school and one a school that sees itself as serving a global village.

With all three members of the Brindishe group currently featuring in the top 10% of schools nationally, they're evidently following a formula that's working well for staff, children and parents. As Vicki puts it, "If you focus on the needs of the children and put them at the centre of all that you do, then Ofsted will look after itself."

There's something unique about the ways in which the three work together. Working non-hierarchically in close

partnership and collaboration, there's a focus on the building of creativity, the pursuit of a rich and engaging curriculum, and a recognition that strength can be found in diversity and difference.

As well as benefiting from the practical advantages that increased scale can deliver – such as shared resourcing and bulk ordering – there's a strong collaborative mindset among the staff across all three schools. There's routine sharing of knowledge, skills and capacity not just in terms of leadership and teaching, but also in the use of premises, business and support staff. Professional development, training and INSET is always delivered to the staff as a whole, with many moving between the schools as they develop their careers.

## A CURRICULUM FOR LIFE

Teachers working within Brindishe schools are encouraged to focus on their teaching by constantly keeping the

following questions in mind:

- How does this child in my class learn?
- Why do they need to learn this?
- What's the best way for them to do that?
- How will I know when they're successful?
- How can I improve their successes?

Brindishe schools share a common curriculum that they've designed themselves, which recognises that the children across all three settings comprise a very diverse group of learners. The curriculum was developed by a group of 30 staff drawn from across the schools, who first established what their shared values were, before devising ways of addressing the schools' diverse collective intake.

Parents and governors were also involved as part of a review process, with teams leading on specific areas. The detail of the curriculum was developed by looking at what tasks needed undertaking, and identifying people who wanted to help support the task in part or full. It's a non-hierarchical approach that's had a major impact on the schools' mindsets, shared sense of community and subsequent learning.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

What's striking about the Brindishe curriculum is the way in which it incorporates elements of local, national and international curricula, with a relentless focus developing the skills, knowledge and understanding children will need for their journeys through life – while at the same time relating only in small part to national assessments and expectations.

Seeing the curriculum in practice is invigorating, and the staff have very clear views on how best to enable children to learn.

Creativity isn't limited to certain activities, but applied to learning experiences throughout the day – be it through outdoor activities, using natural materials in the classroom, when learning vocabulary, or prompting questions.

Collaboration is expected at all times. This can take the form of cross-class partnerships, students supporting students and parents and carers being supported through home learning. There can be myriad staff collaborations

## CURRICULUM FOCUS

From Year 1 to Year 6, the Brindishe curriculum is organised into the following six areas of learning. Each one is linked with the impact it will have on children's later learning, and includes a set of ambitions to be achieved for every child over the course of their time at Brindishe.

- **Communication, Languages and Literacy**
- **Maths, Economics and Enterprise**
- **Scientific and Technological Understandings**
- **Creative and Expressive Arts**
- **Historical, Global, Social and Spiritual Understanding**
- **Physical, Wellbeing, Health and Lifestyles**

taking place at any given time, as well as various group activities for the children, such as interschool dance projects tri-school choirs and inter-school team building work.

Environments are employed as a tool. Smart use is made of the physical spaces within, around and outside of the schools, and there are powerful displays that range from working/learning walls to inspirational postcards.

Each school sees to it that every inch of space is put in the service of learning, whether it be gardens and forest school spaces, shared open plan learning zones or even rooftop astrofurfed games areas. The schools are impressively resourced, in line with William Morris' philosophy that everything in one's house – or in this case, classroom – "Should be either useful or beautiful."

Consistency is considered critical. This belief underpins the curriculum, of course, but also the expectations of children and staff, the presentation of the learning environment and the ways in which staff at all three schools interact with each other.

There's a deeply embedded culture of respect and responsibility among the children and adults across all schools. Children are given

significant responsibilities, while staff work non-hierarchically within and beyond the classroom.

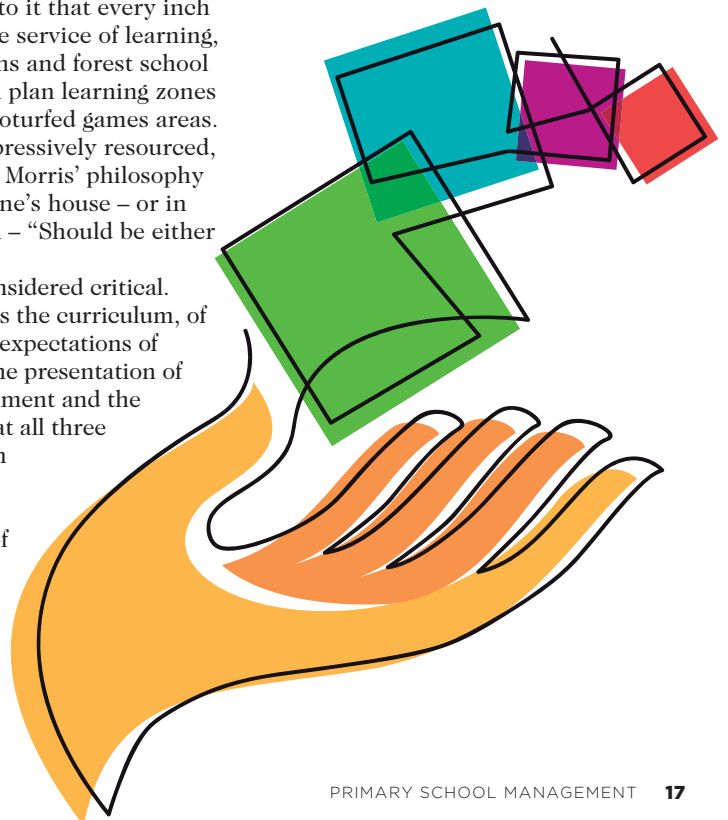
## AN EMPOWERING ETHOS

It seems the ethos in place across the Brindishe family is one that's able to empower staff, governors and the local community to support three very different schools, with very different needs, to the point where each can excel in its own right.

This surely illustrates what notions of 'outstanding' should be all about – strong principles and practice so deeply embedded that almost any obstacle to excellence in learning can be overcome. The schools' collective motto encapsulates it simply; 'Together we are more'.



**Fiona Aubrey-Smith is a doctoral researcher and former school leader, holding a number of non-executive board roles for multi-academy trusts and maintained schools**





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# Buildings & Facilities

## GIVE VISITORS A GREAT RECEPTION

The area of your school where you receive the public speaks volumes about the type of school you are, says Hilary Goldsmith....

**R**emember the old adage that says people make judgements about someone they've just met within two minutes of meeting them? The same is true of schools and their reception areas. Reception is the first experience that visitors will have of your school, so it's important to ensure that yours says everything you want it to say about who you are as a school, and how you treat the people within.

Take a walk from your front gates into your reception area, imagining that this is your first visit. While doing that, hold in your mind an image of the best reception in the world as a comparator. Then consider the following...

### **PRACTICALITIES**

Is your Reception area clearly visible from the street, with appropriate signage and accurate directions? If there are steps, is there also a clear wheelchair route? If there's a bell, who will answer it? Is the reception desk obvious and easily accessible for all of your guests? Is there seating for visitors with mobility issues, and clear, pictorial signage for those with language or visual difficulties? Are there hearing loops and translation services available – and if so, how will your visitors know?



## ETHOS

Every school will have its own ethos, either written in the form of a vision statement, or as a strapline. Look closely at your Reception area - does it send the same message? Is it a learning environment? Are your school's expectations clear from the front door onwards? Is your Safeguarding policy actively in operation? Is your treatment of your students reflected in the treatment of your visitors?

## MEET AND GREET

What of your receptionist? Are they seated at a front-facing desk, ready and able to greet visitors as they arrive? Or are they hidden away behind a glass hatch, looking too busy to be disturbed while juggling a myriad of other tasks? Try not to make your visitors feel like they're intruding into an office space and being a burden. Welcome them in, greet them warmly and be proud and pleased that they've come to your school.

## LOOK YOUR BEST

Reception is your school's showroom, so is the physical space the best that it can be? Is it clean, fragrant and clutter-free, rather than a dumping ground for abandoned parcels and lost PE kits? Is the information on display accurate, up-to-date, timely and easily accessible? Is any student data securely stored away and not visible? Is your signing-in process efficient, obvious and easy to understand? Are your evacuation and child protection protocols visible and made clear to all?

## AND FINALLY...

Having viewed your reception as a visitor, turn around and go back out again. Your visitors will take away with them a final image of your school as they leave, so be sure to check that their outgoing journey is as positive and friendly an experience as their journey in.

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

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## MAKE SAFETY CHILD'S PLAY

Playgrounds need to be exciting and stimulating, but also safe. Christopher Brown explains how to strike the right balance...

**T**he idea that playgrounds involve some form of 'risk' was, and largely still is, far removed from the minds of most children. Yet talk to those involved in designing such facilities and they'll attest to the virtues of 'good risk', and the challenges of managing it in a way that's constructive for a child's development.

A well-designed playground offers an exciting and challenging environment in which children can develop their abilities. Navigating swings, slides, roundabouts, climbing frames and other equipment can teach important problem-solving skills and help to develop physical strength, coordination and balance.

Naturally, all that involves some degree of risk-taking - a few bumps and bruises are perhaps to be expected during adventurous play. However, it's down to playground equipment manufacturers and managers of public play areas to work together on preventing serious accidents and reducing the risk of permanent injury by following good practice.

One suite of standards designed to assist with this is 'BS EN 1176 Playground equipment and surfacing' (see [tinyurl.com/bs-EN-1176](http://tinyurl.com/bs-EN-1176)), which spells out good practice when it comes to designing, manufacturing, installing and maintaining playground equipment in public spaces, while providing guidance on the following crucial areas:

abilities, but also large groups of children using an item simultaneously and adults who might require access in order to help a child.

**Laceration:** Equipment shouldn't have hard or sharp edges, or any rough surfaces that are likely to corrode or splinter.

**Entrapment:** There shouldn't be any openings, moving parts or protrusions that could potentially trap hair, clothing or body parts.

**Falls:** Opportunities for very young or less able children to access equipment with steep or sudden differences in height should be minimised. Handrails, guardrails, barriers or narrow openings should be provided at higher levels, and impact absorbing surfaces should be included beneath high or moving equipment.

BS EN 1176 also acts as a checklist to ensure that organisations don't forget any key safety points, and can be used in a court of law to provide a benchmark of best practice. If an accident happens involving equipment that's labelled as meeting the standard, insurers and courts should be satisfied that appropriate measures have been taken to set risks at an appropriate level for protecting users.

**Christopher Brown is a programme manager at the British Standards Institute**

**Structural strength:** Equipment should be strong and stable enough to support not only children of different ages and

 @BSI\_UK

 bsigroup.com



# Breathe some life into your walls

Noel Palmer explains how schools are getting ever more ambitious when it comes to their wall-mounted signage and displays

**I**nterior directional signage within primary schools tends to be quite limited, simply because they're often not that big. What we have seen, however, is a huge growth in the market for wall art, inspirational messaging and personalised reception displays.

When entering a primary school 15 years ago, you would typically see examples of students' work stapled everywhere. What we're finding now is a newer, younger breed of headteacher wanting professionally-made visuals to be displayed in their schools' main public areas that can brighten up and inspire pupils when they come in. We've previously transformed one corridor into a spaceship interior with the aid of wall illustrations and some 18 months later we're still getting positive feedback. We turned four doors leading off the corridor into 'airlocks', with control panels beside them that the kids could interact with. It's still

common to find A3 or A2 posters in classrooms that relay rules, regulations and messages about the school's ethos and so on, which are sometimes housed within grip frame display systems. Some heads have asked us to incorporate their values into fun-looking displays so that they attract more attention. One school had us develop a design for a 10m wide set of double doors between two large classrooms so that they resembled a gingerbread cottage while incorporating the school's values, so that's what we came up with.

If a design is going to be used in areas of heavy foot traffic, we'll print it onto 5mm plastic that's screwed and taped to the wall. That way it can be much harder wearing in a corridor where bags are going to be constantly rubbing up against it.

In some cases it's surprising how much schools are prepared to spend, though we've found that MATs generally tend to spend less. When carrying out our initial site surveys we'll present schools with a wishlist of things they can have and how much they're

likely to cost. Often we'll do an initial design and come back again the following year to add to it.

Occasionally some mistakes are made. One school we've worked with wanted some inspirational quotes on the wall, which is a request we get quite often. Our usual approach is to print them on vinyl, cut them out and apply them directly. The school told us where they wanted them – fairly low down – and we pointed out that the letters had edges to them. Where there's an edge that people can pick at, that's what they'll do. The school maintained that it was a well-monitored corridor, and that their kids simply wouldn't do that. Some of those letters were off the walls before our guys got home!

**Noel Palmer is the Managing Director of Palmer Publicity Services**

 @PPS\_Ltd

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





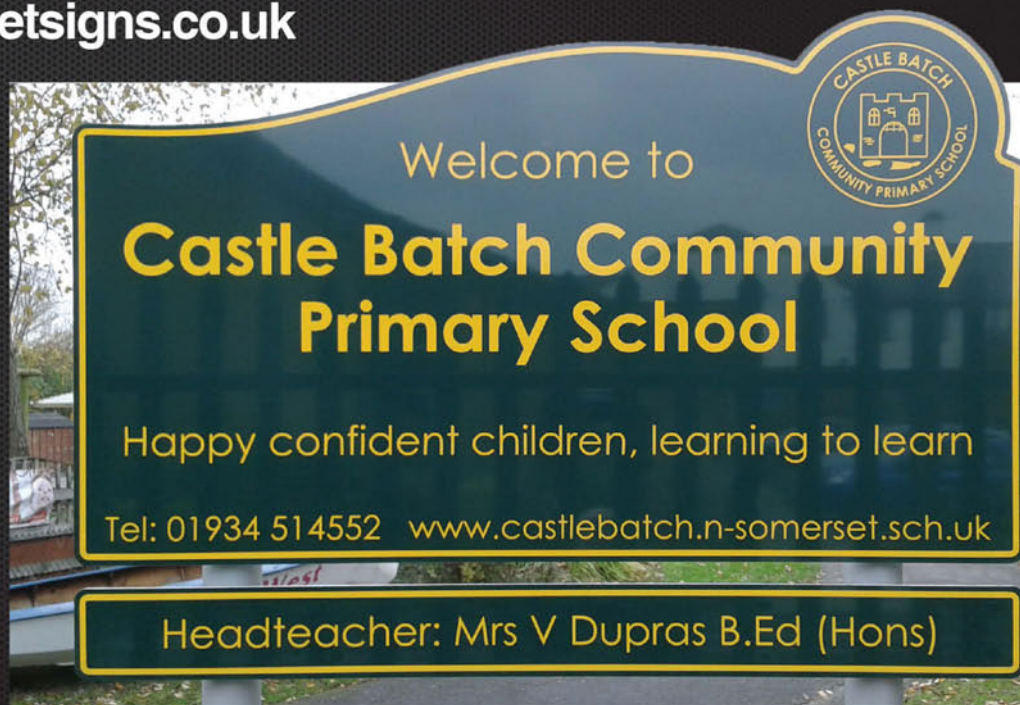
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- One way vision films
- Health & safety signs



### External Signage

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# “You’ve got to do something **OVER AND ABOVE**”

We find out how the premises of Croughton All Saints came to combine a 19th-century thatched edifice with a cutting edge, solar-powered classroom building...



**W**ith a pupil roll of approximately 100, Croughton All Saints Primary School may be small but has quite the history, having been founded in 1842. Its roots can still be seen to this day, with one of its buildings retaining a thatched roof. A second building was constructed in the 70s to house the school's main hall, classrooms, staff facilities and office, and until recently, there had also been a mobile building at the rear with a storied history of its own.

Originally given to school by its LA (albeit for a fee) after a severe flooding incident, the mobile building soon became a permanent addition, initially serving as a

teaching space for older pupils before being repurposed as a nursery space and leased out to a local provider to generate additional income.

In recent years, however, it was plain to see that the mobile building was barely fit for purpose. “It had a flat roof that kept having to be repaired,” remembers Headteacher Helen Goulder. “The pipes froze in the winter and would flood, so it really wasn’t ideal. It got to the point where we were spending more on maintaining it than we were getting in terms of income.” It was eventually decided, towards the end of 2013, that the mobile building and the space it had occupied for almost a decade would instead be used as the site for a new





permanent building as part of plans for the school to expand.

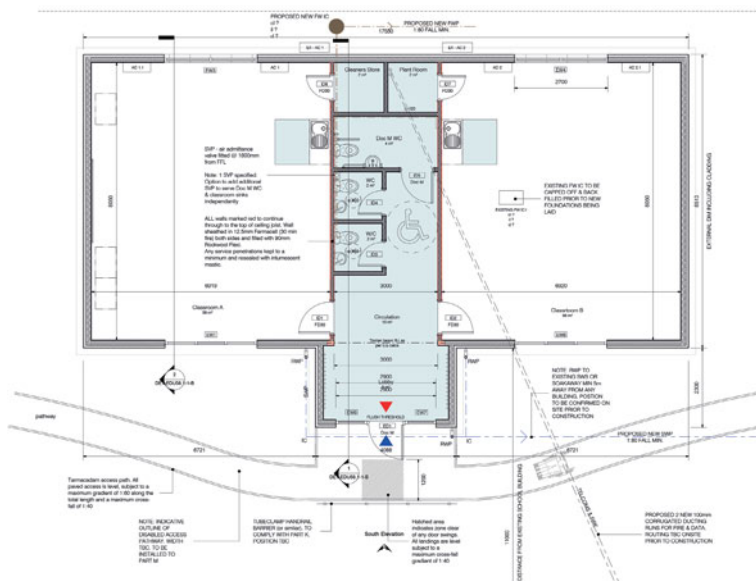
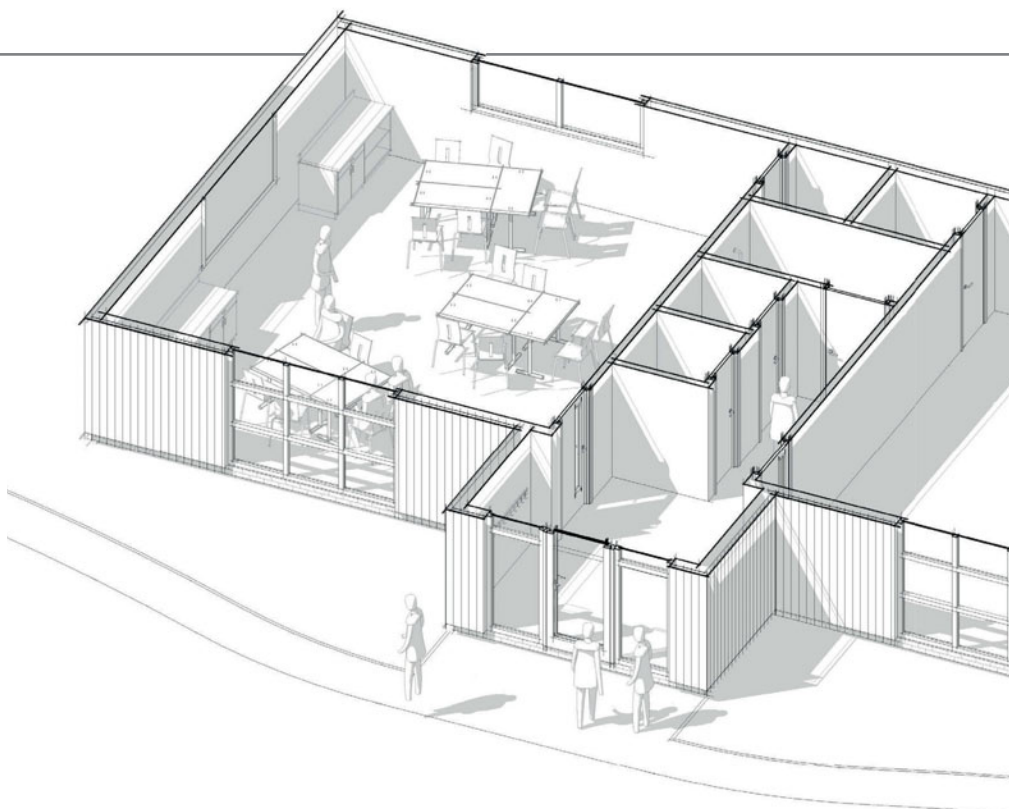
"I'd been at the school for many years, but had just taken over as Head and was very passionate about promoting our school and making sure we were sustainable," Mrs Goulder explains. "When you have 74 pupils and other schools in the area, you have to do something over and above to encourage parents to send their children here."

Using funds generated by the nursery income and the extra funding that came with a gradually growing pupil population, Mrs Goulder and her colleagues set about looking into what options might be available and what the costs would involve. An early quote reached almost £300,000, far beyond the school's available budget, prompting the plans to be temporarily put on hold.

Three years later, with the pupil population now at 111 and the need for additional classroom space more pressing than ever, the school turned to Broadwater Management – a management consultancy that had previously helped the school with installing solar panels on its 1970s building.

