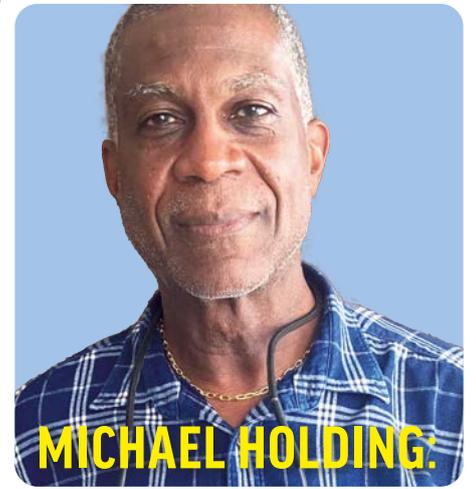


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INTERVIEW



**MICHAEL HOLDING:**

*"History has been whitewashed"*

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THE GUARDIAN, DAILY MAIL, THE SUN

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## FROM THE EDITOR

### “Welcome...”



Trust is the essential oil that an education system needs if it's to run smoothly. Parents have to trust that schools are going to educate and look after their children responsibly. Students have to trust in what their teachers tell them. Teachers would ideally like to be trusted to get on with their jobs. School leaders have to trust that their colleagues will work assiduously in accordance with the school's vision (and do what they're told).

If trust is in short supply, that's when the wheels start coming off.

What then, to make of the government's recently published Education White Paper and draft Schools Bill? Well, if you're fully signed up to the idea of an education system built entirely around multi academy *trusts* (apologies), then the future looks very rosy indeed. If you're yet to be convinced, then you may agree with the view put forth by John Galloway this issue (p51) that the justifications and evidence in favour of such a system remain somewhat hazy.

A surefire way of eroding trust fast is for one party to dismiss or minimise the concerns of another. As Debby Elley notes (p40), relationships with parents can be a regular flashpoint for this kind of thing, especially in the context of students with SEND. A policy of reactive acknowledgement and matter-of-fact responses will only get you so far before it starts actively making matters worse. Far better instead to get off on the right foot with free, frank, and above all, trusting conversations.

Such is our need for trust, that some of us can risk looking for it in the wrong places – be it scientific research with flimsy foundations (p14), curriculums that gloss over the awkward parts of history we'd rather ignore (p24) or colleagues who may not have our best interests at heart (p48).

But that's perhaps putting too bleak a spin on things. In the vast, *vast* majority of schools up and down the country, those supplies of trust are merrily flowing through corridors and pooling in classrooms. You'll have seen that for yourself over the course of your teaching career, and given the remarkable fortitude shown by so many teachers and students amid the pandemic, it seems safe to assume that that's not going to be changing any time soon.

Though it's still worth remembering what they say about the amount of time it can take to build up trust, and the rapid speed with which it can be lost...

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser  
callum.fauser@theteachco.com

## On board this issue:



Chris Curtis is an English teacher



Marie-Claire Bretherton is director of school improvement for Anthem Schools Trust



Conor McCrory is a science teacher and union representative



Alison Ollett is a drama and personal development teacher



Barry Mansfield is the Director of Halcyon London International School



Meena Wood is an educational consultant and trainer

### KEEP IN TOUCH!

Sign up for the weekly TS newsletter at [teachwire.net/newsletter](https://teachwire.net/newsletter)

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Explore algebra through the application of detective work



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People now place more importance on leaders behaving in ways consistent with a common purpose – and woe betide any leaders who fail to see it themselves...

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With ITT and CPD arrangements having recently undergone some major changes, now's the ideal time to reassess your career options