*While at university I studied classroom attainment and the effect of educational environments on children's behaviour, from light levels to atmosphere and the amount of CO2 present. Low classroom ceiling heights make it more likely that children inhale bad gasses that contribute to bad learning and attainment. Our focus when planning is therefore not just on floorspace, but also volume, in a way that allows those gasses to be kept above head height and properly ventilated.*

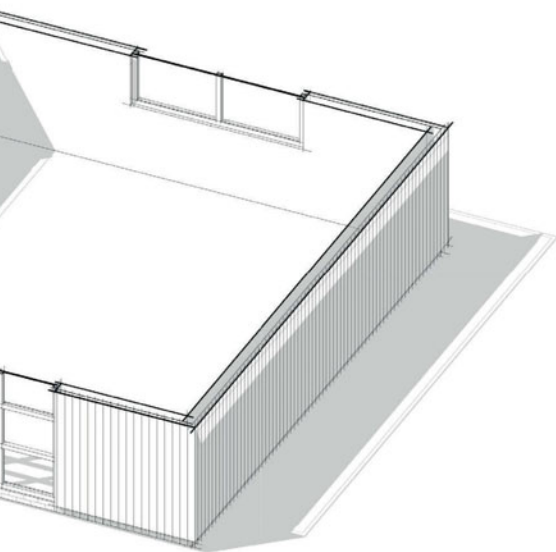
**- BRYN LEE, DESIGN MANAGER, SCOTTS OF THRAPSTON**



VERTICAL TIMBER CLADDING

ALUMINUM WINDOWS & DOORS





With their assistance, Scotts of Thrapston – a Northamptonshire-based joinery manufacturer specialising in the construction of timber buildings – was persuaded to assemble a solar panel-equipped off-site manufactured building that could serve as a proof of concept for what the company was able to do. With a brief drawn up, a bid submitted through the council that fell within the school's £110,000 budget and due process attended to, the ground works began in February 2017.

## HEAVY LIFTING

As Bryn Lee, Design Manager at Scotts of Thrapston recalls, the project largely proceeded without problems, bar the need to demolish and remove the old mobile building, and the somewhat limited access for the two days of heavy lifting. "We had to work around the fact that we could only position the lifting equipment at the front of the site. The spot for the new building was about 18 metres away, so we needed equipment that was both light enough not to sink, but also able to extend out far enough."

Assembled from pre-fabricated components manufactured off-site, the

building's design comprised a beam and block floor structure built atop a concrete foundation, upon which the team installed a series of timber frame wall panels, followed by a series of glulam (glued laminated timber) columns. Above these were added a set of glulam beams and a metal web joist roof structure. Factoring in the installation of the building's aluminium doors, windows, wiring and lining, the total build time amounted to approximately 13 weeks.

"It all went really smoothly," remembers Mrs Goulder. "The staff had to temporarily park somewhere else, but that was manageable. We had no complaints over how the site was secured. There were no health and safety issues, considering our main playground was on the other side of the building site. At no point did we feel that the children's safety was compromised by the machinery on-site."

## IDEAL VIEWS

The completed building houses two classrooms for school's KS2 pupils, along with three toilet facilities (boys', girls' and disabled) and a dedicated space for lockers. "The children love it out there," comments Mrs Goulder. "I'd initially been slightly concerned that the classrooms wouldn't be large enough, but space they provide is amazing. There are floor-to ceiling windows that look out over farmland behind the school, so the views couldn't be better."

PROPOSED SCHOOL BUILDING

"We might be a small rural primary, but we're very outward-looking, and always searching for ways of accommodating more children, not just from Croughton but also neighbouring villages and towns."

Croughton All Saints Primary School

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

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# Rethink your RECYCLING

Disposing of your school's waste in a cleaner, more sustainable way is easier (and cheaper) than you might think, says Jackie Bailey...

**W**e all know how important recycling is, and we all have a role to play in reducing our contribution to climate change by saving energy and precious natural resources.

Take plastic bottles. All LAs collect plastic bottles, and fortunately most of us recycle, yet there's still a lot to do. Over 35 million plastic bottles are used each day in the UK, and nearly 16 million of those aren't put out for recycling.

Schools can play a huge part in this. If they can put effective recycling systems in place, and educate their pupils on the importance of recycling and sustainability, they'll soon start making a positive impact on behaviours both at school and at home.

## WHY RECYCLE AT SCHOOL?

An average primary school generates 45kg of waste per pupil per academic year, so there's much for them to gain by operating effective recycling systems. As a first step, set up and use a waste audit and action plan (see [tinyurl.com/wrap-audit](http://tinyurl.com/wrap-audit) for a worksheet that can help with this) and contact your LA's recycling department to see if they can offer a recycling collection for your school. There may also be privately operated schemes and services in your local area, such as organised collections of printer cartridges, which could present money saving opportunities.

You may be provided with internal recycling containers by your council or service provider; otherwise you'll need to

buy your own. Use the data from your waste audit to decide what type, size and quantity of recycling bins will suit your school best.

Give some thought as to who will empty materials from your internal recycling containers into external facilities, how they'll do it, any equipment they might need and how often it will be done.



## MAKE RECYCLING EASY

Recycling points should be positioned as close as possible to waste sources. For example, place paper recycling bins beside photocopiers and printers. In other areas, put recycling points and rubbish bins next to each other, so that it's no extra effort for everyone to recycle. However, be careful to label all recycling points very clearly, so that everyone knows what should go in them.

Similarly, make sure you use clear signage. You can find a range of free posters and signage for schools at the Recycle Now Resource Library ([tinyurl.com/wrap-resource](http://tinyurl.com/wrap-resource)).

If your recycling efforts are to be successful, it's essential to involve as many pupils and members of staff as possible. If the school community takes ownership of various tasks and responsibilities, the participation is likely to be higher and the recycling more effective. Whole school involvement will also ensure that the recycling you do continues, even after enthusiastic staff and pupils move on.



**Jackie Bailey is project manager at the Waste and Resources Action Programme; further**

**details on setting up a school recycling scheme can be found at [tinyurl.com/wrap-schools](http://tinyurl.com/wrap-schools)**

@recycle\_now

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

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

**1**

### Access

Are there any restrictions in terms of timings/ vehicle access to your school site?



**2**

### Frequency

How often will your recycling need be collected?



**3**

### Storage

Where will your school store recyclable materials?



**4**

### Health and safety

Discuss these with your school's H&S representative



**5**

### Budget

How much will your recycling service cost?



# GET THE MOST FROM YOUR **PE AREAS**

Dan Wilson talks us through what schools can do to ensure their pupils have access to safe and effective PE facilities

1

## LET YOUR KIDS BE CREATIVE

Offer plenty of opportunities for environmental exploration that's as unrestricted as possible. Ways of achieving this indoors can include installing wall bars and bouldering walls indoors, and encouraging freedom outside with multi-directional rope climbing frames.

2

## STAFF TRAINING IS VITAL

When making any large investments in sports facilities and equipment, schools should ensure that staff are given training in how to use it effectively. Many teachers can feel insecure when supervising PE lessons due to lack of knowledge and confidence when using apparatus.

3

## YOU HAVE 'PE CLASSROOMS'

Think of your school hall and playground as extensions of the classroom. Are there displays of pupil's work? How can learning intentions be clearly observed? Are the resources you'll need for the lesson suitable for use in the space, and are they easily accessible?

4

## CARRY OUT SAFETY CHECKS

It's an absolute necessity to ensure that all of your equipment is health and safety checked annually. Any condemned equipment should be removed immediately (and certainly not left in the hall and repurposed to provide extra seating for pupils during assemblies).

5

## TRY TO INCLUDE EVERYONE

Ensuring increased physical activity levels for *all* pupils has become a government priority. Make sure that your equipment and environments cater to the interests of everyone, not just the most sporty, and encourage the least active to move more as much as you can.

6

## EXERCISE AT BREAK TIMES

Analyse your playground at break time and see who's doing what. Where are your pupils? Does break time offer inclusive opportunities for taking part in physical exercise, or do certain groups dominate the space? Consider zoning areas for specific activities.

7

## APPLY A LICK OF PAINT

Line markings are key to making your pupils embrace a playground's potential for fun, physical activity. Drab, discoloured paint will do nothing to inspire them. A bright, creative and engaging system of line markings can enhance your curriculum and encourage pupils to be more active at break times.

8

## SECURE YOUR GREEN SPACES

Fields are a luxury. If your school's lucky enough to have one, make sure the pupils can use it all year round. Get good drainage installed, build pathways so that everyone has access and ensure that the areas are properly fenced off, so as to prevent the public (and their dogs) from wandering in and spoiling them.

9

## CONSIDER YOUR TIMETABLING

Many PE lessons are cut short due to pressures from others in school to release the space for assemblies and lunchtimes. It's not fair to have this impact on the same classes every week, so consider putting in place a rotating timetable for hall use, or doing elements of PE lessons (warm up, plenary) in the classroom.

10

## ACKNOWLEDGE PUPILS' PE ACHIEVEMENTS

Celebrating success can be incredibly motivating, but it's rarely done in PE where many (often less academic) pupils, can really demonstrate their abilities. Every school should have at least one display board specifically for PE (distinct from the sports teams), where photos and other evidence can be shared with the rest of the school community.

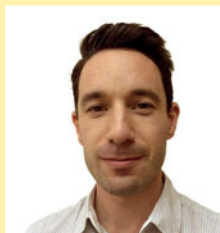


**Dan Wilson is lead for education and school sport at the Yorkshire Sport Foundation**



## “FOR HOW LONG ARE PUPILS SAT AT THEIR DESKS?”

DAN OFFERS HIS THOUGHTS ON THE QUESTION OF HOW PRIMARY SCHOOLS OUGHT TO GO ABOUT ALLOCATING THEIR PE AND SPORT PREMIUM FUNDING



The Yorkshire Sport Foundation is a County Sports Partnership that supports organisations across the nine districts of South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. Its activities include leading the development and implementation of Sheffield City Council's £120k Athletics Plan, establishing branches of local sports clubs in secondary schools and colleges and supporting Primary Schools in making effective use of their Primary School Sport Premium.

“The Sports Premium funding received by schools was doubled for 2017-18, as a result of increased funding from the government's levy on sugary drinks. This in turn led to the government including five new key performance indicators in their guidance for how schools should be spending the grant. Three of those indicators are nothing that most schools won't be doing already (training teachers; broadening the sporting offer; increasing competitions), but the remaining two may cause some schools some serious head scratching.”

“The first is an aspiration to increase the physical activity levels of all pupils. Interventions such as The Daily Mile are advocated as a way of getting pupils moving for an additional 10 to 15 minutes each day. However, as well as these short bursts of activity, schools should also consider how active the rest of their curriculum is. For how long are pupils sat at their desks? Physical activity has been proven to not only increase health outcomes but improve academic performance as well, so try incorporating active lessons in all subjects throughout the day.”

“The government is also keen to see the grant enabling PE, sport and physical activity to be used as a tool for whole school improvement. This could potentially involve engaging boys that struggle to read but love football with a new football-themed reading scheme, or addressing attendance, behaviour, citizenship or mental health issues through various sport-related programmes and interventions. All the new KPIs, along with accompanying guidance and support, can be found at [tinyurl.com/dfe-sport-premium](http://tinyurl.com/dfe-sport-premium).”



### FRESH AIR FITNESS

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**[freshairfitness.co.uk](http://freshairfitness.co.uk)**



### TIMOTAY PLAYSAPES

As well as providing various items of outdoor play equipment ranging from climbing frames to timber-made clambering stacks, Timotay Playscapes offers a free guide for schools that contains inspiring ideas for bringing your outdoor space to life (email [enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk) for your copy)  
**[timotayplayscapes.co.uk](http://timotayplayscapes.co.uk)**



### DAVIES SPORTS

Make exercise fun and engaging with these multi-use goals, which provide a fantastic way to make use of outdoor space during PE lessons and break times. Versions are available for different sports, including football, basketball and hockey.  
**[daviessports.co.uk](http://daviessports.co.uk)**

# How should schools spend their Sport Premium funding?

With the Primary PE and Sport Premium having been given a boost last autumn, we look at how schools can spend it wisely...



**ALI OLIVER**  
Chief Executive of the  
Youth Sport Trust

There's so much potential for what schools can achieve with this extra funding – it presents the best chance we have in a generation to really transform PE and harness its potential to improve children's wellbeing.

This generation is facing a health crisis, as it experiences the lowest levels of physical, social and emotional wellbeing on record, so we must be ambitious. By 2020, we want to see every primary school teacher professionally developed to help teach physical literacy with the same skill and passion as language literacy and numeracy. For all the training a primary school teacher receives, they often get very little guidance on how to educate their pupils in and through movement, exercise and physical activity.

Children's first formative experiences of PE at primary school has an impact which can last a lifetime. Get it right, and we'll transform the life chances of a generation. Get it wrong, and too many children will continue to miss out on the benefits that physical activity brings to their health, happiness and wellbeing.

 @youthsporttrust  
 [youthsporttrust.org](http://youthsporttrust.org)



**BRYN LLEWELLYN**  
Former teacher and school leader,  
founder of Tagtiv8

When the long-awaited announcement about PE and Sport Premium Funding was made last term, schools were suddenly inundated with emails from sport coaching companies outlining their services. Savvier teachers and school leadership teams confined said emails to their junk and spam folders.

Fortunately, a number of schools now seem to be following their lead, and are looking to providers who can offer them a win/win when it comes to their health and education provision – solutions based on actual research, rather than a case study and a few testimonials.

The ideas underpinning Tagtiv8 were formed when I was working as a teacher and school leader. Tagtiv8 isn't a PE scheme, but a programme designed to deliver learning in mathematics and English through physical activity. Yes, we do have some anecdotes and smiles, it's true – but they're now backed up by genuine research undertaken at Leeds Beckett University, which shows the impact Tagtiv8 can have – you can read more about it at [tinyurl.com/tagtiv8-research](http://tinyurl.com/tagtiv8-research).

 @Tagtiv8  
 [tagtiv8.com](http://tagtiv8.com)



**STEVE BUSBY**  
Strategy Director,  
The PE Passport

You might be tempted to join others in looking outside the box, but don't – at least not initially. Your chief priority should be on ensuring that the standard of teaching and learning at your school is good to outstanding.

Get the best advice you can from others, be it your LEA advisor or an independent consultant; it's also worth involving a named governor at this stage. Use the self-evaluation audit template developed by the Association for Physical Education and the Youth Sport Trust ([tinyurl.com/pepp-impact](http://tinyurl.com/pepp-impact)) to ensure that your use of the Sport Premium is accurately reported and consistent with the priorities of your school development plan.

Involve all staff in the process and give pupils a voice too. If your staff want to adopt a particular scheme, make sure it can produce data that demonstrates impact. If there's demand among your pupils for a broader curriculum, get them to suggest areas that might excite and challenge them, and be sure to allocate plenty of time for supporting and monitoring your Sport Premium activities.

 @pe\_passport  
 [primarypepassport.co.uk](http://primarypepassport.co.uk)





## ACTIVE TEACHING

Ian Pickles,  
imoves

**T**he doubling of the PE and Sport Premium funding

should be a welcome boost for all schools, but it comes with the expectation that schools will engage pupils in at least 30 minutes of structured activity each day (half the minimum 60 minutes of daily physical activity recommended for all 5 to 18-year-olds by the Chief Medical Officer).

Activity is now known to considerably boost cognitive learning and academic performance. Small blasts of regular activity throughout the day will contribute higher grades, improved behaviour and healthier, happier children. Primary-aged children on average sit for four to five hours per day, which we now know can be detrimental to their learning and wellbeing. Put simply, activity not only makes them fitter and healthier, it also improves their sense of well-being, behaviour and learning.

imoves uses a three-step process to help schools manage change and adopt a more active timetable, facilitated by their existing workforce.

### STEP 1 - THE 'WHY DO IT?'

This is all about the current mindset of your school relating to physical activity. Step 1 calls for senior leadership buy-in to whole school improvement, so that the long-term benefits of activity across health, wellness and learning can be realised. Many schools are making huge strides in doing this already. Schemes to encourage active travel to and from school and Change4Life after-school



clubs are popular, but a number of schools are now starting to look at the curriculum itself, to see how activity can be incorporated into lessons and raise standards in parallel.

### STEP 2 - TRY IT OUT

Pilot some ideas with a few teachers who possess the necessary tools and expertise. These could include daily 'activity blasts' and lessons that incorporate elements of active learning.

### STEP 3 - ROLL-OUT

By gathering your success stories to build momentum with peers, major strides can

be made in improving your school's learning, wellness and health through just a few easy changes. It's with that in mind that imoves recently developed its 'Active Classroom' series, which comprises over a thousand lessons and activities that are easy to use and include both active breaks and active lessons across a range of subjects, including literacy, science, PHSE and mindfulness.

**To find out more about how imoves works and to trial some of the lessons, visit [imoves.com](http://imoves.com) or follow @imovesactive**

# £5.1billion

AMOUNT SPENT BY NHS ENGLAND ON ILLNESS RELATING TO EXCESS WEIGHT AND OBESITY IN 2014/15  
*Source: HM Government*

# 16%

OF CHILDREN AGED 2 TO 15 ARE OBESE (defined as having a BMI of 30+)  
*Source: Health Survey for England, 2016*



In a survey carried out last year, The ukactive Research Institute found that British schoolchildren are, on average, losing 80% of the fitness they've gained during the term due to 'inactive summer holidays'. The study further found that pupils living in deprived areas had worse fitness levels to begin with, and saw a larger decline in their fitness levels over the holidays compared with those attending schools in less deprived areas.  
**ukactive.com**



The BBC and the Premier League have teamed up for a new fitness initiative called Super Movers. Famous names from TV and football will be appearing in a series of educational videos aimed at helping teachers get their class moving via a number of curriculum-linked routines and activities. Further details and supporting resources can be found at **[bbc.co.uk/supermovers](http://bbc.co.uk/supermovers)**



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**CAPITA**



## WHY YOU NEED AN ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

When schools lend out tablets and laptops to pupils for home use, what should the rules be in terms of how they're used?



"Set expectations as to what school devices can be used for"

When managing networks, school devices for home use and 'bring your own device' (BYOD) policies in schools, it's easy to get caught up in the technology required to minimise risk and maximise learning.

Yet whilst important, technology provides only part of the solution. Ultimately, behaviour is the most important thing to address. When sending pupils home with devices, schools should carefully consider how they expect the devices to be used, and let this dictate what their acceptable use policy (AUP) for pupils and parents in the home environment looks like.

Think about how you can ease the transition from school to home, and provide parents with the information they need to role model good behaviour online for their children – the UK Safer Internet Centre's Advice for Parents and Carers (see [tinyurl.com/usic-pc](http://tinyurl.com/usic-pc)) can help with this.

The UK Safer Internet Centre's lead partner, the South West Grid for Learning, understands how lengthy the process of drawing up and reviewing such policies can be, and has therefore created a set of Online Safety Template Policies (see [tinyurl.com/SWGfl-templates](http://tinyurl.com/SWGfl-templates)), which include AUPs that schools can mould as necessary to meet their



requirements.

It's advisable to have 'Follow me home' filtering and monitoring policies in place if you're considering allowing school devices to be taken off the premises, as these will help schools to comply with the statutory DfE guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (see [tinyurl.com/dfe-children-safe](https://tinyurl.com/dfe-children-safe)). Such policies allow for the online filtering and monitoring applied at school to continue in the home environment, so long as users are logged on to the school network.

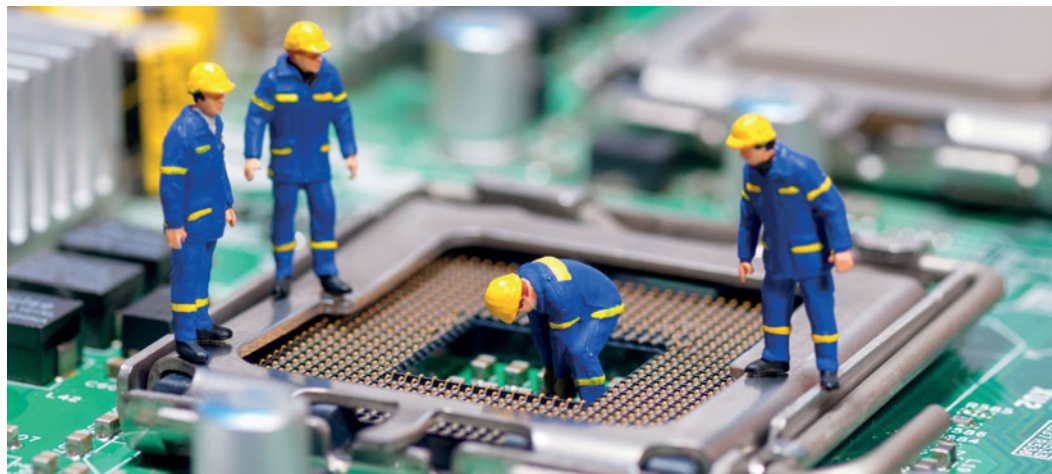
In principle, this means there should be a lower risk of the devices being used to access potentially harmful content. In reality, these policies rely on pupils accessing the school network, most likely via a VPN. If they don't do this, they'll be accessing the internet via their own home Wi-Fi or a 3G/ 4G network connection, which will likely have few, if any, restrictions. Most reputable filtering providers are able to offer 'follow me home' solutions, but there may be some compatibility issues across some devices.

That's why education is so important. Conversations should be had in school about what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour online. Expectations should be set as to what school devices taken home will and won't be used for, as well as how the internet can and can't be accessed at home. Parents also need to understand the importance of accessing online material in accordance with school policies and the risks of not doing so. Consideration should also be given to what sanctions ought to be applied if a pupil fails to follow the AUP.

*Kat Tremlett is a UK Safer Internet Centre helpline practitioner*

 @UK\_SIC

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



## NEARLY NEW' IS GOOD ENOUGH

Refurbished ICT kit doesn't simply offer cost advantages – there can be other benefits too...

If a school opts to purchase refurbished technology, it won't just save money – it can also help with transitioning between different versions of hardware, and help you hedge against obsolescence while making gradual, continual changes. By avoiding the very latest hardware and software releases, you may find that it's easier to maintain compatibility across an institution.

Buying refurbished can also help to eliminate the dissatisfaction that comes with one department using newer equipment than others (which may itself lead to compatibility issues). Newer hardware may, for example, require different versions of software, which will not only cost more but can also cause difficulties with workflow.