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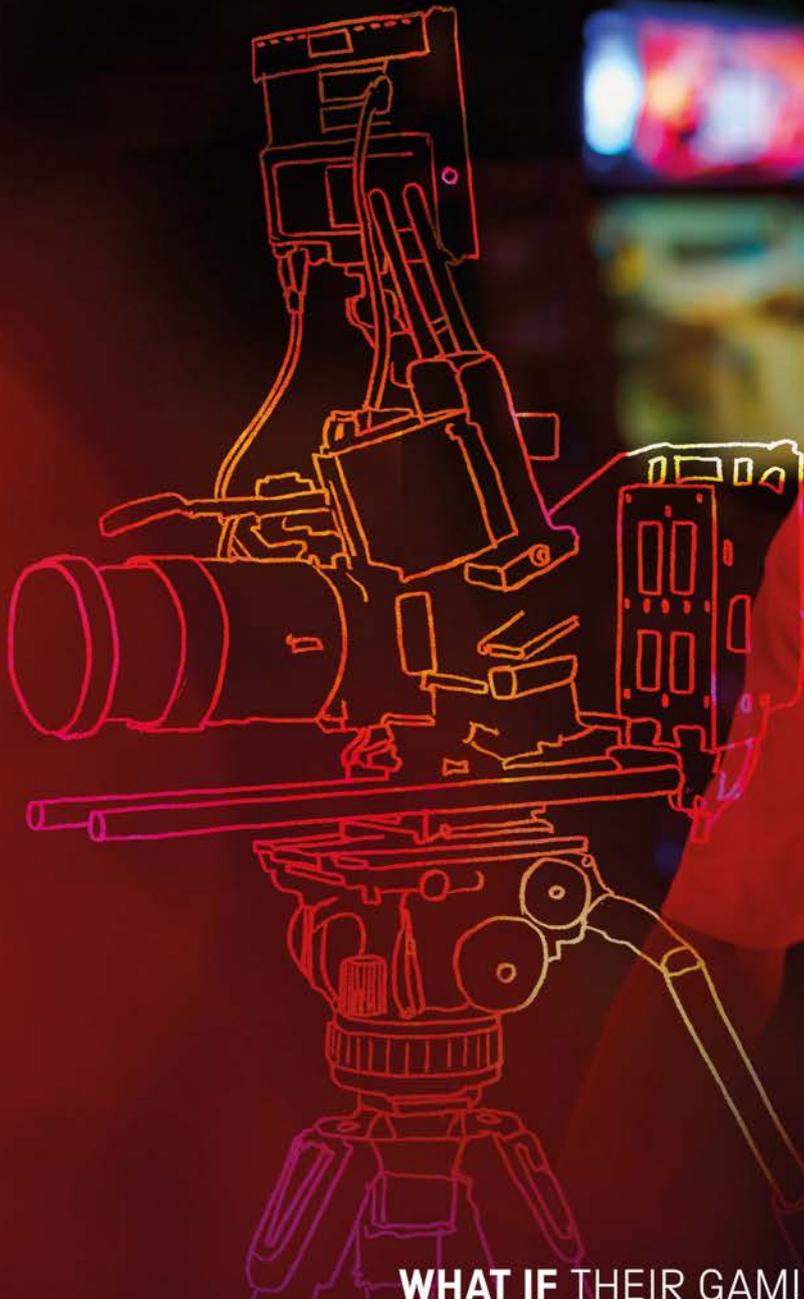
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# TECHNICIANS

THE DAVID SAINSBURY GALLERY

# The newsletter

Grab a coffee and spend five minutes exploring the lighter side of CPD...

## The UNINFORMED teacher's guide to...

### THE 1990S

If you're a teacher reading this, you don't need us to explain what the 90s were like because you were almost certainly there. Though perhaps not consciously if you're 25 or under.

In any case, some of you may have lately concealed the odd wry smile while observing students comparing notes on shoegaze bands, flared trousers and the 90s-era period setting of Channel 4's *Derry Girls*. Everything old inevitably becomes new again, and it seems the 90s are having A Moment, at least where generation Z's sartorial and cultural curiosities are concerned.

And where's the harm in that? Sure, the received wisdom that the era was all sunny optimism and carefree hedonism overlooks some severe economic recessions, horrendous conflicts in the Balkans, Rwanda and elsewhere and – depending on your political leanings – a Conservative government in office throughout most of it.

But when you consider that it was also a time blissfully free of online bullying, industrial-scale disinformation, global pandemics, even worse recessions, even more bloody conflicts, the threat of ruinous student loans and a ruthlessly cut-throat jobs market for everything – who can blame 'da yoof' for wanting to look back?



### DO SAY

"Tell me watcha want, watcha really, really want"

### DON'T SAY

"Ah, Rednex. Now there was a band..."



## BEAT THE BUDGET



**What's the targeted age range?**  
11-13

**What's on offer?**  
A handbook containing five poetry lessons and three 'Wild Challenges',

alongside a collection of poems and poetry links to be used in lessons, plus a homework worksheet.

**How might teachers use the resource?**  
To boost students' knowledge and appreciation of the natural world. The featured activities and guidance will see teachers and students taken through a process of observing, engaging and exploring nature, while simultaneously using poetry to encourage enjoyment of writing.