Refurbished technology can further simplify the maintenance of your IT operations, since everyone will be on the same integrated and compatible system. Rather than having to introduce whole new procedures for each new release and addition to your IT resources, refurbished equipment from previous generations can allow you to use the same kit across the school, making support procedures much simpler.

Refurbished technology is also great from an environmental point of view, and if you have goals relating to sustainability, then this is one way to achieve them. Often, there's won't be any major issues with refurbished equipment – it could be an old store display model, or have one faulty part that's easily

replaced. Yet if items like this aren't refurbished for resale, they'll likely end up in landfill. This means you won't just be helping your IT budget go further, but also ensuring that the school does its bit to reduce e-waste and save the planet.

Despite these strong arguments, however, the most compelling is the cost advantages. Refurbished kit can be priced 15% to 30% cheaper than new, making a huge difference if your budget has been slashed or remained static despite increases in your student intake. Those lower costs also mean that you can get more for your money. By avoiding the 'latest and greatest', it's possible to opt for an earlier model with greater storage and faster RAM.

Maximising the use of your IT budget can also let you install a wider range of technologies for students to take advantage of. You might not be comfortable letting a class loose on brand new, fragile tablets that cost a fortune and may shatter during the first lesson – but if you've managed to secure a significant cost reduction on a model that's proven to be robust or particularly suited to your needs, you'll be able to return that little bit more value to the classroom.

From laptops and tablets, to storage and infrastructure, if you're looking for a way to make your IT budget stretch as far as possible, refurbished technology might well be the best approach.

**James Stoner is the founder of JSPC Computer Services**

 @JSPCComputers

 [jspc.co.uk](https://jspc.co.uk)



# Be part of the EdTech conversation

Could a promising new EdTech project succeed in getting tech companies to learn from teachers, and teachers to learn from tech companies?

With the Bett Show, the largest educational event of its kind, soon upon us, the education sectors in the UK and around the world are looking forward to an ideal opportunity for exploring the future of EdTech – the show's Bett Futures area having become a must-visit stop for any education practitioners in attendance.

This year, around 80 EdTech start-ups will displaying their latest solutions, services and tools, giving visitors a taste of the endless possibilities that EdTech can offer for enhancing the teaching and learning experience.

## The EDUCATE project

EDUCATE is a partnership formed to support and promote the use of evidence-informed education technology. EDUCATE intends to make research accessible to designers and developers in way that enables them to build the best educational technology possible, which will in turn serve to enhance the teaching and learning experience for both professionals and students.

Based at UCL, the enterprise is supported by UCL Engineering, the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA), Nesta and F6S. From at a Central London hub, the individuals and businesses involved have access to up-to-date research evidence, as well as help and guidance from mentors, researchers and experts. Together with other members of the cohort, they are able to create a community of EdTech practitioners.

## In conversation with teachers

EDUCATE also looks to engage with others beyond this circle of EdTech developers and researchers, to hear from those at the frontline – teachers. headteachers and teaching staff with innovative ideas are being invited to contribute their own concepts and pitches to the scheme, and see how they can be developed and turned into

commercially viable products and services.


As Professor Rose Luckin, Professor of Learner Centred Design and Director of EDUCATE, explains, demand for high-quality EdTech continues to grow, as schools try to cope with challenges such as teacher workload, staff recruitment and retention.


"Whether school leaders are sending staff members to us, or joining our cohort themselves, EDUCATE offers a form of CPD, exposing school practitioners to a world beyond the classroom," she says. "It will provide them with research skills that can be applied to improving teaching, or the day-to-day functioning of the school."

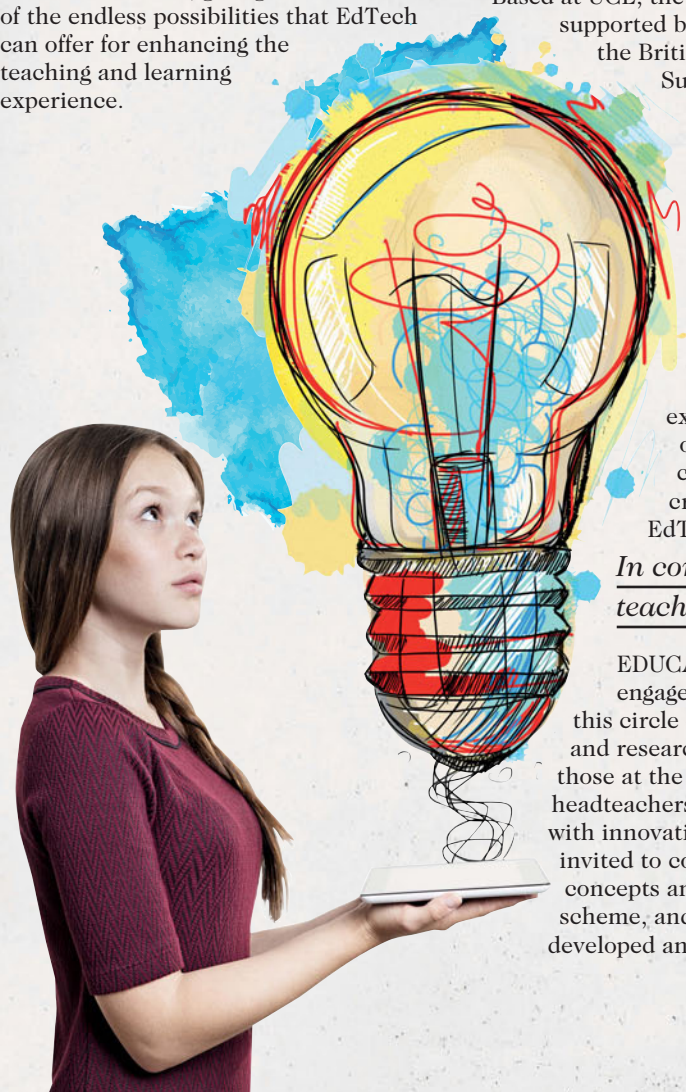
Dr Kristen Weatherby, a researcher at UCL and EDUCATE's lead on teacher recruitment, adds, "It will train school staff to be more reactive to academic research, and better able to identify good evidence. We provide Masters-level professional development which can then be used throughout the school. It will help heads to evaluate the EdTech in their schools, make important decisions about its effectiveness and use, and cascade this information down to colleagues."

Dr Weatherby concludes, "We know that many schools are doing innovative work around EdTech and enhancing their whole-school processes in things like assessment, timetabling and managing their finances. This is an opportunity to take those concepts a step further, and hopefully make their ideas commercially viable."

**Cleo Fatoorehchi is communications coordinator at BESA**

 @EDUCATEIdn

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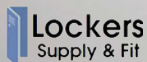
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# TAKE A STAND AGAINST CYBERBULLYING

What pupils do with their tablets and smartphones at home can have damaging effects on their interactions at school, writes Matt Lovegrove

In any work relating to online safety, it's important to acknowledge the massive benefits that being online can bring. We mustn't scaremonger and try to stop children using technology completely – that would go against the flow of the world. Instead, we need to embrace the opportunities of being connected, and focus our efforts on teaching the responsible and safe use of such technologies.

Technology-assisted 'cyberbullying' is similar to face-to-face bullying, but can be harder to get away from. It might involve the sending of hurtful or abusive

direct messages via email, texts, a game's chat function or a social network, and can occur indirectly through the spreading of rumours. It's purposeful, carried out through repeated acts and involves an imbalance of power.

The root causes of bullying will often be related to underlying emotional and social issues. Children may choose to use the internet to bully others as it's an 'easy option', and the distance involved means that they can't see how much they're hurting others. Research has found that people's behaviour changes when they're online, with children in particular feeling that the social norms and expectations of real life no longer apply.

You can help prevent cyberbullying by getting to know what your pupils are doing online and how they're doing it. Run a survey, create a focus group and speak to them directly. Children are generally happy to talk to staff about their online behaviours – they enjoy sharing what they do and how they do it.

Ask them about the apps they're using, how they use them to communicate with each other and how they typically respond to threatening or upsetting messages. Check whether they understand that they're responsible for what they write online, and ensure that they have a good understanding of their own digital footprint. Talk to your pupils openly and honestly, and help them to identify the signs of bullying and its consequences.

Promote responsible and sensible online behaviours through lessons that teach children the following about dealing with upsetting messages:

- Not to respond, since responses can fuel the fire
- To report or flag such messages where possible
- To save any evidence of bullying, as

## PUPIL VOICE

"When she sent the first couple of messages, I tried to say sorry. I wanted to save our friendship. But the messages kept on coming. She'd even passed my number onto someone else, and they'd started texting me horrible messages too."

– Claire, 11

"It made me feel bad. I thought she was one of my friends, but the messages were so mean that they made me cry."

– Charlotte, 11

"I reported her for what she did and the website removed the upsetting messages"

– Alexia, 9

this will be useful later

- To block bullies from their list of friends or followers
- To gain support from a trusted adult

Children who are well-equipped to deal with issues they encounter online will be less likely to let said issues affect their self-esteem.

If you're in need of supporting resources, try the three-part 'Play Like Share' cartoon series and accompanying lesson plans (see [tinyurl.com/ceop-play-like](http://tinyurl.com/ceop-play-like)) from Thinkuknow, the NCA-CEOP Command's education programme, which is designed for 8-10 year olds and provides schools with an excellent way of opening up discussions about online behaviours.

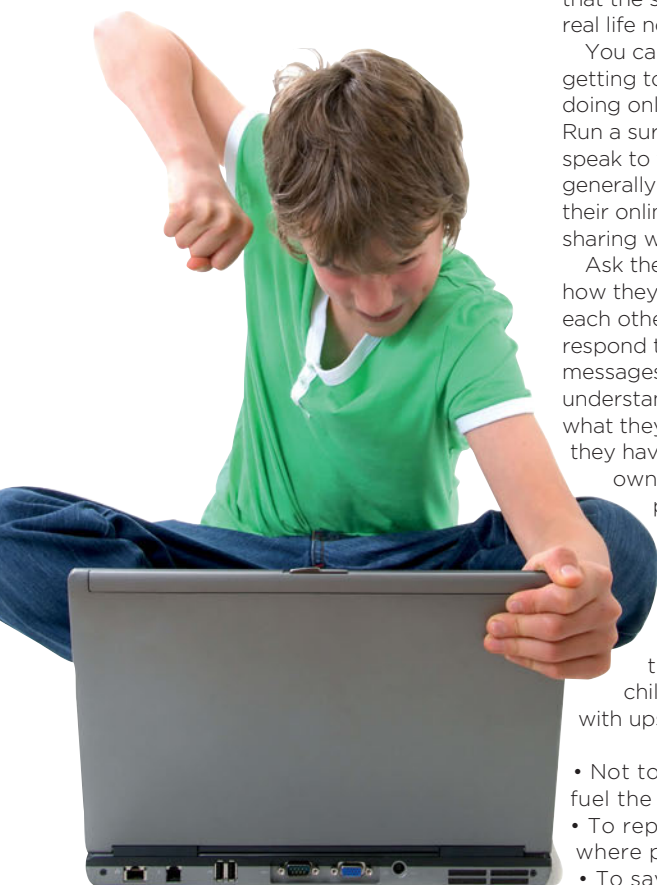
There's also 'Beware of Lurking Trolls' ([tinyurl.com/beware-lurk-trolls](http://tinyurl.com/beware-lurk-trolls)) – a 16-page illustrated text resource produced by Portsmouth City Council's E-Safety campaign.



**Matt Lovegrove is a senior manager and year 5/6 teacher at Beechwood Primary School, Woodley. an ambassador for the Child Exploitation and Online Protection command ([ceop.police.uk](http://ceop.police.uk))**

 @mattlovegrove

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







# LET'S START USING DATA PROPERLY

Our schools might be data rich, but they're programme poor, maintains Anthony David...

**O**ur schools are data-rich environments, yet we're barely scratching the surface when it comes to the range, scale and sheer quantity of data that's created in them, day in day out. Why is that?



The data we're typically familiar with is usually linked in some way to assessment, but our collective confidence in this data has been horrifically eroded within the last three years. That's partly due to seismic changes in assessment which are only now beginning to settle down (and not made any easier by 'interim' assessments that are actually nothing of the sort), and partly because of smaller changes in how everything is now evaluated, following the end of RaiseOnline.

Assessment data, however, is not even close to the whole story of a child. What I want to explore here is how schools could – and arguably should – be making better use of their attendance, behaviour, injury and safeguarding data.

## “HERE, SIR”

Attendance is the most basic piece of data available to schools. Since the 1800s, when schools as we know them first opened, we've been legally obliged to keep an accurate register. The importance of this was highlighted last summer, with Jon Platt's failed attempt to sue Isle of Wight Council for issuing a fine for a school-time holiday. Debates continue today about children's need to be in school on time, all the time, but tracking individual pupils is only part of the story.

What about groups? How does this child compare to their year group, the whole school or their ethnic background? What about their attendance compared to this time last year? And who has access to this information?





The last question is arguably the most worrying. Often SIMS and RM's Integriss will be used to collate this information, which is then typically held centrally – and therefore not available for the class teacher, phase leader, head, deputy or whoever to access as and when they need to. Before schools can even consider assessing a child's academic outcomes, that child will obviously have to be in school first. The higher the absence rate, the greater the gulf becomes between the children who are frequently absent and those who attend regularly.

Of course, this is far from an exact science – I'm sure we've all had friends who seemed able to attain top marks for minimal effort – but children will typically see an impact on their academic outcomes if their attendance is low. We're now seeing new, fleet-footed management systems entering the market that attempt to address the gap, in particular Arbor Education, though the 'old guard' are attempting to address it too (SIMS notably moved to a cloud-based approach this year).

A final point worth considering is that all management systems, including Arbor Education, Scholarpack, SIMs and RM, are updated via online registers. If your school is still using paper registers – and more are than you'd think – then it really is time to move away. It can take anywhere from a whole day to a week for a 2-form entry school's office manager to upload the relevant data to your MIS, costing the school approximately £5,000 a year. Moving to digital registers will immediately release a whole day of a colleague's time.

## PATTERN RECOGNITION

The ability to compare data (or have systems do so on your behalf) opens up opportunities to make links that can support a child. Whether it's records of behaviour, injuries or safeguarding concerns, the more data we can interrogate and interpret, the greater the chance that we can spot patterns or links between seemingly unrelated concerns.

As with paper registers, the amount of child protection and behaviour information that's made on paper is astounding. If we can combine this with records of injuries (which almost every school still does using paper), school leaders can analyse the data to see when injuries tend to occur and where.

Understanding this could then lead to a more effective deployment of staff and increased awareness among pupils regarding certain times, locations and systems.

For example, one of my schools identified that a significant number of injuries were taking place before school, when the children were waiting for the bell and largely unsupervised by teaching staff. We subsequently moved to a soft start, which eradicated this area of concern almost immediately.

## SQUEEZING EVERY LAST DROP

Linking a pupil's poor behaviour on Monday with a stomach ache that affected them on Friday could possibly lead to questions being raised about their home life over the weekend. Equally, it might not – but without the data in front of us, presented in way that's easy to interpret, we can't even consider the question. Companies such as Medical Tracker and MyConcern are leading the way here, with MyConcern currently being used by services across Birmingham to ensure a common

approach in how they record safeguarding information.

Admittedly, (we're not Tesco, Sainsbury, Ford or Google – but if we were, we'd be squeezing every last drop out of all the data available to

“We're not Google, but if we were we'd be squeezing every last drop out of the data available to us”

us), in order to create an environment that's better suited to the needs of our end users. Viewed in this way, we're probably closer to those socially dynamic businesses than we might initially think.

If the notion that 'every child matters' still applies within our schools, then we need to understand those children from all angles. We know the technology can easily cope with the volume of information we want to send its way – so perhaps it's time to take a deep breath and properly embrace what digital data can do for us.



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



## SYSTEM DIAGNOSTICS



- Data analysis can save time and ultimately money. The sooner you can spot trends, the quicker and less painful it will be to intervene and address the issues involved.



- Behaviour data can be accessed immediately and compared against school averages, making it easier to

distinguish between normal behaviours and genuine concerns. This can help at meetings with parents too, since it's hard to argue against facts.



- Patterns can be identified that might have previously been missed. You may see child protection concerns peaking after half term breaks, for example, when anecdotal evidence might have suggested that these occurred before half term.



- A school might be aware of a principle child protection concern, such as domestic violence, but be less conscious of second and third layer concerns. With appropriately formatted data, more time can be spent analysing the concerns in question.



# Simple to master explainer video



## VideoScribe

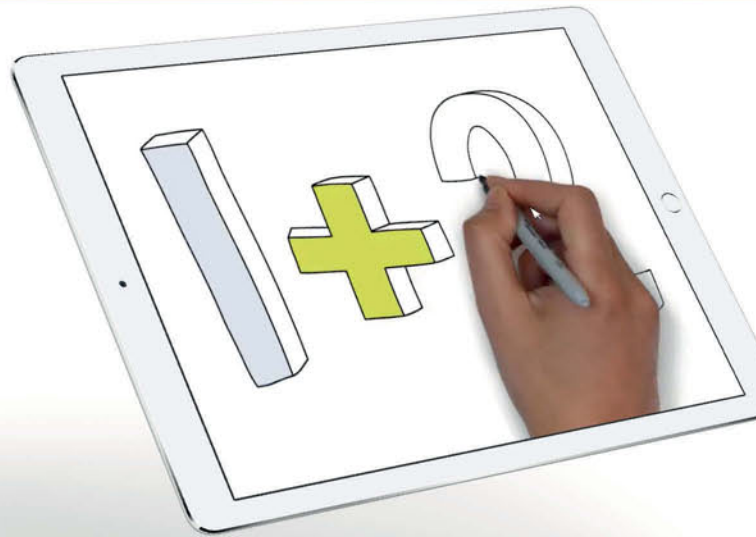
VideoScribe is the easiest and fastest way to create explainer videos on any subject. Built for blended learning and the modern classroom, the highly intuitive software makes teaching rewarding, fun and truly interactive.

A powerful combination of spoken word, animated hand-drawn images, music, and sound effects boosts knowledge retention, inspires creativity, builds digital skills and teaches storytelling.

Whiteboard animation is a powerful medium for teachers looking for new ways to present subjects that engage and inspire. It's also a great tool to test out the flipped learning technique, setting homework to experiment with explainer videos on upcoming lesson topics.

And it's proven by extensive research. Famed psychologist Dr Richard Wiseman found information presented through explainer videos increased information retention by an average of 15% compared with talking head videos.

VideoScribe is also a great tool for teaching SEN students. It stimulates multiple senses and is fun and absorbing – students can create their own scribes as a creative way of learning and practising the curriculum. VideoScribe offers a range of pricing options for schools, including special licence packages and offers.



# 40%

of pupils in England are identified as having SEND at some point between the age of five and sixteen  
(The Education Policy Institute)



## StoryPix

StoryPix is the latest product in Sparkol's creative product suite for education. It's fast, fun and easy to use and will provide teachers and students with the ability to create imaginative projects.

It takes minutes to load your image, zoom into elements on the screen and record an accompanying voiceover and text subtitles. StoryPix then saves this as a video that can be shared online or directly with the class. Easy!

StoryPix will transform language homework, physics explanations, history projects and so much other content needing an imaginative explanation.

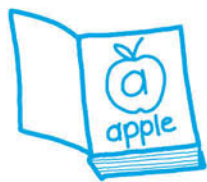
# SPARKOL

[www.videoscribe.co](http://www.videoscribe.co) [ukedu@sparkol.com](mailto:ukedu@sparkol.com)



# creation for students and teachers

## VideoScribe Tasks to Set Students



Create an animated book review



Explain chemical reactions

$$E=mc^2$$

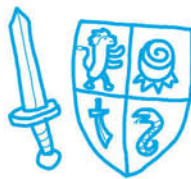
Show how to solve maths calculations



Illustrate the workings of the human body



Animate revision notes

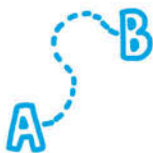


Present the Wars of the Roses

# 88%

agree using video in education helps boost students' achievements

## Teaching Materials You Can Make with VideoScribe



Lesson objectives



Homework tasks



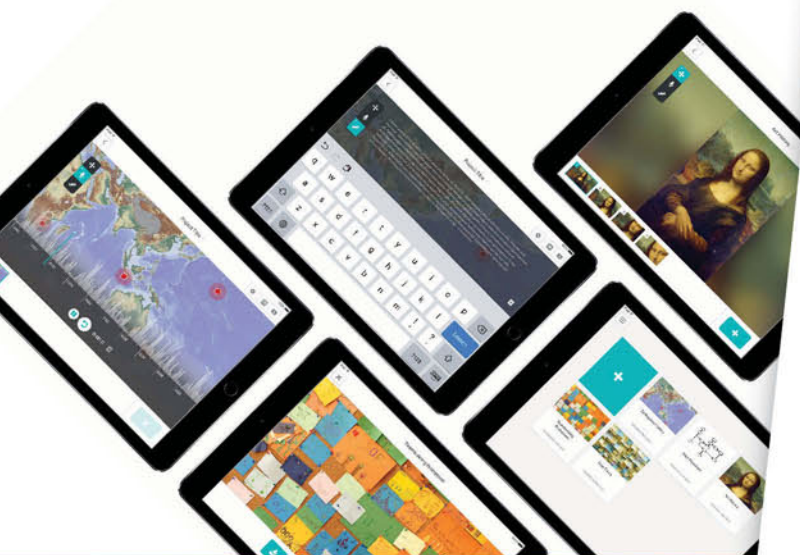
Revision tools



Teacher training materials



Module introductions



## VideoScribe

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### Services For Education

## NEW ONLINE SAFEGUARDING COURSE

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Safeguarding is an essential component of working with children. Staff and volunteers require clear guidelines and examples of good practice, all of which are guaranteed in our flexible and self-paced online course.