**Where are they available?**  
[literacytrust.org.uk/resources](http://literacytrust.org.uk/resources)

### What are we talking about?

Writing from Nature: a poetry resource from the National Literacy Trust and RSPB



## Think of a number...

### 92%

of maintained schools were ranked Outstanding or Good by Ofsted in January 2022, compared with 85% of academies

Source: Angel Solutions research commissioned by the Local Government Association

### 90%

of school governors and trustees describe themselves as white; only 8% combined identify as a different ethnic group

Source: GovernorHub survey of 4,006 serving school governors and trustees

### 30%

of designated safeguarding leads in schools admit to suffering distress or upset as a result of carrying out their roles

Source: Smoothwall

## ONE FOR THE WALL

"It's an artist's duty to reflect the times in which we live"

**Nina Simone**

### DON'T QUOTE ME...

"Reforms to education will help every child fulfil their potential wherever they live, raising standards and improving the quality of schools and higher education"

Queen's Speech 2022, delivered by HRH The Prince of Wales, Prince Charles



## Schools Bill unveiled

This month has seen the publication of the government's draft Schools Bill which, if passed, could spell some major changes for the education sector.

In line with the recently published Education White Paper, the legislation aims to facilitate the conversion of all schools into academies. Key to this will be the establishment of a new set of statutory 'academy trust standards'. These will replace the existing standards for academy trusts originally agreed at the time those trusts were created.

Helping to further those aims will be a new legal tool allowing LAs to request that some, or all of their schools join a MAT. Grammar schools and faith schools will receive protections that preserve their status and freedoms when joining MATs.

The bill will further grant Ofsted new powers to investigate schools suspected of operating illegally, and remove loopholes that have enabled some settings to not register as schools, despite children attending said settings for most or all of the school week. Also new is a legal requirement for LAs to keep registers of all children not in school, so as to prevent children from getting 'lost' from the education system.

The Teaching Regulation Agency will meanwhile see an expansion of its remit to ensure that 'unsuitable teachers' are barred from the profession, irrespective of whether they were employed in teaching roles at the time of their misconduct.

The Schools Bill can be read in full at [bit.ly/ts114-NL1](https://bit.ly/ts114-NL1)

▼ **SAVE THE DATE** ▼

## STATEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Forget the media-friendly soundbites – what else was in those announcements and letters you missed?



THE LETTER:

### [Education Secretary addresses Association of School and College Leaders conference](#)

**WHO?** Michael Fabricant MP

**WHAT?** Response to letter of complaint sent by NAHT general secretary Paul Whitman to Nadhim Zahawi

**WHEN?** 27th April 2022

"I thought it might be helpful if I make it clear that it was not my intention to cause offence, let alone 'demoralise' anyone as some have suggested, and I apologise if I have genuinely done so. I applaud the work of nurses, GPs, and others in the medical and teaching professions who worked long hours under difficult, and sometimes impossible conditions during the height of the COVID pandemic to keep us all safe and to educate our children. We all have a debt to them which will be difficult to repay.

In a lengthy and wide-ranging interview with BBC Television News, I explained that I was neither judging nor chastising the minority of nurses or teachers who chose to unwind with a few work colleagues after a long shift. Nor did I suggest that any were drunk. I know of none who were so. Of course, I am well aware that having a drink after a shift would be against the rules, but I was aware of a number of instances where this had happened, albeit in a minority of cases.

Since that interview, a number of other cases have been brought to my attention, which is not surprising given that there are some 500,000 nurses and 625,000 teachers throughout Britain. Nevertheless, to my knowledge, the number of after work drinks remain a small minority. My error in one part of the programme – which was repeated on TV – was to give the impression this was general practice by nurses and teachers. This was never the case."



THE TAKE:

### [ASCL comments on Ofqual's 3-year plan for qualifications and proposed use of technology in assessments](#)

**WHO?** Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders

**WHEN?** 4th May 2022

"We are delighted that Ofqual is going to look at new approaches to exams, including the use of technology, and that it intends to work with the awarding organisations to this end.

Our current reliance on a pen-and-paper exam system, organised at an industrial scale with Fort Knox-style security arrangements around the transportation and storing of papers, is hopelessly outdated and ripe for reform. The recent experience of the pandemic has shown just how vulnerable it is to unexpected events. If online assessment had been available, it might not have been necessary to cancel all summer exams for two years in a row."

8 JUNE 2022 The Northern Education Show | 7-8 JULY 2022 Festival of Education | 10 NOVEMBER 2022 The Education People Show

### 8 JUNE 2022

The Northern Education Show  
Bolton Whites Hotel  
[northerneducationshow.co.uk](https://northerneducationshow.co.uk)

Education decision-makers in the north of England will find plenty of interest at this free-to-attend mix of informative talks, including updates from likes of Ofsted and the NAHT, professional networking opportunities and an exhibition space featuring some 70 service and product suppliers. A sister event, The Eastern Education Show, then follows on 16th June at Newmarket Racecourse.

### 7-8 JULY 2022

Festival of Education  
Wellington College  
[educationfest.co.uk](https://educationfest.co.uk)

Following a COVID-prompted two-year hiatus, the 12th Festival of Education will once again be held at Wellington College this summer. The organisers plan to host stimulating talks and presentations by more than 200 speakers drawn from across the profession, and attract a crowd of more than 5,000 educators to what remains perhaps the most relaxed and convivial event on the education calendar.

### 10 NOVEMBER 2022

The Education People Show  
Kent Event Centre, Maidstone  
[theeducationpeopleshow.co.uk](https://theeducationpeopleshow.co.uk)

Formerly the EduKent EXPO & Conference, the retooled Education People Show is pitched as a free-to-attend, major networking event for school leaders and policymakers across Kent and neighbouring counties, combining inspiring keynotes with engaging workshops and an extensive exhibition of leading school and academy suppliers.



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# Get Into Film



**10 THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU**  
(1999, 12, 94 MINS)

### CURRICULUM LINKS:

English, PSHE

Bringing Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* to the setting of an American high school, this fast-paced and very funny film brilliantly combines the Bard's dialogue with modern teenage anxieties.

When new boy Cameron arrives at Padua High School, he instantly falls for Bianca Stratford – but his hopes of winning her heart take a tumble when he discovers Bianca will never be allowed to date by her father, at least until her rebellious older sister Kat has done so first. And so, without her even knowing it, the search for a suitable boyfriend for Kat begins...

### Discussion questions:

- What are some of the main themes in *The Taming of the Shrew*? Why is an American high school a good setting in which to explore them?
- How are certain themes, such as social hierarchy and sexism, explored within the film?
- Is *10 Things I Hate About You* a film that can be enjoyed without knowing anything about Shakespeare? If so, how does it achieve this?
- Discuss the scene where Patrick follows Kat to the bookshop – what is the subtext of their exchange, as evidenced through the dialogue, camera shots and the scene's setting?

**Head online to [intofilm.org](http://intofilm.org) to stream the film and download our fantastic film guide, in which you'll find Teacher Notes on these discussion questions and much more.**



## Retweets

**Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?**

### Jonathan Simons @jonathansimons

Whoever could have thought that a company with no track record or expertise in education, who lowballed their bid and therefore had no cash to run the programme, who aggressively pushed all risk onto tuition partners and who built a terrible IT platform, would not be a success.

### Jonathan Mountstevens @MrMountstevens

Is it ok for me to teach students about the fundamental British value of the rule of law or would that now put me in breach of the requirement for political impartiality in the classroom?

**Follow us via [@teachsecondary](https://twitter.com/teachsecondary) – and let us know what you're thinking!**

# TEACHER TALES

True stories from the education chalkface

### I made my excuses...

While patrolling the school's 'out of bounds' area, as I did during most morning break times, I encountered a young female and asked her why she was in a prohibited area, and why she was wearing a plain black jumper, rather than one with the school logo on it. She replied, "Oh, I'm sorry - I didn't think those rules applied to supply teachers..."

### Going all in

It was a Y7 group's first introduction to the rugby scrum, where positions were usually allocated according to size. The boy chosen to be scrum half was told to put the ball into the tunnel, follow it closely, and then pick it up and pass to his backs once the ball came out the back half of the scrum.

Either the instructions were unclear, or he misinterpreted them. He dutifully placed the ball into the front row tunnel, and immediately proceeded to crawl in after it, through flailing

legs and boots. When he finally emerged through the legs of the No.8 player, he proclaimed "I'm not sure I want to play this position any more..."

### Here's a tip

Our headteacher was very proud of his yellow Citroen 2CV, and would often peel back its roof on sunny summer mornings. Unfortunately, one such morning saw him forget to close it. One fierce thunderstorm later, he returned to the car to find it filled with rainwater.

So it was that staff later glimpsed through the staff room window the sight of the car being tipped fully onto its side by four burly sixth formers, trying to empty it under the headteacher's supervision...