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[www.servicesforeducation.co.uk/sgonline](http://www.servicesforeducation.co.uk/sgonline)





# Community Engagement

## WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR **PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT?**

Teachers might value the help and insight parents have to offer, but schools need formal structures in place if they're to make the most of it...

**P**TA UK recently published a report detailing the findings of a survey carried out among teachers, to assess their views on the benefits of, and their approaches to, parental engagement. The findings were encouraging, with teachers overwhelmingly (98%) agreeing that parental engagement has a positive impact on their school. Yet despite this, less than a fifth (19%) said their school had any formal parental engagement plan in place.

There are many recognised benefits to engaging parents. It can help to build trust, lead to better behaviour, boost pupils' academic achievement and reduce absenteeism, but many teachers have told us that their schools aren't geared up to making sure that parents are fully engaged and integrated into their decision making processes.

Only a fifth of those responding to the survey told us that their school had a written parental engagement plan in place, and even then, only a minority reported there being any measures to track parental engagement at all. Perhaps more surprisingly, half the respondents said that even where there were such measures in place, they didn't know who within their school was



responsible for this particular area of work.

The research is interesting, because teachers clearly see the value of building relationships with parents and including them in decisions that affect the day-to-day running of the school. Indeed, a school's parental engagement plan can be an important support for teachers looking to boost their capacity for enhancing children's education by establishing better relationships with parents.

What seems to be lacking is a commitment to embed this engagement work within school improvement plans, to the point where it could be having a detrimental effect on the families and communities they serve.

Teachers need to be better supported in their efforts to embrace parental engagement. They need to know what role they can play in addressing it, and be clear as to who in their school is leading this vital area of work. The aforementioned research showed that fewer than one in 10 teachers (8% of respondents) had undertaken any CPD training specifically related to parental engagement. By underinvesting in this important area of work, however, schools could be missing a trick.

Senior leadership teams, governors and trustees should be leading the way here, so that our schools can make strides towards forming better home-school partnerships, and start to establish themselves as truly parent-friendly.

**Ruth Lowe is external affairs manager at PTA UK – a Parent Teacher Association membership organisation and registered charity in England, Wales and Northern Ireland that champions all the ways in which parents participate in education. In partnership with Parent Councils UK, the organisation also provides teachers, governors and parents with training in how to build successful home-school relationships.**



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## LIFE, LIKES AND LESSONS

Teachers know the effect social media can have on young minds – now a new report proposes that schools start taking action

**E**arlier this month, the Children's Commissioner published a report titled 'Life in 'Likes'' (see [tinyurl.com/life-likes](http://tinyurl.com/life-likes)) which examines the effects of social media on the wellbeing of 8- to 12-year-olds. Headlines quickly followed, highlighting her calls for schools to play a bigger role in preparing children for social media's emotional demands during the primary to secondary transition.

Whilst most social media sites have an official age limit of 13 years, the report states that younger children are, in fact, using platforms that social media companies say aren't designed for them, and concludes that they might not be ready for them.

8 to 10-year-olds tend to use social media in a playful, creative way, often to play games. This changes significantly once they're in secondary school. Whereas younger children have less of a routine around when they access social media, older children start getting into the habit of using their social media apps multiple times per day. In short, as children get older, social media begins to dominate their lives more and more. Children feel social pressure to be constantly connected, as being 'offline' or uncontactable is considered socially damaging.

A repeated theme of the report suggests that while children have internalised messages around 'online safety', they aren't always aware of the subtler impacts that social media use can have on their wellbeing. The Commissioner calls on schools and teachers to incorporate awareness of the impact of social media on wellbeing into education about life online.

Other recommendations in the report include:

- The introduction of a whole-school education programme to develop digital literacy skills, and the teaching of digital resilience to be placed at the heart of lessons
- Engagement with parents, helping them recognise the impact their own relationship with social media has on their children and highlighting how children's relationships with social media changes as they move from primary to secondary
- The use of peer-led 'e-teams' to provide children with an accessible and relevant way of learning about life online, following research that shows children learn a considerable amount from their peers and older siblings
- Teaching children about the techniques and algorithms social media platforms employ to influence what their users see online, and to help them understand that these are often designed to prevent those users from disengaging

For more ideas on the teaching of digital literacy and resources to implement a whole school online safety programme, have a look at the resources available with Switched on Online Safety, published by Rising Stars

**Katy Potts is Computing, Digital and Online Lead at Islington Council and the author of *Switched on Online Safety***



[risingstars-uk.com/online-safety](http://risingstars-uk.com/online-safety)



# School food beyond the dining hall

Childhood obesity is a real and pressing concern – but what can schools do about it?

**T**he statistics surrounding childhood obesity make for uncomfortable reading. More than one in five children are overweight or obese when starting primary school, rising to one in three by the time they leave. Obesity prevalence among children in the most deprived areas of the country is twice that of children in the least deprived areas – a gap which appears to be widening.

This is bad news for Britain's health, but there are solutions. The Soil Association's Food for Life Programme supports schools in providing healthy school meals, great lunchtimes and food education that has a positive impact on both pupils and the wider community.

The programme is based on a whole school framework that guides the development of a healthy food culture in schools, in a way that permeates the whole school experience. What's taught about food and healthy eating in lessons is reflected and reinforced in the broader daily life of the school.

Pupils are further empowered to help guide the process along beyond the school gates and into the wider community. Recent independent research has found that pupils who have taken part in the Food for Life programme are twice as likely to eat their five fruit and

veg a day, and are a third less likely to eat no fruit and veg at all than pupils in comparable schools. They also eat significantly more fruit and vegetables at home.

Why? Because they're served higher-quality meals at school, but also because they're inspired to do so. The cooking, growing and farm visit activities that form part of the programme help to give children a tangible understanding of where food comes from and how it's prepared. Food is made an integral and central part of the school day.

Lunches that regularly include food grown by pupils help to reinforce core messages and understanding about healthy eating. The consensus in many schools is that since growing their own produce as part of the Food for Life School Award framework, menus and school meals have improved, with pupils eating better at lunchtime and being more willing to try new foods. The number of those buying school

lunches tends to increase, and even where pupils bring their own packed lunches, those lunches tend to become healthier.

Changing dietary behaviours is difficult. You can't simply tell children to eat more veg, or dish it up and hope for the best. The whole school approach embedded within the Food for Life framework drives real change by engaging and inspiring children to eat well. If all primary schools were to adopt the Food for Life School Awards framework, a million more children would be eating their five a day, and some 100,000 more children would be eating at least some veg at school.

**Lorna Picton is communications and marketing manager at Soil Association Food for Life**

 @SAFoodforLife  
 [foodforlife.org.uk/schools](http://foodforlife.org.uk/schools)



# LIBRARIES GIVE US POWER

Professor Sonia Blandford explains why the chief motor behind social mobility is literacy

It's estimated that up to two in five children growing up in disadvantaged communities across the UK have difficulties with literacy.

Numerous studies have shown how these children will go on to fall behind in their schooling, lack self-confidence and face a future with diminished opportunities.

We must break this cycle.

Despite the best efforts of primary schools, more than 150,000 children started secondary school last autumn without the basic reading skills needed to access the curriculum (see [tinyurl.com/ks2-sats-17](http://tinyurl.com/ks2-sats-17)). Primary school leaders can't be expected to overcome stubborn and entrenched social mobility issues at the flick of a switch, but together we must find ways to improve literacy skills, level the playing field and ensure every child has access to the wonder of books.

A great deal of emphasis has been placed on the 'teaching of literacy skills', but fostering a love of reading has tended to be a much lower priority. We don't just learn to drive because we have a desire to operate pedals and gear levers; we think about the places we'll go, and the freedom and convenience that being a driver will bring us. It's the same with reading – children need to know the joy and pleasure it will bring them.

Through our work with early years settings, schools and colleges to improve outcomes for children and young people at risk of underachievement, we've identified five ways in which schools can raise literacy and enjoyment levels among their pupils and build brighter futures.

## 1 IGNITE A LOVE OF READING

It's common to see a structured and organised approach to phonics firmly embedded in the timetable at Reception and KS1. This might well have resulted in improved reading results overall – but how else can you weave literacy into pupils' days?

If you don't already, try to make story time a planned and exciting part of the day, with texts that inspire and speak to children's interests and locality. For pupils who need more sensory learning experiences or physical play, you could hold group reading sessions in the playground, in a 'creative reading' corner, as part of an art class where children paint scenes from the book, or even during a school trip.

Building engaging environments around the reading experience can get messy, but the memories and associations you create will have a huge impact on children's long-term reading attitudes and attainment.

## 2 ENGAGE YOUR FAMILIES

It's not just pupils that you have to engage with reading. Many schools are seeing the positive impact that tailored engagement and literacy support for parents and carers can have for pupils' families.

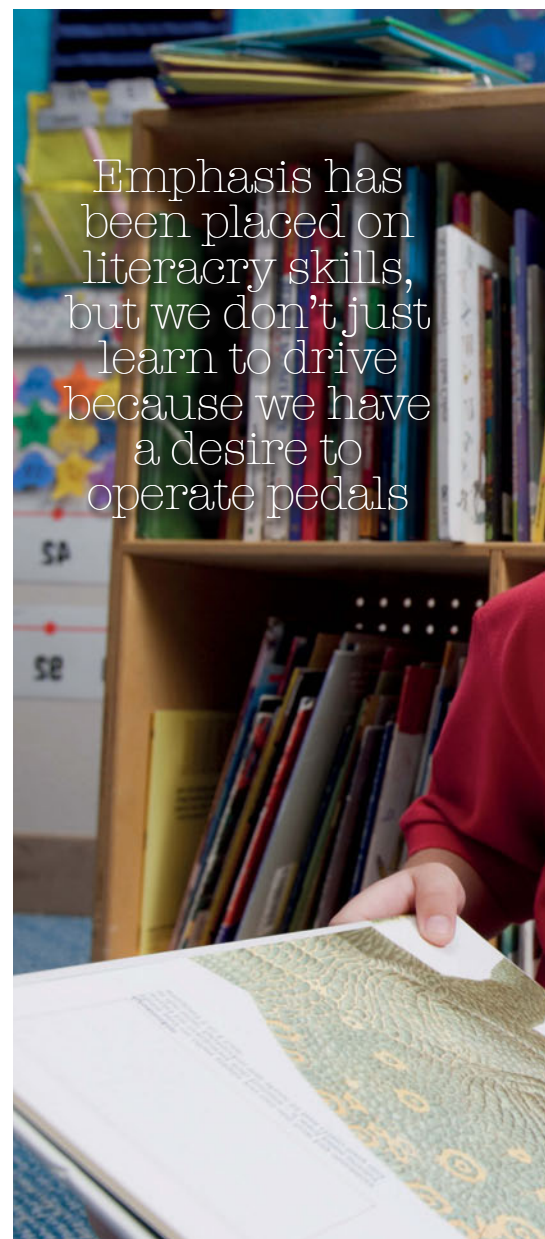
For children and young people in some of the countries' most disadvantaged communities, chances are that their parents can't read. According to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' 'Skills for life' survey, around 35% of adults in some of the UK's most deprived wards have the reading skills of an

Emphasis has been placed on literacy skills, but we don't just learn to drive because we have a desire to operate pedals

11-year-old (see [tinyurl.com/bis-sfl-12](http://tinyurl.com/bis-sfl-12)). For parents struggling with literacy themselves, reading with their children can be a daunting prospect.

Where possible, invite parents and carers in to school and have them listen and join in stories alongside their children, so that they too can soak up the pleasure of reading. You might also like to consider your school's use of 'reading records' or 'log books' – are they actually encouraging parents to enjoy reading time at home?

One school that had high levels of poor literacy skills among its pupils decided to invite parents and carers in for workshops on how to support their children's reading at home. Not only did their children's attainment subsequently improve, but many parents went on to achieve NVQ literacy qualifications of their own.







## THE 100 MILLION MINUTES READING CHALLENGE



ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL IS CURRENTLY INVITING SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, EARLY YEARS SETTINGS, PARENTS AND CARERS TO SIGN UP TO ITS 100 MILLION MINUTES READING CHALLENGE, WHICH WILL SEE A WEEK DEDICATED TO ENGAGING PUPILS WITH READING.

Beginning on Thursday 1st March 2018 (World Book Day), children and young people will have a week to collectively read 100 million minutes alongside their registered settings. Registration is free, and includes access to packs containing ideas and materials for inspiring pupils of all ages with reading across the week.

There are also prizes to be won for the settings that achieve the highest average number of reading minutes per child and young person.

**For more information and details of how to register, visit [100millionminutes.org](http://100millionminutes.org) or follow the hashtag #100MillionMinutes**

focused, less disruptive, and proved to be a positive and supportive role model with better attainment.

## 5 GO BEYOND LITERACY

Literacy isn't just about reading and writing well; it's also about story telling, and developing imagination and creativity. You could set up book clubs, invite inspirational guest speakers to tell stories at assemblies about their lives, organise songwriting, poetry and theatre workshops and competitions – the list is endless.



**Professor Sonia Blandford is CEO at Achievement for All – an award-winning charity that works**

**with early years settings, schools and colleges to improve outcomes for all children and young people vulnerable to underachievement, regardless of background, challenge or need.**

@AfA\_Education

[afaeducation.org](http://afaeducation.org)

## 3 SUPPORT EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

Toddlers and other vulnerable children from disadvantaged communities can be as much as 10 months behind their more advantaged peers in vocabulary development by the age of 3 (see [tinyurl.com/ioe-ey-inequality](http://tinyurl.com/ioe-ey-inequality)).

Targeted interventions in pre-schools with children and families can help to close the gap, but what support can primary schools provide? You could collaborate with local early years settings and the wider community on initiatives that involve talking with young children, reading to them and telling them stories on a daily basis, as this can help them to construct the foundation blocks for a lifetime of reading well.

For example, we've seen a welcome growth in schemes where older pupils

volunteer in nearby early years settings and read stories. Holding events where pupils organise reading activities and invite families with younger children to attend can be beneficial for all.

## 4 BUILD PUPILS' CONFIDENCE

Buddy schemes and one-to-one mentoring can make a big difference to pupils who struggle with reading. In one school we work with, there was an eight-year-old boy who was a reluctant reader in school, often disruptive and at risk of not meeting his literacy targets. His teacher made him a reading mentor to other children and the impact was immediate. Acting as a reading mentor twice weekly built up his self-esteem; he enjoyed the responsibility, became more

# HOW TO PARTNER WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

REAL EXAMPLES AND DEMONSTRATIONS FROM LOCAL COMPANIES CAN LEND YOUR STEM TEACHING A WHOLE NEW DIMENSION – SUSAN COLEMAN EXPLAINS HOW SCHOOLS CAN START REACHING OUT...



**W**hen I worked for Shropshire County Council's business team, much of our work focussed on skills gaps, particularly around the area of STEM. While many businesses here are concentrated around agriculture, food and tourism, we also have a tremendous number of engineering and technology businesses clustered around Telford, where our team was based.

It soon became clear that schools and businesses in the area were almost working in parallel with each other – businesses with their recruitment expectations and lack of curriculum knowledge proceeding along one line, and schools unaware of those expectations and focused on their own curriculum goals along the other. The two never seemed to meet.

Through Twitter I would regularly come across many fantastic opportunities

available to schools for improving their STEM teaching in partnership with businesses, yet many of the schools we worked with seemed to have no awareness of them. What I wanted to do was bring together schools and businesses more directly, and encourage them to start having conversations with each other. If this is something you've previously considered doing in your own area, here's what I would suggest.

## STEP 1 – ESTABLISH YOUR CONTACTS

Ask parents if they have any links to companies that draw on STEM skills and are finding it difficult to recruit. Are they able to open channels of communication between the school and someone senior at the company who might be interested in giving their staff the chance to become a STEM Ambassador?

Try contacting the Growth Hub run by your nearest Local Enterprise Partnership (see [lepnetwork.org.uk](http://lepnetwork.org.uk)), and ask to speak to a business advisor. The staff there will likely be in contact with newly established businesses that want to form links with the local community, including schools, but aren't sure how to go about it.

By registering with the STEM Alliance ([stemalliance.eu](http://stemalliance.eu)), you can request visits by STEM Ambassadors who may be able to help your school with various projects and topics of work. Every registered STEM Ambassador – I'm one myself – receives a regular newsletter containing requests for assistance and invitations submitted by local schools. It's also worth contacting outreach staff at nearby universities and approaching STEM teachers at local secondaries, who may have already established contacts with local businesses regarding work experience placements and careers advice for school leavers.



Make a point of involving your SBM in the process, since they will often attend conferences at which they're able to gain ideas from what other SBMs are doing and sometimes establish contacts with universities and businesses themselves. You could also consider partnering with other primary schools in your area and forming a STEM group, which may provide you with greater clout when approaching businesses for the first time.

## STEP 2 – MAKE YOUR APPROACH

During your initial exchange with a business, good points to raise include the potential CPD benefits of school visits for its staff, and how partnering with a school can boost its local profile – mention the phrase 'Corporate Social Responsibility' and people's ears will prick up. Explain that it can lead to good exposure in the press, and suggest that if it works, you'd be open to building a long-term relationship.

Give some thought as to type of activity you envisage, and bear in mind that 'hands on' stuff tends to work best. Having a business simply come in and talk to pupils isn't ideal, particularly at primary, because what your visitors say will be too far





removed from the pupils' experiences. A better idea would be to run a science-themed workshop with practical activities that your visitors can assist with.

Above all, make it as easy as possible for businesses to engage with you; don't leave it all to them. It's no good simply saying 'We want you to come and run something on STEM for us,' because they won't know what you want. Be specific – *'We're having a space week.'*

Work some national days and themes into your approach. Women In Engineering Day, for example, takes place on 23rd June every year. That allows you to propose a specific idea to engineering businesses months ahead of time – *'We'd love to do something themed around women in industry. Could you come along and run two workshops tailored towards girls that involve engineering?'*

It helps to respect people's time. Businesses operate from 9 to 5, whereas schools effectively operate between 10 and 3. Staff from a business could visit the school between 10 and 11, or 1.30 and 2.30 in the afternoon, so that it doesn't eat too much into their day and still make an effective contribution over the course of an hour.

### STEP 3 - THINK LONG TERM

All being well, the business will offer to send along one or two members staff to take part, and they'll come away from the experience having got something out of it – perhaps a boost to their confidence and communication skills. After each visit, get your teachers to complete feedback forms and pass them on to the business. If both parties agree that the event was a success, try to keep things going. Consider what you're both going to do next and get the date in the diary.

If you're able to build ongoing relationships with multiple businesses, you won't have to keep approaching the same contacts for help, but be able instead to draw on a range of different specialisms – digital, engineering, science – when planning future activities. In some cases it might even be possible to attract sponsorship to assist with costlier activities and equipment purchases. The price of a 3D printer will likely stretch the budget of a school, but could represent small change for a business.

Nor need partnerships such as this be strictly one-way. Some local businesses might be open to setting up embedded

## PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

WITHIN THE PAST 18 MONTHS, I'VE HELPED TO ORGANISE THE FOLLOWING EVENTS:

### STEM Day, Dawley C of E Primary Academy

A five-hour event involving 200 pupils, spanning nursery to Year 6, which was attended by representatives of Harper Adams and Birmingham City universities. Each year group partook of different activities that included a rocket car race, a 3D printing session, a code club and an 'F1 racing car experience', where pupils were able to try changing the wheels on a real life Formula 1 car.

### STEAM Co Telford

An event held at Enginuity, part of Ironbridge Gorge Museums, that was attended by 70 pupils from seven primary schools in the local area.

### Teen Tech Telford

A live event supporting the STEM education provider TeenTech ([teentech.com](http://teentech.com)). Attended by 270 Year 8 children and supported by 30 local and national organisations. Was co-sponsored by the local council and Wolverhampton University, alongside a £25k sponsorship provided by local business.

placements for your teachers during the school holidays, giving them a chance to see first-hand how the business world operates in terms of decision-making and communication, and pass that knowledge on to their classes.



**Susan Coleman is a former business advisor for Shropshire County Council**

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



# Ask the Expert

Rebecca Klemm explains how exploring numbers' history, background and application to everyday life can pave the way for learning breakthroughs



**Rebecca Klemm, PhD** (Statistics) has been a teacher for over 40 years. She makes maths relevant for children and adults around the globe using storytelling, the senses and activities.

## What is NumbersAlive!?

NumbersAlive! creates foundational and levelled multimedia activities, games and integrated learning tools that make maths relevant and prepare learners of all ages for the future. Questions or concerns

about maths from teachers and students challenge NumbersAlive! to create cross-disciplinary stories, STEM activities and discovery-oriented tools. The organizational goal is to alleviate maths anxiety and make numbers 'friends you can count on®' for life.

## As the founder and head of content, how did you develop your approach?

When I first began teaching I asked students what maths meant to them. Horrified by the responses, I began every day with a story or activity about where maths came from and its evolution into the various and beautiful systems of today. I would draw from art, history, daily transactions, literature, music, fashion, architecture, sports, news and more, and soon students and parents became fascinated.

## How do your learning tools and activities differ from those of others?

We offer integrated physical and digital learning tools that allow for years of learning using the senses. We level our stories, puzzles, and activities and include surprises and patterns for students to discover and discuss. We provide initial guidance and encourage creativity, imagination, teamwork, and innovation to augment the tools or activities, so that they become part of their own experience.

## What types of teaching do you do today?

I teach all ages of students, including teachers and parents. When teaching adults I begin with questions: what is maths? Where did it come from? What maths have you used daily, monthly, annually – or never – since

attending school? What do you wish you had learned?