**Find more true tales and amusing anecdotes at [schoolhumour.co.uk](http://schoolhumour.co.uk)**

## A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

### #21 FICTIONAL OBJECTS

Give one or all of the objects on the other side of this card a meaningful role in a short story.

Draw a scene from the story in which the object or objects appear.

A Few Minutes of Design FICTIONAL OBJECTS



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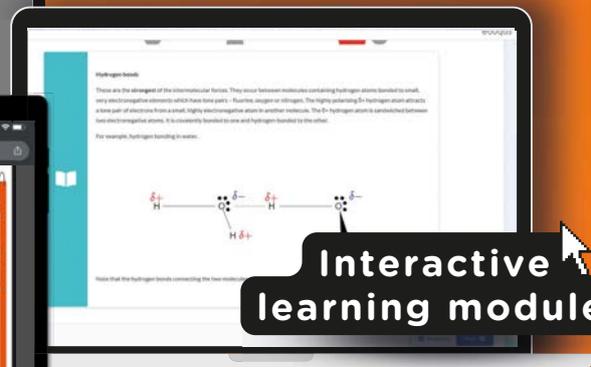
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# The Vocab Clinic

Support your students towards better language use, with the help of our resident word-wizard, **Alex Quigley**...

## TRY THIS TODAY: 'HIGHER OR LOWER'

When writing in school, pupils will commonly not write with a close focus on selecting the right word for the job. To help address this, you can draw upon the classic game show, 'Play Your Cards Right' and apply the strategy 'higher or lower'.

Put simply, this involves presenting pupils with a range of useful synonyms or alternative word choices. Given a range of word choices on a scale – such as 'blue', 'sad', 'glum', 'despondent' and 'melancholic' – they can play your cards right and select a word from a point in the scale. In history, for example, you might discuss whether a battle was 'damaging', 'devastating' or 'cataclysmic'.



## Cracking the academic code

A key concept that defines the 'academic code' of school writing is that style and word choices are more formal than those typically found in everyday communication. It can therefore be helpful to teach pupils how to make appropriate writing choices with the aid of a 'formality scale'.

We want them to avoid using slang, sloppy spelling, or fragments of sentences, whilst selecting more sophisticated vocabulary (e.g. 'perspire' in place of 'sweat'). The differences between words can be subtle, though. For instance, a student could begin a sentence with 'firstly', 'first', or 'now', with each choice representing a different point along the formality scale.



## DO THEY KNOW?

It took almost 50 years to complete the first Oxford English Dictionary

## ONE FOR: FOOD AND NUTRITION STUDENTS

### BLANCHING

**Derives from:** Old French, 'blanchir', meaning 'to whiten and clean' ('blanc' being French for 'white')

**Means:** A method of speedy cooking in hot water that retains colour and flavour enzymes

**Related terms:** Boiling, parboiling, scald, whiten, decolourise, etiolate

**Note:** 'Blanch' has broadened in meaning to convey a person being shocked and turning pale



**I DON'T THINK IT MEANS WHAT YOU THINK IT MEANS...**

### DISPLACEMENT

**In maths/physics**

The changing position of an object, represented by the formula  $x = xf - x0$

**In geography**

A particular form of migration where people are forced to move against their will



### One word at a time

The term 'population' is commonly known, used in geography, history, statistics and most corners of the school curriculum. Indeed, you could say it is 'popular' in the classroom...

We commonly define the word as 'a distinct group of individuals, typically with some shared characteristics'. The word 'population' is Latin in origin, deriving from the root '*populus*' meaning 'people' (with the root 'pop' often commonly seen in words like 'popular').

In Roman times, popularity was considered a little vulgar; appealing to the '*populi*' meant communicating with illiterate, common people.

Today, those negative connotations have fallen away, leaving 'population' as a versatile academic term and 'popular' is a definitively positive adjective.



Alex Quigley is a former teacher and the author of *Closing the Reading Gap* and *Closing the Vocabulary Gap*; he also works for the Education Endowment Foundation as National Content Manager

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## [ MATHS PROBLEM ]

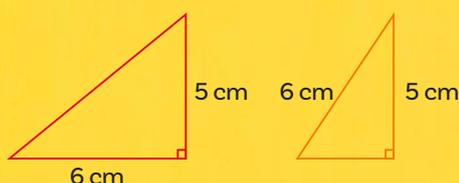
# PYTHAGORAS'S THEOREM

When using Pythagoras's Theorem, students often muddle up calculating a hypotenuse and calculating a leg.