One of my major activities, Building NumberOpolis! asks participants to build a house for a number that reflects the meaning of the number in name, shape, quantity and/or order. Once the concept is understood they begin their design-thinking process, hide clues from colleagues and are proud of the results of their creativity and numerical understanding.

## How has NumbersAlive! increased pupil engagement with maths in primary schools?

NumbersAlive! makes numbers 'friends you can count on®' for life! We use stories and 'learning to look for numbers' activities to link numbers to everyday life as you experience them. For example, in patterns (such as animals with four legs, zebras with two-tone stripes, car wheel designs based on five spokes), names (5th street), everyday tools (tape measures, time, temperature, keyboards, money), order (1st, 2nd, 3rd) and shapes (triangle, square, pentagon). That way, they begin to see how numbers show up everywhere. Maths calibrates our lives, and is thus useful and important to daily communication.

By discovery, children learn that 3 is not always 4-1. Recognizing '3' as the symbol of recycling, triangles, Shakespeare's witches, the sides of the Great Pyramids and more demonstrates a far deeper understanding of numeracy and its daily influence.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**  
To find out more, contact [info@numbersalive.org](mailto:info@numbersalive.org) or visit [numbersalive.org](http://numbersalive.org)



# How to engage parents in SAFEGUARDING

It's worth complementing your staff's safeguarding training with contributions from parents, advises Laura Ralph

**M**any school leaders will have begun 2018 by ensuring that their staff have received a safeguarding update, be it through training, bulletins or resources. Any new members of staff will likely have had safeguarding inductions too.

Yet staff aren't the only members of the school's community with a role to play in safeguarding. You can promote a culture of keeping children safe that involves parents too.

## KEEP PARENTS IN THE KNOW

One of our experts at The Key, a former headteacher now working with LAs to produce school guidance, says that communications with parents and carers about safeguarding should be simple and clear. It's important that parents know what safeguarding is, what schools are expected to do and what safeguarding in school actually looks like.

Parents need to know who they and their child should raise any concerns with. Parents of pupils with SEND will additionally have to be aware of what arrangements the school has in place to safeguard their children and how these will be carried out – with respect to intimate care procedures, for example.

We also received some suggestions from a designated safeguarding lead at an all-through academy in Greater London. Whenever a new child starts at her school, the academy sees to it that a home-school agreement is set up and signed by parents and pupils. The contract contains a line that states, *'We will do whatever it takes to ensure children live happy, healthy and successful lives'*. This demonstrates to parents and pupils that safeguarding is treated as a priority right from the start of the child's school career.

You could also make use of your school website when communicating with parents on safeguarding issues. In addition to their safeguarding policy, many schools add details of key staff members and the first steps parents should take if they have any worries concerning their child. Safeguarding letters and pamphlets can be another useful way of updating parents on issues appropriate to their context, such as the risks relating to child sexual exploitation or online bullying.

## INCREASING ENGAGEMENT

Some schools run workshops for parents throughout the year to support their understanding of safeguarding issues. You could cover topics such as online grooming, and perhaps send parents informational video clips on various other issues throughout the year to encourage greater participation.

Pupils can also help. One school we spoke to holds training days once a term in which staff look at different aspects of safeguarding. First, the school runs an INSET session on the topic. Pupils are then taken off timetable for a day to be taught about the subject, and apply their learning by making a video that's then shared with parents and carers.

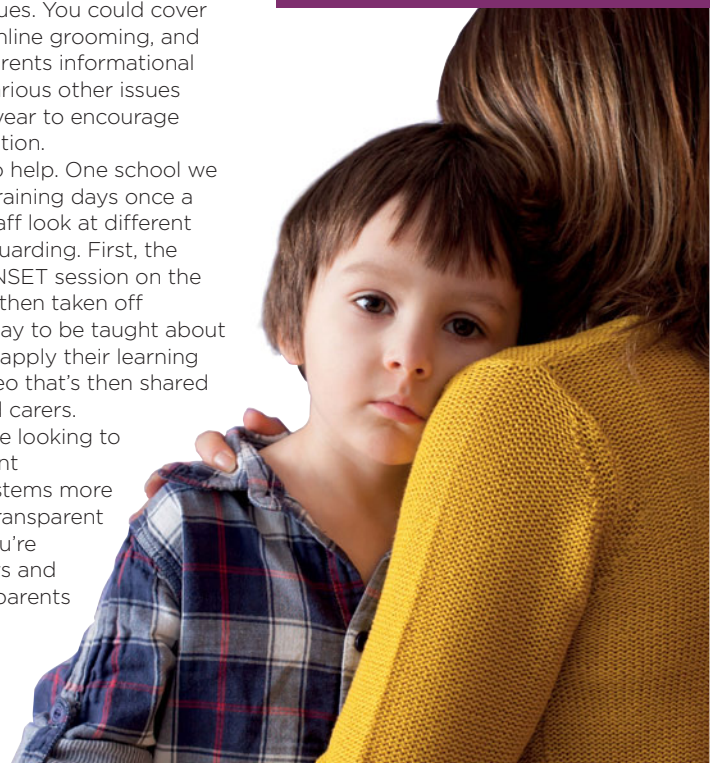
Whether you're looking to make your current safeguarding systems more accessible and transparent to parents, or you're seeking the views and participation of parents in building your safeguarding community further, an inclusive approach to

understanding safeguarding can make all the difference in keeping your pupils safe and happy.

**Laura Ralph is a specialist content editor at The Key, which provides impartial leadership and management support to almost half the schools in England; The Key's Safeguarding Training Centre can help schools meet their statutory training requirements – for more details, visit: [safeguarding.thekeysupport.com](https://safeguarding.thekeysupport.com)**

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 [schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com](https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com)



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

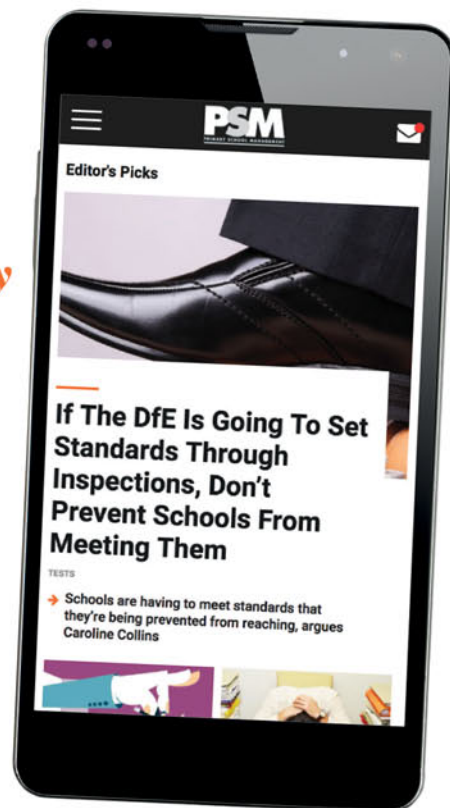
“Take a closer look at outstanding examples of leadership in some of the best primary schools across the UK”

## FREE digital copy

Missed an issue? On the website you can download a free electronic version of the previous edition of *Primary School Management*.

## Weekly briefings

Get great advice from fellow leaders sent direct to your inbox by signing up to our weekly newsletter. Topics so far have included how to rethink your catering, and why heads need to stop micromanaging and start leading.

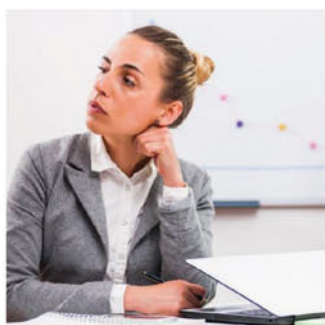


### Staff Management



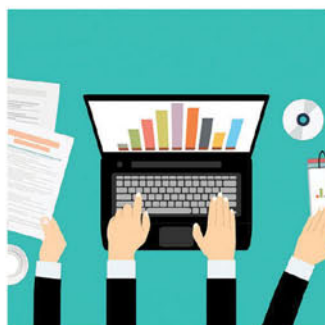
How should schools handle cases of unfair dismissal?  
[tinyurl.com/psmdismissal](http://tinyurl.com/psmdismissal)

### CPD



Your pupils can benefit from resilience - and so can your staff  
[tinyurl.com/psmresilience](http://tinyurl.com/psmresilience)

### Procurement



The right way for SBMs to approach their annual budgets  
[tinyurl.com/psmbudgets](http://tinyurl.com/psmbudgets)

### Community



How headteachers should handle unwanted media attention  
[tinyurl.com/psmmmedia](http://tinyurl.com/psmmmedia)

## WHAT'S TRENDING

1

Sean Harford on 3-day inspections  
[tinyurl.com/psmharford](http://tinyurl.com/psmharford)

2

Revenue raising tactics  
[tinyurl.com/psmrevenue](http://tinyurl.com/psmrevenue)

3

Manage parents' parking habits  
[tinyurl.com/psmparking](http://tinyurl.com/psmparking)

4

Better recruitment drives  
[tinyurl.com/psmrecruitment](http://tinyurl.com/psmrecruitment)

5

Tackling teacher workload  
[tinyurl.com/psmworkload](http://tinyurl.com/psmworkload)





## SHOULD YOU **OUTSOURCE YOUR HR?**

If you're thinking of getting an external provider to administer your staffing, make sure you've considered all the angles, says Laura Williams...

**S**chools will typically look at HR outsourcing for reasons of cost, in that they believe they'll save money, or compliance – because they don't have people with sufficient knowledge of staffing regulations. If you're a very small school and lack in-house expertise, the size of your staff could make outsourcing your HR relatively cost effective.

In my own experience, however, perhaps 1% of the HR cases I've dealt with were 'messy', in the sense that I had to liaise with an employment lawyer. You do need to manage risk, and avoid expensive tribunals by ensuring that you're compliant and not breaking any laws – but at the same time, you shouldn't automatically assume that having an internal HR function 'is expensive'.

This might lead you to paying someone to contract manage your entire HR function, and if there's no one in your organisation who knows what that contract should be delivering and whether the provider is performing sufficiently well, the function becomes disconnected from your organisation and you're just making a bigger issue for yourself in future.

Heads and governing bodies can make decisions regarding oversight of their HR, such as transferring service level agreements while payroll often stays with the LA, but that requires brokering between the two, and heads will likely decide against it. I know of one headteacher who decided to do just that, and thought it best for the LA to not know what was going on. He came unstuck very quickly.

Heads should be aware that if they're paying for an outsourcing service, that service can inadvertently be perceived as being paid to do the head's bidding. There should be someone based in the school who does the 'softer' side of HR, who can link local knowledge to legal processes. Otherwise, heads can risk undermining what they're trying to achieve. Having someone with local knowledge – of both your school context and your staff – liaise with outsource providers such as payroll and employment lawyers is critical, and also a great way to 'grow your own'.

It's important to remember that HR is people. If you're looking at outsourcing more than just your transactional HR – ie. paying people – bear in mind that nobody will care as much about 'your people' as you will, because you're the employer. There's something to be said for separating some parts of your HR system from others. You don't need a CIPD qualification to perform basic level HR. You do, however, need to be able to speak to people, be empathetic and sensitive, and respect people's confidentiality. Your people are your greatest asset, and how you look after them can be a big differentiator when it comes to recruitment and retention.

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

 @lauraljbusiness

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



It's not just children who can exhibit challenging behaviour – so can your staff...

A large part of my job involves supporting staff in developing strategies to manage challenging behaviour in children. I also spend a significant amount of time supporting senior staff in managing challenging behaviour from other staff members. In my experience, although the behaviour may differ, challenging children and challenging staff have a lot in common.

The vast majority of people do not choose to present difficult behaviour, and in the same way that children communicate through their behaviour, so too do adults. When children are challenging adults, refusing to do things and generally being difficult, they're often feeling scared and anxious. When adults show similar behaviour, the feelings are often the same.

The importance of a positive working environment can't be underestimated. If you want an effective workforce, it's crucial that people feel they belong; that they're needed and valued, and that any negativity, blame and gossip is dealt with so that people feel happy and experience job satisfaction.

## OPENNESS AND HONESTY

Relationships between staff should incorporate open and honest communication, along with mutual respect and appreciation. This can be demonstrated in front of the children so they're able to experience the positive impact of relating to other people in the same way.

Conversely, if relationships between staff are characterised by mistrust, resentment and animosity, this may be witnessed by the children through verbal and non-verbal interactions, which can result in them becoming anxious and their

behaviour changing. Staff need to be able to look after and support each other's emotional wellbeing, and identify positive ways of managing their stress.

The key to maintaining any good relationship is the ability to self-reflect. It's beneficial for all practitioners to reflect on themselves and their practice in an honest and open manner, while also considering how their behaviour may impact on other members of their team in a positive or negative way.

To develop this self-awareness, staff need to feel comfortable, and for other members of the team to demonstrate mutual support and a commitment to excellent practice. This will create a positive environment that encourages practitioners to identify and work together on areas that need improving – conducting honest appraisals of what they react to and why, listing strengths and areas to improve on, and cultivating a willingness to change.

The quality of relationships and levels of professionalism between staff across a setting can create a supportive and effective team, or a divided group of people who all struggle to go to work every day.

For a setting to be successful, it's crucial to nurture, support and empower your staff in the same way as you do with your children. When staff feel valued and happy, conflict is less likely, resulting in a more harmonious place of work for all.

*Cath Hunter is a play therapist, trainer, therapeutic consultant and author specialising in understanding children's behaviour*

 @CathTFI

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



# Recruitment shouldn't be reactive

Avoid getting caught on the hop when it comes to your recruitment needs by planning ahead, writes Nickii Messer...

With staff being your most valuable (and expensive) resource, it's worrying to recognise that schools are facing a staffing crisis. The government has failed to meet its teacher training recruitment targets for the past four years, and the number of teachers leaving the profession is reported to be at an all time high, with 25% of new teachers quitting after just three years.

Against this background, schools are finding themselves fighting over a fast-shrinking pool of good quality staff – so it's essential that we get our recruitment act together now!

Recruitment should be viewed as a proactive element of raising standards, rather than a reactive response to a resignation. It should start before the school needs to appoint, and be prescribed within policy that includes a clear and consistent recruitment process structure. The policy should be written within the context of strong market competition and highlight the importance of placing the right advertisement in the right place, to appoint the very best candidate. Since most potential candidates will also view your school's website, make sure this is up to date.

When advertising, consider your audience. Who are you trying to attract? Ask colleagues where and when they would look for jobs. Many staff tend to look at vacancies towards the end of a week or term, so try advertising and pushing your vacancies around those times.

Make sure your advert stands out for the right reasons. Ensure the information is clear,

accurate and professionally presented. Include a paragraph about the school that sells it as somewhere that staff aspire to work, perhaps for reasons relating to wellbeing, CPD, support services, clear career paths and so forth.

## Shop around

For positions that are harder to fill or more senior, the size, position and quality of your advert should reflect the importance you place on the job being advertised. This isn't about cost, but investment.

Many schools advertise through agents such as Eteach (eteach.com), which works in partnership with organisations such as the ISBL, NAHT, ASCL and TES. These agents tend to be well-established and popular with job hunters but shop around for deals, as they can prove expensive.

Schools are also increasingly turning to collaborative enterprises such as Jobs In Schools (jobsinschools.org). A web-based joint venture between a number of different academy and business manager groups, Jobs In Schools flags up job-related postings on social media. Members of

groups which support Jobs In Schools enjoy free and unlimited use of the website.

Other suggestions include your LA and local media, but these will limit your audience. Many teachers and SBMs spend time proactively networking via social media platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn, so try placing your notice there. You can reach a wider audience, it's free and SBMs tend to be good at sharing job ads across different network groups.

Once the process is over, review the success (or otherwise) of your advertising. Did that 'special deal' actually bear fruit, or was your social media approach more successful? Assess the costs spent versus results and record this to help inform your decisions the next time you need to recruit.

*Nickii Messer is a school business leadership consultant and trainer*

 @NickiiMesser

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



# On the Money:

## Transforming financial education and learning in primary schools with LifeSavers



Did you know 60% of British adults don't plan for life events – like the cost of marriage, or buying a car? That a third could not pay an unexpected £300 bill without cutting back, and one in six are over-indebted? Did you know children develop their formative attitudes about money as young as seven?

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LifeSavers is currently being delivered in 70 schools across England. On the Money provides a major opportunity for others to discover how this engaging programme can transform learning in their school. Join us!

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*It's highlighted to them and us the importance of financial education. Our teachers now have the skills, confidence and resources they need. I have no doubt it's benefiting our pupils and it looks good with Ofsted.*

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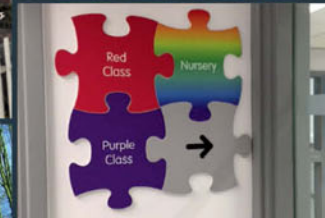
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# They're not 'only' NQTs

Julie Price Grimshaw explains why there's nothing wrong with placing high expectations on your NQTs from the get-go

I'm often told that a teacher is 'having some difficulty' in getting the pupils to make progress, followed by the statement, "But she (or he) is only an NQT." Are mentors making allowances for inexperience, or excuses for underperformance? The key to supporting newly qualified teachers is getting the balance right. What can we reasonably expect from NQTs – and what should we do, as mentors, to help them so that they don't just survive but reach their full potential?

New teachers should have been through a rigorous teacher training programme. In order to be successful, they need to have met all of the Teachers' Standards, so there's nothing wrong with having high expectations of NQTs – especially as many will have had experience of working in schools before starting their training. They should know how to plan learning, deliver engaging lessons and assess pupils' achievement. If any of these basic things aren't up to scratch, it's perfectly reasonable to point this out while offering the necessary support.

Last October I carried out a joint observation of an NQT with her mentor. We watched as she ploughed on, repeating an over-complex explanation of halves and quarters to a class who had been sitting on the carpet for some time. One shouted, "My bottom has gone to sleep." When one boy stood up and started colouring in a carrot with a crayon, I felt it was time to intervene. The mentor said that this was fairly typical of the teacher's practice, but added, "I don't really want to say anything yet because she's an NQT and it's only October."

Ideally, new teachers should be happy to accept feedback, but problems can arise when NQTs feel that they're not held in high enough regard. One NQT

told me he was very disappointed with his mentor's feedback, which had been perfectly reasonable and sensitively delivered. "When I was on the PGCE I was graded as an outstanding trainee," he said.

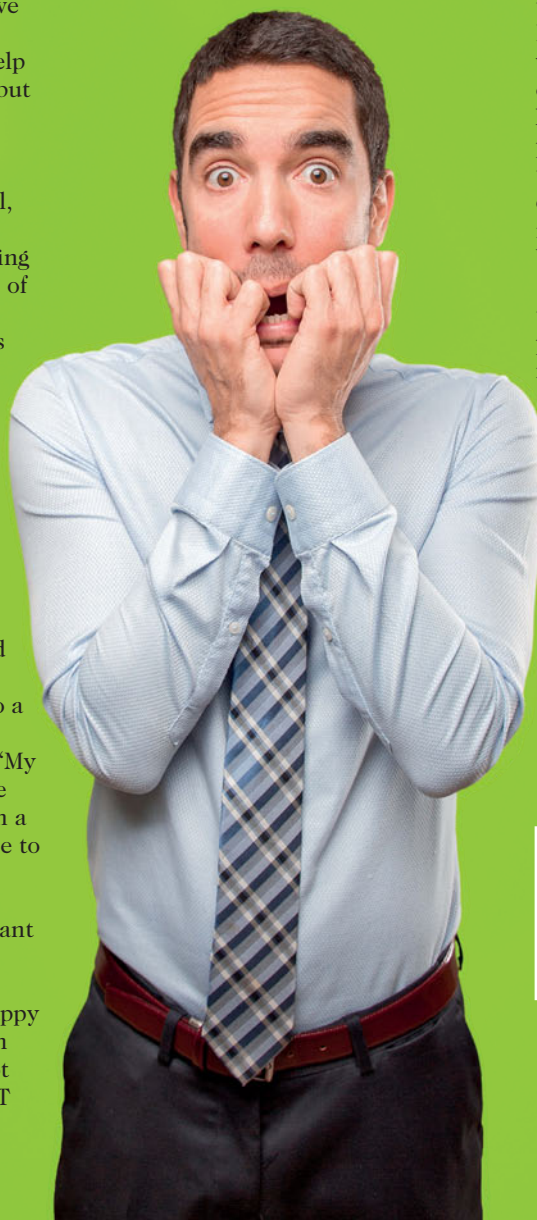
Let's get this straight. Teacher training providers generally grade

trainees at the end of the course. Grade 3 means 'meeting the standards at the minimum level'. Grades 1 and 2 are awarded to trainees who have met the standards above the minimum level. A grade 1 trainee is not necessarily an outstanding practitioner.

I'm happy to say that I've seen grade 3 trainees make incredible progress in the right school with the right support. I've also seen grade 1 trainees who, for various reasons, didn't make it to the end of their NQT year. I'd add that if an NQT clearly isn't happy in the job, pupils aren't making progress and there's no sign of improvement, we're doing everyone a disservice by recommending that they continue beyond that year.

We should ensure that NQTs – like all teachers – aren't overloaded with planning and marking, and it's clearly not ideal for most to be placed with 'high risk' classes, such as Y2 or 6, if it can be avoided. But we should expect them to meet all the Teachers' Standards from day 1 and provide appropriate support. In turn, they should be willing to accept feedback and learn from it.

Some of the most inspiring teachers I've seen have been NQTs, often with incredible ideas and energy. Their mentors have high expectations of them and love to praise them for their efforts. None of them would ever be described as 'only an NQT.'



**Julie Price Grimshaw** is a teacher, trainer and education adviser

 @julespg

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

# HOW SHOULD YOU HANDLE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS?

Conversations with staff about sensitive issues carry the risk of causing further problems – which is why the right framework and language is essential, writes Sonia Gill...

If you're like the school leaders I've met, you'll find difficult conversations tend to come at you, from all angles, many times a day. A 'difficult conversation' is a dialogue about a situation where something needs to improve (results, performance, working

relationships etc.) and where voicing the issues is likely to upset someone to some degree. If you're sure someone won't be upset then it's unlikely to be a difficult conversation.

I've witnessed a *lot* of difficult conversations – thankfully not all my own

– and there are three common problems I see repeatedly, no matter what the topic. Maybe you've also experienced some, or all, of the following...

## EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

Problem 1 is that the person doesn't hear your message. You raise an issue with someone, you're as clear as you can be and you give your message in several different ways, but when they walk away, you feel like they didn't hear what you were telling them. In fact, you might feel they've heard something else. It's frustrating, and can you make you feel like it wasn't worth having the conversation in the first place. Problem 2 is when it gets emotional. When we're giving a message

that's hard for someone to hear, emotions can increase. Maybe they cry, withdraw or get angry. This can be hard on us as well as them, because we didn't give them the message to cause distress; we gave it to help them improve. But we're human, and we can react emotionally.

Emotions come into play before, during and after the conversation. Have you ever worried about a conversation you knew you needed to have? Perhaps you've played it over in your mind, or it's become the low point in your week ahead. After the conversation, have you ever re-played it, re-lived or even re-invented it, imagining what you could have said and then how they would have responded, even though the conversation is over? If so, you're not alone.

“They come at you,  
from all angles”





The problem with these emotions is that they can be exhausting and use up a lot of your energy, which means there's less energy for the rest of school and your home life. A memorable example of the impact that emotions can have was with a school leader that I trained. As we started the day, she told me how she had a difficult issue with a woman in her school, and that she took this woman on holiday with her. She was by the pool, at dinner, on the beach, always with her.

I remember thinking 'Why would you take this person on holiday with you?', then I then realised that she wasn't physically with her – the woman had been *in her head* throughout the holiday. This school leader was reliving, replaying and reinventing the conversation she'd had with her colleague, and it was ruining her holiday.

## CONVERSATIONAL SUCCESS

Finally, problem 3 is when no change happens. You know this situation – you have a difficult conversation with someone and they agree with what you say, including what they need to do next. But you're pretty sure none of the changes will actually happen, which means that despite putting yourself through a difficult conversation, sadly, you might as well have not bothered!

Another senior leader I worked with had exactly this problem. For a year he'd been repeatedly asking a capable team member to complete some necessary paperwork. However, for that entire year, the paperwork hadn't materialised. We worked on the three core components of successful difficult conversations, and after a subsequent conversation, this previously uncooperative member of staff produced all the paperwork within eight hours.

So what are they? Three core components that, when all in place, will dramatically increase the success of your difficult conversations, no matter what the topic. Taken together, they tackle the three common problems discussed above head on..

### Component 1: Structure – ensures your message is heard

The problem of someone not hearing your message is down to your message being unclear. You might feel like that you've been crystal clear, but I've seen hundreds of school leaders who believe they have a clear message when in fact they do not. It's the single biggest mistake I see in around 70% of difficult conversations.

### Component 2: Emotional management – prevents exhaustion

Emotions are exhausting and can derail a successful difficult conversation, as well as make the conversation occupy too much of our internal thoughts before and afterwards. Emotions are, however, an important and inevitable part of having these conversations, so learning how to manage our own and the other person's emotions is crucial.

### Component 3: Trust – increases the likelihood of positive action

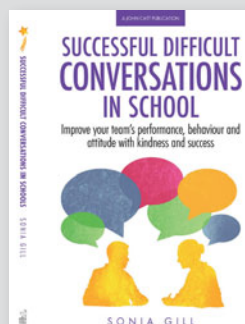
When the other person doesn't take action following the conversation, whether they said all the right things or not, is due to a lack of trust. I'm not talking here about trust that you might have built up from knowing someone for a decade, or perhaps from having grown up with them. I'm referring to the trust in the interaction itself. Often, we'll inadvertently sabotage trust through our non-verbal communication, and this reduces the effectiveness of our conversation.

## THE CORE COMPONENTS

When a team, such as the SLT, MLT or year group leaders, understand these three components of successful difficult conversations, they can reflect and analyse their interactions more effectively, because they have a framework and language for difficult conversations.

Without this knowledge, the analysis of a conversation will tend to be unhelpful, taking the form of '*I said...*', '*He/she said...*' or '*Perhaps if you'd said...*' and won't enable you to have more effective conversations. With this knowledge, teams are better able to support one another with their difficult conversations.

To draw a parallel, this is akin to what you can do when you've observed a lesson where you know what was (or wasn't) working, and can explain this clearly. This is the level teams get to once they understand the mechanisms at work in a difficult conversation.



## THE DIFFICULT CONVERSATION TOPICS I'VE ENCOUNTERED THE MOST:

1. Books not marked frequently or well enough
2. Poor teaching and/or poor planning
3. Not working as a team
4. Bullying behaviour
5. TAs not working with a child or class well enough
6. Year/subject leaders not driving performance across their year/subject
7. Missed deadlines or failure to carry out agreed actions
8. A brusque receptionist
9. Lateness
10. Laziness



Sonia Gill is director of the school leadership training provider Heads Up.

The article is an edited extract from her book *Successful Difficult Conversations In School*, which is available now, published by John Catt

 @SoniaG\_HeadsUp

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



# How can primary schools teach online safety?

We find out how the Switched on Online Safety whole school programme from Rising Stars can help schools educate pupils about online risks – particularly during the secondary transition

## I would like to get pupils more involved in online safety – how can SOOS help with this?

Engagement with pupils is key to the success of online safety activities, and this is central to the activities in the resource. SOOS includes guidance on setting up an e-team, and suggests giving the group a high profile within the school. There are ideas to support how they use their time, and it encourages older pupils to work with younger pupils to develop digital literacy and online resilience.

## My biggest issue in school is getting parents/carers to work with us on keeping children safe online – how can SOOS help?

SOOS provides a range of activities that extend learning beyond the classroom, with activity sheets that focus on aspects such as a family agreement for keeping safe online, as well as a clear focus on home/school engagement and text to use in communications with parents/carers.

## Teaching staff in my school need additional support, advice and confidence to teach. What can we do?

SOOS has guidance to help teachers feel more confident tackling a variety of topics, including sensitive issues such as nude selfies (sexting). It's often easy to flick past the few pages of teacher guidance and jump straight to the teaching section, but these vital pages provide useful information and hints and tips for teaching online safety.

## How can we ensure that we get the curriculum right for pupils?

SOOS provides a comprehensive curriculum map, with six 1-hour units per year group (Years 1-6), that can be taught as one-off lessons or used in year group assemblies. There are three teacher guides available for KS1, lower KS2 and upper KS2. These focus on developing responsible online citizens, how to protect individual rights and the rights of others, and how to engage (and disengage) with the digital world.



## How can I get my pupils to transfer what we talk about in lessons to how they behave in real life?

This is a common problem. Many pupils can cite the need to keep safe, but fail to follow this in practice – sometimes because they feel ill-prepared to respond and fear the reaction from peers. The activities in SOOS are designed to help pupils engage with the content, react to scenarios and discuss how to respond – for example, saying no and not being a silent bystander to unkind comments.

## I have been given the responsibility to lead online safety because the designated safeguarding lead doesn't understand the digital element. Is this okay?

The DSL is responsible for keeping children safe, and that includes online safety. If you lead on the online safety element, it's crucial that you work together and have a shared understanding of the issues and how to deal with them. It's also important

to work together to ensure that all staff are trained and prepared to deal with issues and support pupils as needed.

## Online safety issues are changing constantly. How can I ensure that my knowledge, policies and procedures are current?

SOOS is designed to signpost to websites with useful online safety support and guidance, and is supplemented by regular newsletters that keep users abreast of online safety issues. If you're looking for up-to-date policies and practice, an excellent additional source of advice is the London Grid for Learning's 'LGfL DigiSafe' site – see [digisafe.lgfl.net](https://digisafe.lgfl.net).

**SWITCHED ON**   
**Online Safety**

To find out more, call 01235 400 500 or visit [risingstars-uk.com/soos](https://risingstars-uk.com/soos)



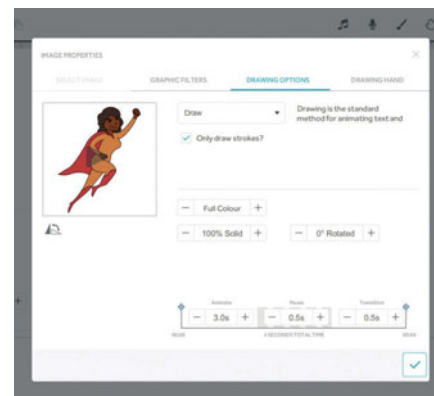
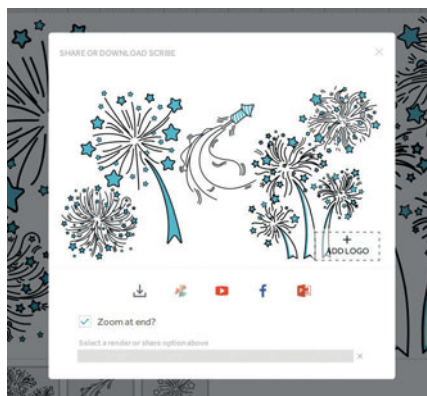
# VideoScribe

Capture your pupils' attention by creating your very own animated explainer videos, with the aid of this intuitive software resource



## VideoScribe

- Creates professional-looking 'explainer videos' that bring content and ideas to life
- Can be used to assemble simple picture slide animations that deepen learning
- Comes with a rich library of images and soundtracks
- Simple to use and highly customisable
- Can be used in myriad ways to build understanding and improve outcomes



Reviewed by: John Dabell

Attention is a slippery concept. How do you get information to 'go in' in an age of information overload? Technology always holds great promise, but with so much of it competing for children's attention, you need something special to get and hold their attention.

In an evidence-led profession, we can look to research to help us understand what works and what doesn't. We know that video is the lingua franca of young people and a powerful form of communication. We also know that scribbled animation videos are particularly effective and incredibly popular – those multimedia digital storytelling videos that explain a concept using an artist scribing and illustrating an idea in fast-motion doodles.

'Lo-fi' animated videos such as these can completely transform the way in which complex information is communicated and shared. As well as being attention-grabbing, they've been proven to improve problem-solving by up to an impressive 75%, and there's further proof that they can boost subsequent recall of information by 15%.

You don't even need to be an artist. Sparkol's VideoScribe enables teachers to create their own memorable explainer video on any subject quickly and easily using a superb software suite that does all the sketching for them. It's simple to use, but hugely effective and can go a long way towards engaging learners.

VideoScribe offers access to a bank of images from which you can select what you need, before combining them with on-screen text and an accompanying soundtrack. It also lets you record voiceovers and adjust draw times, pauses and playback speeds as required.

VideoScribe is addictive. It's easy to pick up and start using to develop your ideas, and there's plenty of assistance in the form of various short videos to help you master the basics. Changes and edits are easily made, and once you're happy with your finished video you can publish and share it via social media.

Scribes can bewitch, dazzle, fascinate and wow. Put simply, they can make learning sticky and fun. This isn't just a decorative endeavour – animations can really help bring ideas to life, make them accessible and make them exciting. Goodbye death by PowerPoint...



## VERDICT

- ✓ Ultra-engaging, entertaining and informative
- ✓ Fun, enjoyable and puts children in a great mood for learning
- ✓ Make lesson planning and preparation far more creative and pleasurable
- ✓ They spread ideas and stimulate conversation
- ✓ They dynamically transfer knowledge and contribute a real depth of learning
- ✓ Ideal for lesson content creation, CPD training, social media and digital marketing.

## UPGRADE IF...

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# Budgeting

## GET GOOD DEALS ON SCHOOL TRIPS

Clare Hunter explains how it often doesn't take much to reduce the cost of booking a school visit

Schools should look out for special offers from venues and attractions whenever they can, because there are lots out there – you can always find a large selection in a dedicated area of the UK School Trips website.

As much as possible, schools should be flexible with their dates and be aware that there are certain parts of the calendar where demand is always high. That makes it far harder to negotiate a better price, so plan any school visits as far in advance as is practical and try to book dates during quieter times – though when those are will depend entirely on the type of trip and venue you have in mind.

Demand for school bookings of residential trips involving lots of outdoor pursuits typically peaks between June and the start of the summer break, but what many schools have started doing is booking residential in September and October. As well being easier and cheaper to book, organising trips like that at the start of the academic year, rather than at the end, can do a lot to help pupils bond outside of the classroom environment. Besides, in the UK it can easily rain in summer, so there might even be a case for organising outdoor trips in March.

Of course, it's always worth shopping around. If you send your Year 6 on a residential trip every year using the same provider, be prepared to look at other venues offering something similar and see if any can quote you a better price for a service similar to what you've been getting.

Indoor venues have different quiet times of their own, and it's worth asking when those are. Contact them, tell them the time of year you have in mind for visiting, and ask which months you would need to book for to get the best price possible. Trampoline centres, for example, are full at weekends but virtually empty from Monday to Friday.

To the venue, you're potentially bringing a very large group in with you, so it's in their interests to give you a good deal by making the booking cheaper. An easy way of lowering your booking costs is by negotiating with the venue to let your supervising teachers go free. Beyond that, don't be afraid to simply ask for some money off – you're interested in visiting, but the price quoted is a little out of your budget. Is there anything they can do?

When it comes to more expensive trips, planning well in advance also make it more likely that your pupils' parents and carers will be in a better position to afford the cost. Payment plans can be arranged, whereby parents pay for upcoming trips in instalments over time, instead of via a large upfront payment.

*Clare Hunter is the co-owner of UK School Trips*

 @UKSchoolTrips  
 [ukschooltrips.co.uk](http://ukschooltrips.co.uk)



## THINK MORE GLOBALLY

Erasmus+ isn't just for university students – it could also provide that school exchange funding...

**P**eople tend to assume that the Erasmus+ programme is just for studying at universities abroad.

In fact, half of all Erasmus+ funding is received by further education, schools, adult education and youth organisations to fund collaborative projects and enable young people and staff to spend a period of time abroad.

In 2018, UK schools will receive over 30 million in European Union Erasmus+ funding, up from €21 million in 2017, which will help pay for around 500 projects led by schools, academies and LAs. The UK is committed to full participation in Erasmus+, and successful projects which can start later this year will be funded for their duration. With greater funding available and increased opportunities, there's never been a better time to apply for a European project.

As well as enabling opportunities for CPD, such as teaching assignments, job shadowing and training abroad, the funding can also support partnership projects between schools in the UK and other European countries on topics including language-learning, digital skills and classroom inclusion, and help pupils develop an international outlook.

The increase in budget for school partnerships represents a massive opportunity for schools to take part in our new School Exchange Partnerships. These are one of the few available routes to funded pupil exchanges, allowing pupils of any age to go abroad for as few as three days at a time, and can involve staff exchanges with partner schools. Each school can apply for up to €16,500 per year of their project.

80% of pupils who have participated in European school partnerships say it

improved their sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, while 70% said it increased their digital skills.



A recent British Council report further highlighted that international links improved pupils' reading, writing and communication skills, and understanding of cultural and religious behaviour. Interactions with pupils overseas highlighted similarities and differences between them and their peers, better equipping them to question prejudice.

International activity has also been shown to have a positive effect on the performance of underachieving learners, who became more focussed and motivated, resulting in improved behaviour in classrooms and around the school.

St Nicholas Church in Wales Primary School, for example, wanted to give its pupils an international outlook and linked with schools in Germany, Hungary and Denmark to run an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership digital skills project called 'Innovate With LEGO Education'. It was also awarded funding for a mobility project to allow two members of staff to job shadow lessons in Denmark.

Around 2000 teachers who participated in Erasmus+ CPD in 2016 reported that the experience had increased their job satisfaction, thus in turn contributing to improved teacher retention.

**Liz Neil is Erasmus+ schools lead at the British Council; the deadline for Erasmus+ CPD applications is February 1st 2018, and 21st March 2018 for school partnership applications**

 @erasmusplusUK  
 [erasmusplus.org.uk](http://erasmusplus.org.uk)



# How bad is it? Check the numbers

Some might quibble with headteachers' vocal complaints against funding pressures, but the government's own figures would seem to back them up, says John Howson...

Last December, right when many commentators were focusing their attention on the just published primary performance data, the DfE chose the same day to also publish its annual update on maintained school finances for 2016-17 (see [tinyurl.com/dfe-ms-1617](http://tinyurl.com/dfe-ms-1617)). Why was that?

Comparisons from year to year are slightly handicapped by the conversion of schools to academy status and their removal from the relevant tables. Nevertheless, at the national level, some pointers do become clear, especially as the funding between academies and maintained schools is now roughly the same for most of their government-funded income. (They do, of course, have different accounting years, which can affect issues such as salary spend and the payment of increments).

If you examine the average percentage of revenue income held as balances by maintained schools, you'll see that this has now started to

reduce after a long period when it was on rise for both primaries and secondaries. In primary schools, the total revenue balance as a percentage of total revenue income peaked at 8.4% in 2015/16, having risen from 5.9% in 2009/10. In 2016/17 it dropped back to 7.4%.

This is the first year that the primary sector has recorded a decline in balances as a percentage of revenue income. In secondary schools, the decline began in 2014-15 (with a dip to 5% from a high of 6.4% the year before), followed by declining revenue balances in each of the years since.

For schools with a deficit, the aggregate position is similarly deteriorating, at least where secondary schools are concerned – 4% back in 2009/10, and now more than double at 8.4% in 2016/17, though this may be partly due to those secondary schools that haven't yet converted to academies being more likely to be in deficit.

Of the maintained secondary schools included within the 2016/17 data, 26% had a deficit budget compared with just 7% of primary schools. This may also reflect the fact that rolls have been steadily rising across the primary sector, but were falling across the secondary sector until this year.

Between 2015 and 2017, the average spend on teaching staff has increased in the primary sector by £68 per pupil, and in the secondary sector by £58 per pupil. During the same period, the primary sector reduced its running costs by £30 per pupil, and secondary sector by £25 per pupil.

That said, schools overall did succeed in increasing their non-government revenue income, by £25 per pupil in the primary sector and £13 in the secondary sector over. Some of this might simply be income to cover the costs of trips, meals and other expenses, but it does also include parental contributions and donations.

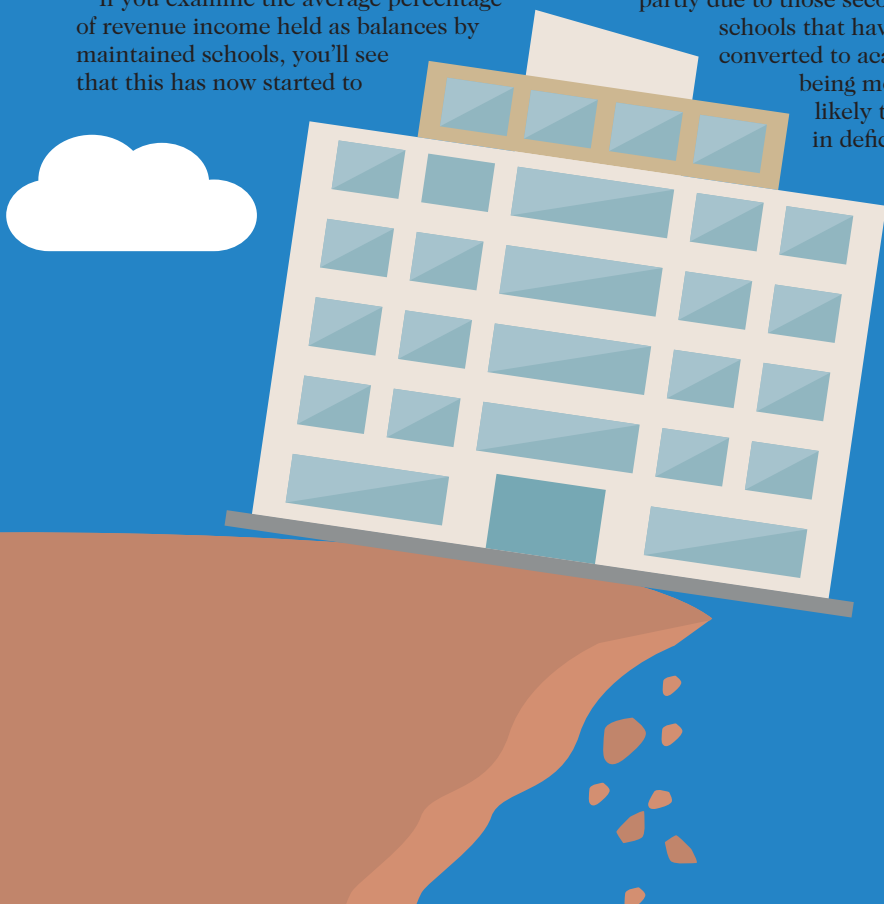
Overall, the figures show that the squeeze on income now really is beginning to affect schools, especially in the secondary sector, backing up the complaints made by many headteachers about their funding levels. With general inflation now over 3% – at a time when schools need to offer recruitment and retention payments to counteract below inflation pay increases – the next few years are going to be challenging times for maintained schools, and almost certainly for academies as well.

Schools can no longer rely on dipping into their savings for a rainy day. That day has now arrived, and the cash is being used up.

**Professor John Howson is the chair of TeachVac, the free national vacancy service, and co-founder of Oxford Teacher Services**

 @TeachVac

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



# BUY BOOKS WITHOUT BREAKING THE **BANK**

If your school's budget is barely covering the cost of new books for your library and classrooms, there may be another solution writes Brian Herbert...