In this lesson, students distinguish a hypotenuse from a leg by repeatedly switching between them.

## THE DIFFICULTY

What's the same and what's different about these two triangles?



Students might pick up on the different colours, that they are both right-angled, that the two given lengths are the same but differently placed (6 cm is a leg in the red triangle and a hypotenuse in the orange triangle), and that the areas and perimeters are different.

Which triangle has the larger perimeter? It isn't necessary to do any calculations to reason that the red triangle is larger than the orange one. The largest side in a right-angled triangle is always the hypotenuse. In the orange triangle, this is 6 cm, so the perimeter is

$6 + 5 +$  something **smaller** than 6 cm. In the red triangle, the perimeter is  $6 + 5 +$  something **larger** than 6 cm. So, the red triangle has the larger perimeter.

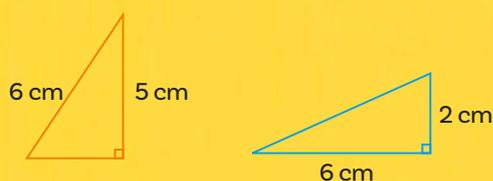
Work out the perimeters of these triangles.

The missing sides are red:  $\sqrt{6^2 + 5^2} = \sqrt{61} = 7.810$  cm (3 dp) and orange:  $\sqrt{6^2 - 5^2} = \sqrt{11} = 3.317$  cm (3 dp), so the perimeters are red: 18.810 cm (3 dp) and orange: 14.317 cm (3 dp).

Watch out for students being unsure about whether they need to square and **add** or square and **subtract**.

## THE SOLUTION

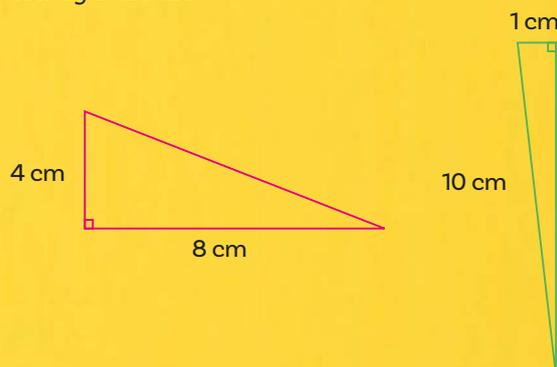
With the red and orange triangles, we could see without calculating which one must have the larger perimeter. But that isn't always the case. Which of these triangles has the larger perimeter?



Students might compare the 5 cm with the 2 cm and conclude that the orange one has the greater perimeter, but this is wrong because the 6 cm is the hypotenuse in the orange triangle but a leg in the blue triangle.

This time we need to calculate. We already know the perimeter of the orange triangle, but the blue one is new, and its perimeter comes to  $\sqrt{6^2 + 2^2} + 6 + 2 = 14.325$ , which is just slightly **longer** than the orange perimeter - too small to detect by eye.

Now try these two:



These are very close: pink perimeter = 20.944 cm and green perimeter = 20.950 cm (3dp). Students might struggle to see that the 10 cm side in the green one is a hypotenuse and not a leg. It must be the hypotenuse, because it is **opposite the right angle**.

## Checking for understanding

To assess students' understanding of Pythagoras calculations, ask them to order the triangles on the task sheet (available at [bit.ly/ts114-mp1](http://bit.ly/ts114-mp1)) by perimeter, starting with the smallest.

The answer is  $C < A < B < H < G < F < E < D$ .



Colin Foster (@colinfoster77) is a Reader in Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics Education at Loughborough University. He has written many books and articles for mathematics teachers. [foster77.co.uk](http://foster77.co.uk)

# Teens, genes and means

Could genetics inform our understanding about the learning process in ways that have stayed hidden until now? **Conor McCrory** is yet to be convinced...

**I**s academic ability fixed or are students blank slates? Do schools make a big difference to students' lives, or is their destiny already settled?

Most educators will probably hold more nuanced views than those implied by the dichotomous questions I've just posed, but the notion that some pupils are 'just good at school' because of gifts granted to them by their biology isn't new. Such perspectives have waxed and waned in popularity over years, if not decades, alongside changing trends in educational philosophy and evolving social and political attitudes.

As a primary school pupil in early 90s Belfast, I managed to navigate my way through the 11-plus exam used to select entry to Grammar schools. We were never told that we were 'genetically gifted' as such, but there was still a subtle implication that those who passed were simply 'academically good', while those who didn't, well ... maybe weren't.