I'm now in my eighth year of working in education as an SBM, and am finding the ever-changing landscape of school funding to be a real challenge, with current funding having to stretch further than ever before.

As SBMs, we all know that when setting budgets some departments won't fare so well, while others receive, and go on to use as many resources as the school can give them. What goes? What stays? Where does the SDP want to steer the money to?

Library budgets seem to be getting ever nearer the bottom of the pile when it comes to the divvying up. The budget continues to get shaved, and before you know it, five

years have passed and the library is starting to look tatty and understocked. Unless you're one of the lucky ones, your librarian will probably have gone too.

In the absence of specific funding from central government, we've seen a well-documented decline in public and school libraries. This past year, for example, I had a library budget of £5,890. Sounds like a lot, but how far would it go? We had too many half-full shelves, a computer system in need of updating – and more to the point, how many new books would that money buy us? All of these issues needed sorting out, but

there seemed no obvious way of doing it.

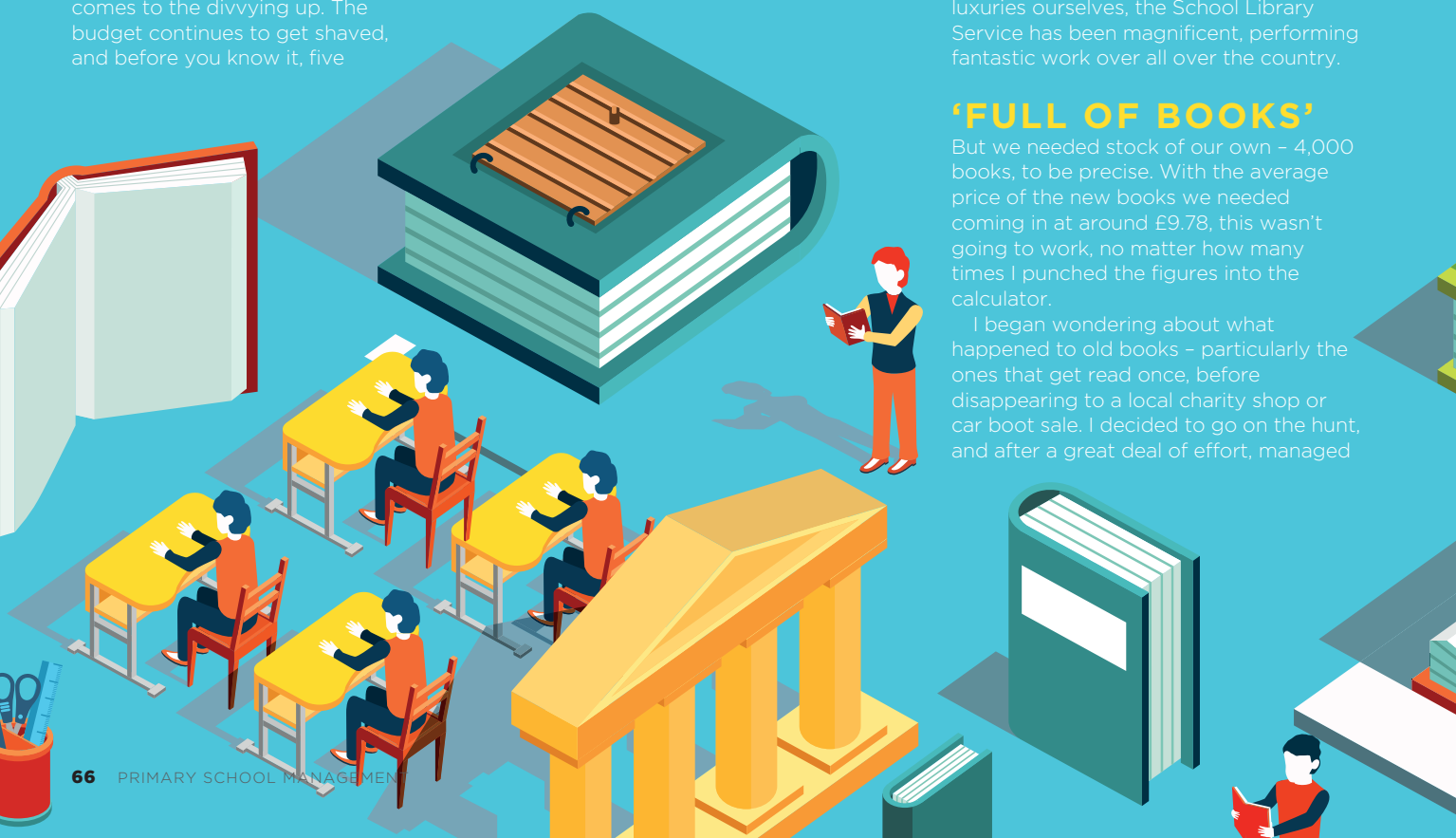
Some schools can make use of fantastic wholesalers such as Peters, who can provide nice, shiny new books that are all barcoded and dressed in protective covers. I've managed to use them myself in the past – who wouldn't? – but the grass was a lot greener then.

Other schools establish links with the School Library Service – a great service that can refresh your library over the course of a year and also supply various resources for use with class topics and projects. In the years since those heady days of us being able to afford such luxuries ourselves, the School Library Service has been magnificent, performing fantastic work over all over the country.

## 'FULL OF BOOKS'

But we needed stock of our own – 4,000 books, to be precise. With the average price of the new books we needed coming in at around £9.78, this wasn't going to work, no matter how many times I punched the figures into the calculator.

I began wondering about what happened to old books – particularly the ones that get read once, before disappearing to a local charity shop or car boot sale. I decided to go on the hunt, and after a great deal of effort, managed





to find a supplier that would sort me out with the books that I needed!

From that point on, we were away. The feeling I got from being able to walk down the school corridor and confidently announce that we would soon be 'full of books' was immense. I knew the importance of what we were about to do.

4,000 books later, at a rough cost of around 85p per book, the school's book capacity is nearly full. The classrooms all have a good stock, with plenty of variety, and the library now has many copies of the *Harry Potter* series and *Gangsta Granny*, along with many Blyton favourites. We now have the freedom to use portions of our 'book money' for specific class sets, or those specialist books that seem to cost as much as a flight to Spain!

## A SELF-FUNDING SUPPLY

Starting my own business has been an entry on my personal 'bucket list' for years, so I decided to give it a go and thus The Book Junction was born. I made the decision early on to deal only with schools, as I wanted to get as many pre-loved books into them as possible, just as I'd done with mine – and three months on, all the effort so far has been well worth it.

Generating funds can be difficult. For many schools, the Foyle Foundation ([foylefoundation.org.uk](http://foylefoundation.org.uk)) has been a helpful source of funding. I believe that Tesco's Community Fund has also occasionally been successful in helping to pay for the resources schools need. For more extensive projects or a full refit, it may be that the National Lottery's Big Lottery Fund ([biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://biglotteryfund.org.uk)) can help. But all of these will only lead to 'funding spikes' – what's really crucial for schools is that they're able to secure a means of generating funds on an ongoing basis.

So that's what I intend to do. The next step for us is to organise and run a series of termly book fairs, where we'll invite members of the local community into the school alongside the children. We'll look to make cheaply-priced books available to parents who maybe can't otherwise afford them, in the process hopefully tackling another social hurdle that needs to be overcome.

Pre-loved books are nice and affordable, and can give schools the opportunity to generate an ongoing and sustainable income that can subsequently be spent on their library facilities. If done right, with careful thought and sufficient enthusiasm, a school's supply of books over time

could even become self-funding. And finally, if any books should happen to go missing from your library or classroom... does it really matter? In my experience, organising a short-term 'book amnesty' – perhaps tied into any 'house points' system your school might have – usually does the trick...

## TRY IT YOURSELF

**Phase 1** – Schools begin by ordering a Book Junction trial box containing between 90 and 110 books to see whether they're happy with the books' quality. This initial box will contain a selection of popular KS2 children books from authors such as JK Rowling, Michael Morpurgo, David Walliams and others.

**Phase 2** – Schools can then order a pallet containing 1000 or 2000 books, packed into boxes of approximately 100. Each box is carefully packed and securely sealed for ease of handling, and will weigh no more than 25kg.

**Phase 3** – Schools that decide to set up a Book Fair can order a mixed pallet of 2000 books containing a mix of both children's and adults books, or optionally a pallet containing children's books only. The Book Junction will also provide a free banner to help publicise the Book Fair to parents and members of the local community.



Brian Herbert is a school business manager at Ferrars Junior School [info@book-junction.co.uk](mailto:info@book-junction.co.uk)

@Book\_Junction

[book-junction.co.uk](http://book-junction.co.uk)



# YOUR SBL HAS EXPERTISE TO OFFER TOO

There's a long and rich tradition of teachers sharing best practice with colleagues and other schools, writes Caroline Collins – the time has come for SBPs to join them...

**T**he role of school business manager has assumed some prominence of late, with some organisations – including the National Association of Headteachers, the Institute of School Business Leadership (formerly the NASBM) and the Association of School and College Leaders – replacing their use of the term 'school business manager' with 'school business leader.'

It's somewhat disheartening, though, that the importance of the work performed by SBLs in the school environment still isn't as widely acknowledged as it should be, and that the impact SBL professionals can have continues to receive far less recognition than that of teachers. We've all seen plenty of media reports highlighting the importance of having good teachers and heads in our schools, but the SBL is rarely given the same level of acknowledgement – even though the SBL will be leading on all non-teaching aspects of school life.

Without the SBL taking charge of a school's business – everything from finance to HR, health and safety and so on, right down to ensuring the school compliance across multiple areas of regulation – the school would most certainly not be as strong.

## SHARING WORDS OF WISDOM

With that in mind, it's difficult to see why some schools, academies and even some LAs aren't doing more to promote the need for strong business skills within the education environment. But it's because of this that we need to ensure the SBL profession assumes a greater level of prominence throughout the sector.

As with many other groups of professionals, a number of SBLs do all that they can to support colleagues via a

range of channels, with social media being the most popular. The SBL community is quite unique, however, in the sheer quality and depth of support it's willing to offer others. Every day, Twitter comes alive with SBLs asking questions, sharing words of wisdom and offering suggestions, options and solutions for the latest dilemma that someone might be facing.

There are also a series of conferences and courses designed for SBLs that are always very well attended, though many SBLs at those conferences will tell you that the networking opportunities they present are as important to them as the topics under discussion. I myself recently organised a conference for SBLs from London, and during the coffee break found small groups chatting together about everything from the national

“We’ve all seen plenty of media reports highlighting the importance of having good teachers and heads in our schools, but the SBL is rarely given the same level of acknowledgement”





## SET A DATE

You can find details of many SBL conferences and events taking place across the country by checking the ISBL's Events Calendar  
[isbl.org.uk/Events.aspx](http://isbl.org.uk/Events.aspx)

But what you won't find is a group of SBLs in that same staff room discussing the latest legal requirements being thrust upon them, the evidence they're providing for this year's SFVS or the impending audit. And that's why sharing practice and setting up communication channels with other SBLs is so important for the profession.

## SOMETHING VALUABLE

As part of the government's efforts at helping schools support each other, the role of Specialist Leader of Education (SLEs) was designed for school staff who, according to the DfE, are 'Interested in supporting middle and senior leaders in other schools'. Most people have since come to associate SLEs with deputy heads and senior teachers, but there's no reason why they can't be SBLs too. In fact some are already, though they're very thin on the ground.

SLE's are specifically there to share good practice, and will thus be drawn from a pool of education professionals considered suitably knowledgeable enough to visit schools in challenging circumstances and provide them with their expertise. An 'SBL SLE' going into a challenging school with weak finances and procedures will be able to share with that school the excellent practice they use themselves. As SBLs, we can have a tendency to think that what we do isn't particularly unique or special. Sometimes it's only through talking to others that we realise we actually have something valuable to offer.

funding formula to the new GDPR legislation – it's these types of conversation that SBLs can really learn from.

The SBL role is a somewhat isolated one. True, many SBLs will have a team behind them that might include a combination of administrators, site managers and finance officers, but the strategic SBL role itself is one that will tend to sit slightly apart from everyone else within the school. Walk into any school staff room and you can expect to find teachers huddled together discussing their teaching approaches, what resources they're using, new initiatives they're trying and so on. Elsewhere, you might see the TAs talking to each other about what's working in their classroom and what they've tried with their lower-achieving pupils, while giving each other some useful tips.

If you're an SBL that's keen to help others by becoming an SLE, then you'll need to seek out some nearby teaching schools, since they're the ones responsible for making SLE appointments. I was appointed as an SLE in school business management two years ago by a Teaching Schools Alliance in my local area. The application process was relatively straightforward, and having been shortlisted on the basis of my application form, was invited to interview.

The interview day involved working with the other shortlisted applicants, who at my interview were all teaching staff. We were given a case study to discuss while being observed by the interview panel, and were subsequently asked to present our findings. Following this, we were then each tasked with delivering an individual, independent presentation before a final interview.

After I was appointed, the teaching school proceeded to carry out some marketing and distributed the details of the new SLE to schools in the local area. I'm the only SLE in my area to have been appointed by the teaching school in question – so it's quite surprising that at the time of writing I've not yet been commissioned to work in any schools.

It may well be that schools don't feel they need an SBL SLE to support their own SBL. I understand that schools might well feel protective of their staff, but if help is needed, then schools really ought to accept whatever is being offered.

What concerns me is my suspicion that I've yet to be called upon simply because SBLs still aren't properly recognised for the importance and impact they can have in schools.

If that is indeed the case, we can only hope that the work currently being undertaken by NAHT, ISBL and ASCL starts having an effect soon.



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

@caroline\_261

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## ARE TEAM BUILDING DAYS WORTH IT?



Don't be the head who takes staff out of school for what turns out to be a waste of everyone's time, urges Terry Freedman...

### FEELING BRAVE?

Demon Wheelers offers a range of team building activities, including quad biking and a 'Krypton Factor Challenge' [tinyurl.com/tb-quad](http://tinyurl.com/tb-quad)

The hall was packed. Two hundred teachers waited expectantly for the training to begin. And waited. And then waited some more. An hour later, a flustered trainer announced that the resources she'd asked for had finally arrived and the day could start. Unfortunately, that timewasting had put everyone in a negative frame of mind.

In another school, the diversity training day it had organised turned out to be well-named. Teachers who, up until then, had rubbed along nicely with each other soon found themselves acutely aware of all the things they didn't like about their colleagues.

A third example. The day started with breakfast, which consisted of sweet danish pastries, tea and coffee. Nothing to eat if you were diabetic or vegetarian.

Each one a real incident that could and should have been avoided.

If you're considering putting on a team-building day away from school, there are several things you should take into account.

First, everyone needs to know the event's purpose. From a teacher's point of view, time taken up with 'team-building' could be better spent preparing lessons

and getting classrooms ready. Why is your 'away day' better than that? A team-building day can be an excellent way of thrashing out new ways of working, getting to know people quickly or tackling major changes, such as a new curriculum, new Ofsted or SEND requirements or a new MIS – but staff need to understand why they're there.

Directions to the venue must be crystal clear. At one event arranged by an acquaintance, the organiser failed to send out directions resulting in him being called at 7am by frantic teachers asking for the postcode. Also, be sure to liaise with the training provider about catering. When your teachers arrive, what refreshments will be available?

Moreover, who is that training provider? Look for companies that come recommended by similar settings to your own. Can they ensure that the event's intended outcomes will be achieved?

Agree on the type of activities that will be organised. Avoid so-called 'fun' activities that might offend, demean or upset people. Google 'horrific team building exercises' to learn what these might be – though you might pick up some good ideas, too.

Ideally, the venue should be far enough away to make it difficult for staff to 'pop in' to school at lunchtime, but not so far away as to add an extra hour to their usual journey time.

All matters relating to the day should be agreed beforehand with the provider or venue in writing. If you can tie them closely to payment, so much the better. If boxes of materials aren't ready in time, for example, a 10% 'fine' could be taken off the fee. A small school may not have the clout to insist on this, but a MAT certainly should.

If left to chance, away days can be grim affairs – but if planned well, they can offer staff the opportunity to achieve a great deal.

**Terry Freedman publishes the ICT and Computing in Education website at [ictineducation.org](http://ictineducation.org)**



## “WHY WOULD I HAVE ANY AUTHORITY?”

The Primary Head takes issue with the assumption that a young headteacher can't be a great headteacher...

**W**hen I was appointed as head for the first time, I became the youngest headteacher in Bristol.

While proud of this, it also made me a little paranoid. I drove to school on that first day wondering how long it would take the parents to capitalise on my lack of experience and defy me, claiming that I didn't know what I was talking about. Of course, in reality everything was fine. My age never came up as an issue surrounding my headship.

As an NQT, I felt similar existential angst during my first ever parents' evening. Why would parents and carers believe I had any knowledge or authority when I still didn't have to shave and wasn't entirely sure of the difference between summative or formative assessment? I felt I'd barely left school myself, and was therefore mentally prepared for my 'inexperience' to be an issue for the next 10 years.

Yet as it turned out, nobody ever challenged my age as a teacher, either. For some, the fact that I was the youngest member of staff was a boon, because naturally my classes would be the most exciting. I'd be dynamic, and all my lessons would be drenched in ICT. Well, as my first ever class found out, not all the time!

Maybe parents and carers don't mind young teachers because they're still 'teachers'. No matter the age gap between them, the teacher still has the qualification that the parents do not.

Teaching is a complicated job and, in my experience, a person's age pales into significance against their ability to adapt, think creatively and collaborate with those around them.

But what about leaders? I thought being a deputy at 28 and head at 32 was pretty young, but now we've got headteachers who are in their 20s. What does a twenty-something know about great leadership? It's a joke. Headteachers should be at least 35 (I was an exception) if they're to take command of a school effectively. Fact.

Of course that's not true. I see no reason why a young(er) person can't become a headteacher, providing they have the experience that makes them the right person for the particular school they're taking on. Ultimately, the interview panel must determine which candidate has best demonstrated the right skills and attitude for the job. It's then down to the individual to prove themselves worthy of the title.

Once you're a headteacher, you'll find that the job is far too important, busy, challenging and all-consuming for you to spend even a second worrying about your age. And I say that as an experienced – and still youthful – headteacher.

**The Primary Head is the headteacher of a UK primary school**

 @theprimaryhead

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



# “Good news, everyone!”

‘Selling’ staff on a new initiative that some might not welcome calls for a careful balancing act, writes Jill Berry...

**T**he oft-quoted Dylan Wiliam put it powerfully when he told the SSAT Conference in 2012 that “Every teacher needs to improve not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better.” I’d say that the best teachers are those committed to being even better teachers, and the best leaders are those determined to become even better leaders.

However, I fully understand that there may be a range of possible responses to Wiliam’s comment. Some might feel that constant learning is something which motivates and energises them. Others may feel pressured by it – ground down by the feeling that however hard they work and whatever they do, it won’t be deemed good enough.

How should heads square this? How can they ensure their school continues to develop and move forward, embracing new initiatives and looking to the future, while still respecting the capacity and willingness of those they lead to take on new things? If, as a head, you return

from a conference fired up about a new idea that you think will strongly benefit the school, how can you communicate this in a way that’s positively received, rather than just another thing for staff to manage? I suggest that heads bear the following in mind:

**1** When introducing something new, ensure that the reasons behind the decision are fully explored, explained and discussed. If staff see the rationale, and particularly the potential positive impact, they’re far more likely to be receptive than if the new way of working is simply imposed without debate.

**2** Be mindful of capacity and workload. Where possible, when introducing something new take

something else away. Consider carrying out a workload impact assessment and be transparent and open about it. Consider what support might be necessary so that those involved can take on the new requirement without undue strain.

**3** Listen carefully and demonstrate that you are listening, so that staff don’t feel they have no influence and agency. Ideally, you’ll need to generate emotional as well as rational engagement, so that those who’ll need to make this work feel invested in doing so; that won’t happen if they believe they have no voice.

The main sources of stress for those working in schools seem to be a perceived lack of control over their workloads, and a sense of having little influence over their working lives. The two are clearly related, and crucial with respect to the successful implementation of new initiatives and working practices. Heads who ride roughshod over the anxieties and fears of their staff will never get the best from them.

Heads need to take courageous and sometimes unpopular decisions, and can be required to ‘hold the line’ in the face of staff opposition. If they heed the above advice, and do all they can to get staff on-side, they may well find themselves spending less time and energy on dealing with resistance, allowing them to channel their efforts into working alongside staff to make things work even better for the benefit of the whole school community.

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

 @jillberry102



# LEADING IN THE FACE OF UNCERTAINTY

As the demands made of school leaders continue to change, what can heads do to deliver what's now expected of them – on their own terms?

**T**here's a growing sense among school leaders that no matter how hard they work, it's increasingly difficult to achieve improvement. Combined with pressures to deliver more for less and contradictory education policies, the result is that those working in schools are faced with increasing complexity – which, over time, will likely lead to increasing frustration and a sense of impotence.

Exacerbating the situation yet further have been huge changes to the context in which schools work. See the increasing polarisation of society (rich and poor, north and south); the growth of virtual relationships and communication; environmental factors, such as the implications of climate change, and changes in employment. These factors are in turn framed within the context of increasing life expectancies, meaning that schools are educating young people today who will still be alive and well come the end of the century. The leadership challenge is therefore how to balance managing current complexity against leading long-term change.

## THREE HORIZONS

There are many aspects to this that are beyond the control of individual schools, of course, but there is still scope for schools to rethink their policies and working practices in a way that enables them to better respond to current complexities and the increasingly uncertain world of tomorrow. We've been working with the Schools of Tomorrow programme to explore practical ways of addressing this challenge.