That said, we were rigorously drilled for at least a year prior to taking the exams. Evidently, they didn't believe in our 'innate ability' enough to leave things solely in the hands of biology, and must have felt out environment had *something* to do with it...

## 'Genetically informed schooling'

The 11-plus may be broadly out of favour today, but notions that school performance is rooted in biology have received a

boost in recent years. In 2013, then DfE special advisor Dominic Cummings made headlines for suggesting to his boss at the time, Michael Gove, that genetics outweighs teaching (see [bit.ly/ts114-tp1](http://bit.ly/ts114-tp1)). Gove himself was then the subject of another 'genes versus education' story later that year, when *The Independent*

**“If a driving instructor is helping a learner to drive, will they teach them about the workings of the internal combustion engine?”**

reported on meetings he'd held with a noted 'IQ genes' professor (see [bit.ly/ts114-tp2](http://bit.ly/ts114-tp2)).

The professor in question was Robert Plomin, a psychologist and behavioural geneticist at Kings College London. Plomin has argued that genetic variation goes a long way towards explaining the differences we see between students' achievement at school, more so than even differences in school or life experience. Hence the bold assertion he made in his 2018 book *Blueprint: How DNA Makes Us Who We Are*, that "Schools matter, but they don't make a difference."

In an earlier 2013 book, *G Is For Genes* – co-authored with psychologist and University of York professor Kathryn Asbury – Plomin had argued in favour of 'genetically informed schooling'. In Plomin and Asbury's telling, a child's genotype could be used to

calculate their risk of developing behavioural and learning disorders, such as ADHD or dyslexia, and develop individual learning plans emphasising students' strengths and weaknesses. They even went so far as to advocate that teachers be trained in the 'genetics of learning'.

## Limits to potential

The historical links between intelligence testing and eugenics has led some to dismiss any research into the genetics of intelligence as being an inherently right-wing project – a view that has heavily influenced the critical reception of Plomin's work. More recently, however, several new books from authors aligned with the so-called 'hereditarian left' have attempted to 'rescue' the concept of educational genetics from the political right wing.

Fredrik deBoer's *The Cult of Smart* and Kathryn Paige Harden's *The Genetic Lottery* both accept the premise that at least *some* aspects of an individual's intelligence is attributable to inherited genetic difference. deBoer's central argument is that we should accept how students have different proclivities and get over them, and focus less on measuring a limited

conception of intelligence and type of academic pursuit that could be described as the 'cult of smart'.

deBoer envisions a society where individuals have their needs met and can flourish, regardless of their academic ability. I can't argue with him on the latter point, but I'm wary of taking population level statements and applying them to individuals. I'm also anxious about the implications of accepting limits to a person's potential.

For Harden, genetics helps us 'see' who needs the most help. Her view may be backed up by a recent genome-wide Association Study of 3 million individuals (see [go.nature.com/3xjMBKk](http://go.nature.com/3xjMBKk)), which found that 12% to 16% of the variance in educational attainment (the number of school years completed) was associated with individuals' 'polygenic index' – a kind of DNA-based profile. Yet while Harden considers these sorts of insights to be of primary moral importance for the promotion of equality, the study's authors acknowledge that they "Cannot distinguish whether the associations are causal or not."

## Environmental interventions

Writer John Gillott counters that it isn't clear, in an educational context, how genetics helps us 'see' who needs help. In his words, "The phenotype is all we need" – the phenotype being the observable characteristics of a student. To that end, observations of

## Join the CONVERSATION

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students by teachers, parents and other education specialists can tell us more directly about learners' needs than a polygenic index ever could.

Harden's former supervisor, psychologist Eric Turkheimer, believes that many of the claims made concerning how genes relate to complex aspects of human lives, such as school outcomes, are far too strong to be sustained by current scientific knowledge. For him, there are no genes, or groups of genes that can influence complex human outcomes in clear-cut ways – especially not in ways where we can see what's actually happening.

The processes involved are very different to those

responsible for genetic conditions such as phenylketonuria, in which a single gene variant will prevent a person from breaking down phenylalanine (present in some foods and artificial sweeteners) and can lead to brain damage if left untreated. In this case, the required treatment is an environmental one that entails avoiding foods with

phenylalanine, prompting Turkheimer to wonder why, if it can be made to go away *environmentally*, in what sense it can be said to be a *genetic* condition.