A helpful analogy to understand what's happening can be borrowed from the energy industry. According to Andrew Curry and Tony Hodgson (1), the challenge of achieving a sustainable

energy supply can be conceptualised using the lens of three different horizons. The first horizon represents the way we generate and use energy at present. It's inefficient, damaging to the environment, short-term, and ultimately unsustainable. We'd argue that this is equally true of school improvement today.

A third horizon represents the outlook of those who understand these limitations and are trying to create alternative, viable, sustainable solutions to meet future needs. In energy terms, these might include solar and wind power, hydrogen cells, biofuels and changing consumption patterns. Such solutions will be experimental, not yet proven, or perhaps even contradictory. Certainly none will have been built to scale or fully tested. Nevertheless, at some point a new way forward will emerge from this experimental cauldron to supersede the unsustainable status quo.

Between the two lies the second horizon. This is the space in which leaders try to navigate between the failing,

unsustainable present and an as yet uncertain and unrealised future, in order to create a meaningful way forward for their organisation – or in the case of schools, those in their care. A big difference between running a school and a running an energy business is the fact that what school leaders do and how they do it directly shapes individual lives now, while also impacting on the futures those individuals create for themselves. So what might this look like in practice?

- Schools becoming more efficient and effective in terms of their existing management and leadership structures (leading in the first horizon)
- School leaders developing the confidence to focus more on long term, strategic development (leading in the third horizon)
- A school seeking to gradually move away from its current situation, and towards a different way of working that does more to anticipate future needs (learning to lead in the second horizon)

## DEVELOPING A RECIPE

Based on our study over time of school leaders working with the Schools of Tomorrow Fellowship, schools that are successfully leading in the second horizon tend to possess the following characteristics and attributes:

### Clear values and personal authenticity

Second-horizon leaders work with explicit values that guide their decision-making and demonstrate authenticity through personal integrity and consistency.



Fig 1



**Quality relationships** The school is emotionally literate, maintaining high-quality relationships work through mutual respect, high levels of trust and open communication and involvement.

**Understanding of complexity and sensitivity to context** Leadership and governance recognise the conflicting demands placed on schools to develop strategies that can accommodate contradiction and imposed change, while also prioritising the demands of their context and their implications.

**Frequent collaborations** Demands for change are responded to via interdependent partnerships within the school, between schools, across MATs and LAs, and crucially, with families and communities. The prevailing culture is very much 'All for one and one for all'.

**Willingness to build community capacity** The school is seen primarily as a community, working in partnership with other

communities through shared norms and values, open communication, trust and shared learning. This community is inclusive, and confident in responding to internal

tensions and imposed demands.

**Regular working through loose-tight relationships** Leaders achieve a consistent and sensitive balance between non-negotiables and opportunities for choice through various partnerships across the school. The emphasis is on maximising the loose whenever possible and appropriate.

These six characteristics shouldn't be seen as different offerings from a menu, but rather the components of a recipe to be used in varying proportions according to the situation at hand.

## MUTUAL REINFORCEMENT

The problem with many approaches to school improvement is that they involve a piecemeal and incremental approach. The Schools for Tomorrow approach works through an interdependent and mutually reinforcing strategy that employs a four-quadrant framework for school purpose and quality (see Fig 1). Each component is enhanced through interaction with the others, and so becomes embedded across all dimensions of a school's work and life. To quote one of the headteachers involved, "This journey has got a vision, but we're having to modify as we go along. You try something and it doesn't work. It's a bit like evolution, sometimes appearing haphazard. But we're not just changing as a result of chance or external pressure, but because of reflection on our journey and learning."

Whatever the impact of short-term political policymaking, we believe that there's the possibility to begin exploring new ways of leading and governing schools, based on what we've seen demonstrated by the second-horizon leaders involved in Schools of Tomorrow.

## A 6-POINT PLAN FOR LEADING CHANGE

- Ensure that your school's values are regularly on the agenda and monitored to ensure that they're made concrete in the life of the school
- Work towards school policies and practice that are evidence-based
- Build rich networks for sharing intelligence and successful innovations
- Focus on school-based professional learning and development
- Develop wellbeing and resilience for the whole school community
- Build leadership capacity



Malcolm Groves, Andrew Hobbs and John West-Burnham (top to bottom) are the authors of *Leadership for Tomorrow - Beyond the School Improvement Horizon*, available now from Crown House Publishing

@schoolsoftomorrow

[schoolsoftomorrow.org](http://schoolsoftomorrow.org)

(1) Curry, A. and Hodgson, A. (2008). Seeing in Multiple Horizons: Connecting Futures to Strategy, *Journal of Futures Studies*, 13(1): 1-20

# OUR SCHOOL'S SET TO BECOME FIVE TIMES **BIGGER**



Headteacher Nicky Phillips explains what's involved in overseeing the expansion of a school from 75 pupils to 420 the following year...

I was appointed as Principal of St Michael's C of E Primary School in Figheldean, Wiltshire in January 2017.

We're a small village school with 75 on roll, housed in an old Victorian building with mobile buildings serving as our classrooms.

We have three mixed-age classes – Y1/Y2, Y3/Y4 and Y5/Y6, plus a small Reception class. 61% of our intake are from military families, so there are many pupil entries and departures throughout year as families are posted in and out. I arrived after a fairly turbulent time for the school, during which we had several headteachers. I took over from an interim head, with various systems and processes yet to be fully formed, so there was lots of work to do.

In addition to that, 75% of the school's staff had begun the September before I started, including a number of inexperienced NQTs. This, combined with the new curriculum's emphasis on mastery, meant that I was soon spending considerable time looking at our teaching and learning to ensure we had a consistency of approach across the school.

## THAT 'FAMILY FEEL'



This coming year we'll be undergoing some major changes, boosting our intake from 75 to 420 in 2018-19, adding a 60-place nursery and moving that to a new site approximately two miles away.

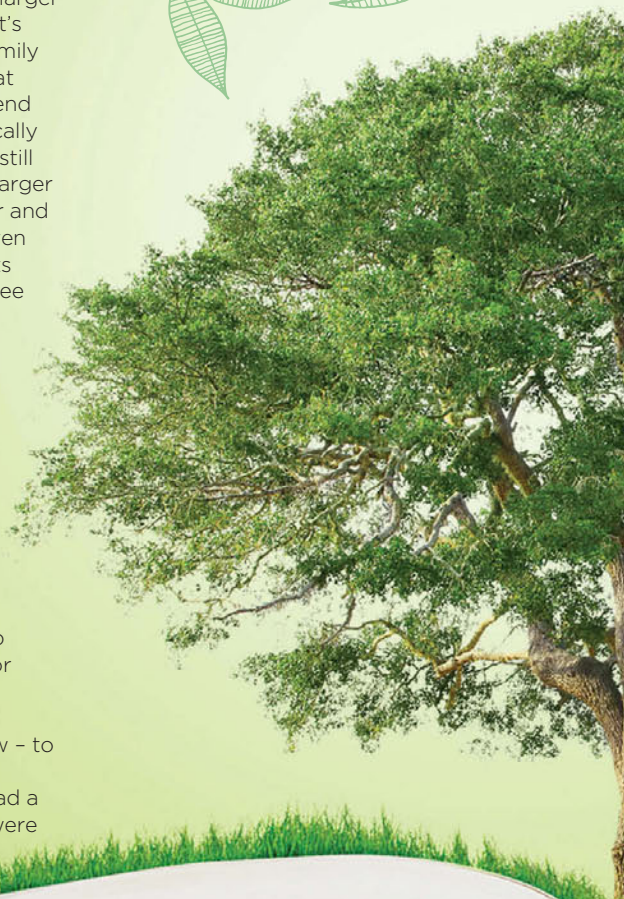
The expansion plans were already in place when I was appointed – it was actually one of the main reasons I wanted to take on the role – since they coincide with a major rebasing of army personnel currently stationed in Germany.

My background is working within larger schools, from which I've learnt that it's entirely possible to maintain that 'family feel' in a larger setting. I'm aware that some people may have chosen to send their children to St Michael's specifically because it's very small; but you can still develop a sense of community in a larger school by regularly coming together and organising cross-phase activities. Even with larger pupil numbers there's lots you can do to ensure that children see siblings regularly, that playtimes aren't split, and that different classes and year groups have opportunities to mix.

People here have tended to see our school as very quaint, but if you consider the impact of our current facilities on the children's learning, it's quite limiting. Our classrooms are fairly old, our technology isn't great and the playground's quite small, to the extent that we have to make trips to the village hall and use their grass for PE lessons.

It was important to me to get the school as I wanted it before we grew – to ensure that the team was tight and working consistently, and that we had a strong ethos. Given how much we were

about to expand by and how quickly, I needed a core of 'champions' who could model





the school's consistencies, systems and expectations to the rest of the staff and the new teachers we are about to appoint.

## OUT OF OUR HANDS

The plans for our new building were largely agreed before I started, though I have had a say in some of the less substantial aspects, like the colour of the carpets and walls. That said, since visiting the new site – and having also been to Germany to meet with some of the families coming over as part of the rebasing – it's become clear that there'll be a range of pupil needs that we're going to have to start catering for. The new school building will therefore now include a nurture room that wasn't originally planned for.

Another exciting addition is the new online technology we'll be using, which is

very different to what we've worked with up to now. We've recently transitioned to using cloud-based systems, so we're no longer required to have on-site servers. That's also given us the chance to get our essential systems up and running and bedded in before moving to the new building, after which we can pick up where we left off. Our devices will all be connected wirelessly, presenting fantastic opportunities for our children to take advantage of new technologies, which is something they've previously barely had.

St Michael's became a founding member of an academy trust in July 2016, with a governing body that has always worked closely with the school and been very much involved with the expansion process. Because we're currently so small, communication between our governing body, senior staff and teachers has been quite straightforward. Having now done a great deal of work developing the school's teaching and learning, vision and future direction, I'm confident that our staff demonstrate a clear understanding of what we're doing and why we're doing it. I've been very fortunate in that our existing staff have been on board since the start, and are excited about the forthcoming changes.

On the recruitment side of things, however, we do have challenges in that we're presently a small school with a tight budget (along with many others, of course). Additionally, due to the nature of the rebasing, we don't know how quickly our newly created places will fill up, which is a concern.

How many teachers should we appoint, when we don't yet know how many children are going to be at the school in September? It's unfortunately out of our hands, and the numbers will be entirely dependent on the academy's rebasing progress.

What I can do, however, is make sure we have a tight team in place, supported by systems that can grow and scale in line with

the school's larger size. We can make sure there are clear and consistent expectations, and that the teaching and learning is absolutely effective.

## MUTUAL POSITIVITY

One of the biggest challenges we've had is managing the concerns some parents have expressed regarding the move, including some who are concerned about losing the 'village feel' of the school and want to move their children elsewhere. Parents need to be made aware of how our new school and larger numbers will actually offer a greater variety of opportunities for their children. After all, the more teachers you have with different interests, the more things you're able to offer during our wonderful enrichment afternoons.

So far, we've invited parents to open sessions and are currently in the process of writing a new prospectus that conveys the fabulous additions the new site has to offer. We've planned a mile run around the perimeter of the new site, and there'll be multiple playgrounds, grass pitches, outdoor learning areas – none of which we currently have.

Our parents have been very honest with us, and a couple have confirmed that they'll be moving, but on the whole, we've received positive comments expressing excitement at the potential the new school offers. Ultimately, if you yourself can be enthusiastic about big changes like the one we're going through, that positivity and excitement can become infectious.



**Nicky Phillips is the Principal of St Michael's C of E Primary School**

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

# The ultimate Edtech showcase

With over 850 exhibitors and a theme of 'Transforming Education', this year's Bett Show is a must-visit for anyone curious to find about the technology that will be shaping tomorrow's classrooms. Here's our pick of the stands to look out for...



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Victoria Dock

**When:**  
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Thu 25th January – 10am to 6pm  
Fri 26th January – 10am to 6pm  
Sat 27th January – 10am to 3pm

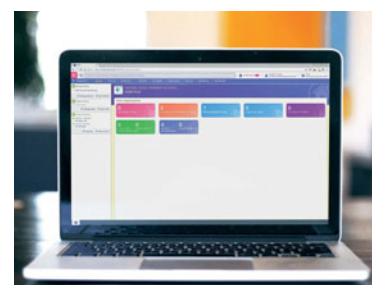
**Contact:**  
bettshow.com  
@bett\_show  
facebook.com/bettshowuk

## SIMS Primary

Capita SIMS, supplier of the software that supports the majority of UK maintained schools, has revealed that at Bett this year it will release its next generation management information system (MIS), transforming the way teachers and senior leaders use classroom data and manage their daily school life.

SIMS Primary has been redesigned with teachers and senior leaders in mind, to help them save time and provide meaningful information about their pupils. It will enable them to fully unlock the power of the data they record on pupils, and use it to improve more learning outcomes than ever before.

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



SIMS **primary.**

STAND B190

## Moxton Education

This independent ICT consultancy supports schools and trusts with developing their ICT strategy, carrying out health-checks and financial modelling using pricing benchmarks. Other areas in which the company can assist include 'joining up' ICT across trusts, helping rationalise procurement policies for schools with multiple ICT suppliers, drawing up practice documents and offering support to trusts in effectively deploying Office 365.

[moxton-education.com](http://moxton-education.com)



STAND F240



STAND FS34

## TrainingToolz

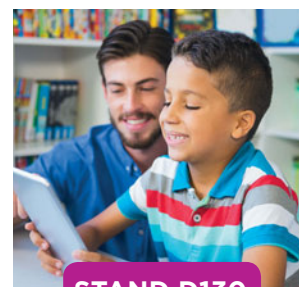
TrainingToolz is a simple and easy to use platform that allows school leaders to deliver their own online staff training. Content can be uploaded and distributed to staff within minutes, giving leaders an easy and cost effective way of monitoring, recording and improving staff development. Visitors to Bett can also register for TrainingToolz' brand new GDPR training course, launching 1st February, which is designed to help schools understand the impending changes to data protection legislation.

[trainingtoolz.com/gdpr](http://trainingtoolz.com/gdpr)

## Sparkol

Engage and inspire students with Sparkol's VideoScribe – the easiest, fastest way to create whiteboard explainer videos on any subject. The combination of spoken word, animated hand-drawn images, music and sound effects boosts knowledge retention, inspires creativity and teaches storytelling skills. Also on show is StoryPix, which can turn photos into engaging explainer videos from any device. Visitors to the company's stand will further get to take advantage of some exclusive Bett offers.

[videoscribe.co](http://videoscribe.co)



STAND D130



**STAND E140**

## InVentry

InVentry is a provider of sign-in and visitor management solutions trusted by more than 4,000 UK schools, which allow users to accurately monitor who is in their school at any given time and issue notifications to staff when visitors arrive on site. Its systems can be integrated into a school's MIS and speed up schools' signing in processes, while keeping visitor information secure and providing reassurance that students are safe. InVentry's expertise also extends to printed photo ID badges, passes for pupils arriving late and even a 'Visitor memory' function facilitated via facial recognition technology.

**inventory.co.uk**

**STAND C274**

## Seppo

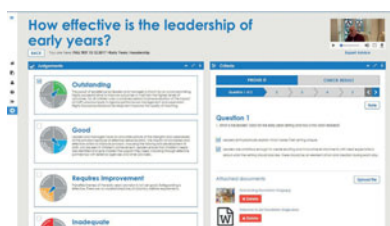
Seppo is a unique tool that combines gamification, social learning and physical movement to help teachers gamify their lessons in any subject or school level. Once a teacher has created a game and exercises (eg. 'Find and document these shapes'; 'Measure these items'; 'Interview people about...') the students can log in into the game via their mobile devices. The teacher then monitors the game, giving students personalized feedback and points as they go. Seppo games can be played both indoors and outside, making them a great way of adding an element of light exercise to the school day.

**seppo.io**

## Catchbox

Engage your students with Catchbox – the world's first throwable microphone for classroom participation. Catchbox can help to increase student engagement, develop communication skills and make learning more active. The Catchbox device itself comes in two versions to suit different environments and use cases – the 'Lite', for use in small classrooms and similar environments, and the Pro, which can be used in lecture halls with several hundred seats and a sound system.

**involve.vc/catchbox**

**STAND E171****STAND C81**

## Inspection Coach

This online consultancy software aims to simplify the process of school self-evaluation. Created by developers 2Eskimos in partnership with Focus Education, Inspection Coach seeks to dramatically reduce the amount of time and effort involved in self-evaluation, giving staff more time to spend on actually running their school. It enables users to examine in detail precisely what's expected of good and outstanding schools, collect and store evidence, and list and assign tasks to key staff, including governors and middle leaders – with everything kept stored in one place for ease of access.

**focus-education.co.uk**

## NumbersAlive!

Via engaging activities and learning tools developed in partnership with teachers and students, NumbersAlive! helps children develop their creativity, imagination and teamwork through interdisciplinary storytelling with number characters. By learning to recognise numerical shapes, quantities, patterns and names, young learners are more effectively able to build their foundational skills in maths, STEM and scientific inquiry. At Bett 2018 there will be a chance to meet with The Numbers Lady herself, Dr. Rebecca Klemm – simply contact [rebecca@numbersalive.org](mailto:rebecca@numbersalive.org) before or during the show to arrange a time.

**numbersalive.org**

**STAND C191**

## TTS

Visitors to the TTS stand at Bett this year will get to explore a variety of zones packed full of engaging technology resources. Discover the TTS Galactic Control Station, complete with rocket and robot, which focuses on resources that are key for STEM. Elsewhere, the company's giant Light Up Learning wall will help make lessons literally shine – or alternatively, why not take part in TTS' Grand Prix and see where you finish up on the leadership board? There will also be free educational content for visitors to take away, as well as the chance to win a £500 TTS voucher!

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Pupils Profit provides training materials that pupils can use to get their business up and running and make it profitable. The Healthy Tuck Shop snack range is fully compliant with Children's Food Trust guidelines, while the Stationery Shop's stock includes eco-friendly scented pencils and ergonomically-designed pens to assist handwriting.

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



## 5 HEALTH BOOST

A Food for Life Award is a great way of demonstrating that your school is doing fantastic work to provide healthy school meals, great lunchtimes and inspiring food education. Independent evaluation indicates that Food for Life's unique, whole school approach benefits pupil health and helps many schools see a positive impact on their Ofsted report for pupils' personal development and wellbeing.

The great value Food for Life Award packages are based on a flexible framework, allowing schools to adopt whichever approach works best for them while also providing plenty of help and support.

[foodforlife.org.uk/schools](http://foodforlife.org.uk/schools)



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

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[signet signs.co.uk](http://signet signs.co.uk)



# WHOSE SCHOOL IS IT, ANYWAY?

Take it from a teacher – it's fine for incoming heads to want to make their mark, but they would do well to tread lightly...

**W**ith a retention crisis in full swing, those of us still in the game know only too well the impact that a school's leadership team can have on staff wellbeing. In short, who you work for matters. A headteacher and their particular approach can mean the difference between loving your job and loathing it, so it's no surprise that a change in leadership is a hugely nerve-wracking upheaval for teachers – made worse by the fact that they've absolutely no control over it. No control over a change that could have a lasting impact on their careers and home lives.

Anyone who's experienced a change in leadership will recognise just how disempowered teachers typically feel at such times. The recruitment often takes multiple rounds – that's multiple sets of learning walks with strangers, any of whom could potentially be your new leader; multiple rounds of nervous getting-to-know-you lunches, and months of scrutiny and uncertainty. It can take a toll on even the most enthusiastic teacher.

By the time a new head actually starts, their arrival will often be very welcome – yet the staff are still likely to be nervous and exhausted by the appointment process. The whole school will need time to heal. The staff

will need their experiences over the past year to be understood, their strengths to be celebrated and their school to be loved.

They don't need to be formally graded in the first few weeks of term. For their practice to be reduced to a single phrase. For their confidence to be reduced to a nub. Yes, all teachers need to improve, and a passionate new head will want to make their mark – but a bullish performance management approach upon entry is more likely to pull apart an already fragile team than galvanise a culture of reflection and continuous improvement.

Any incoming leader will naturally want to implement changes and make the school their own, but I'd be careful about using phrases like 'This is my school...' to assert your authority. Ask yourself – *is it your school?* At what point can you claim that? Do schools

ever become one person's belonging? To an already disempowered staff, phrases like that can rankle and have an insidious effect over time. Schools ultimately belong to their stakeholders, so if anything, it's surely 'our school'.

Take the time to explore the culture and community of your new school, and try not to leap to judgement. Undoubtedly, you need to lead, be true to yourself and shape the school. But listen to what staff have to say, try to understand the reasons behind their actions and don't blame them for the shortcomings of the previous leadership. They might not have

agreed with the way things were done either.

Most of all, I'd implore incoming leaders to keep an open mind and leave their labels at home. If you don't want staff to label you, don't label them. The process of leadership change takes time to recover from. Being judged at your most vulnerable can damage the confidence of even the best teachers, and we need them now more than ever. Please bear that in mind, and tread lightly as you make your mark...

**Emily Tenenbaum is a primary school teacher based in Hampshire**



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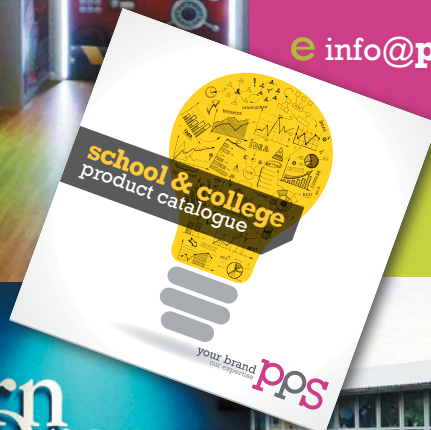
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