The corollary here would be that if there were 'environmental interventions' in education that could be shown to produce tangible gains, to what degree would genetic knowledge add to our understanding of said interventions? It's a fair question, and one that I never felt deBoer or Harden's books quite answer, interesting and well-written though they are.

### A bridge too far?

None of this is to say that there isn't any value to such studies. However, the causal chain between genes and the sorts of outcomes we care about in schools is so long that many other causal factors will inevitably enter the mix, to an extent that will muddy the importance of any biological factors to test scores or grades.

In relation to the

everyday practice of classroom teachers or school administrators, they're most likely of limited, even negligible use.

Let me try an analogy. If a driving instructor is helping a learner to drive, will they teach them about the workings of the internal combustion engine and the physical laws of motion? Probably not. Would the learner's time be better spent simply learning about the procedural and practical aspects of driving a car and navigating the roads? Probably yes.

I'm not saying there's no value in studying lower level processes at a biological (or in our analogy, physical) level. But by – wrongly – focusing on this 'level' of analysis, we risk failing to see the wood for the trees.

In 1997, the philosopher John Bruer stated that attempts to ground classroom practice in neuroscience was a 'Bridge too far', and still felt this to be the case 20 years later. He believed that better insights could be had from observation and understanding grounded in cognitive psychology, which has aided instructional design and problem solving in a way that neuroscience had yet to convincingly do. He maintained that any neuroscience findings would have to cross two bridges – one from neuroscience to psychology, and another from psychology to education.

This biology teacher thinks the same is likely true for genetics and education. Will those bridges ever be crossed? I'm not holding my breath.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Conor McCrory is a science teacher and union representative based in London

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A curriculum built on coherence, high expectations, responsive teaching and learning, metacognitive learning, identity, awe and wonder

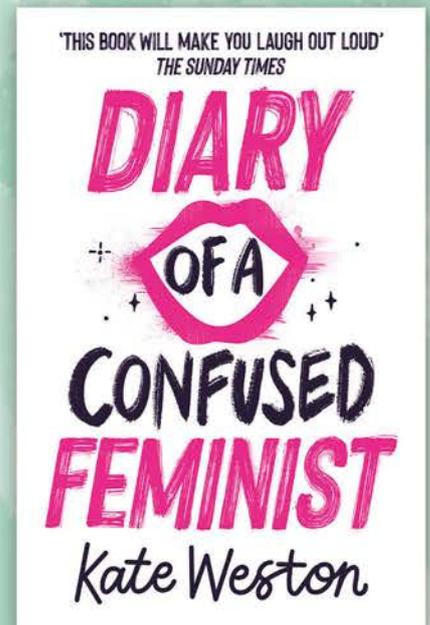
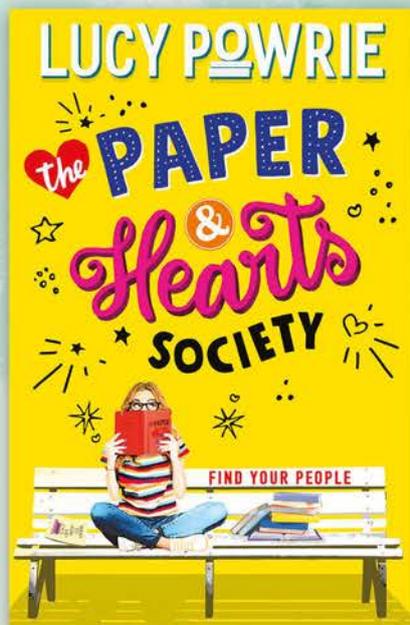
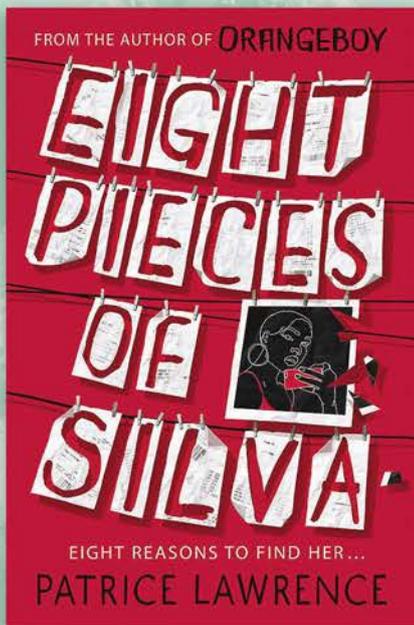
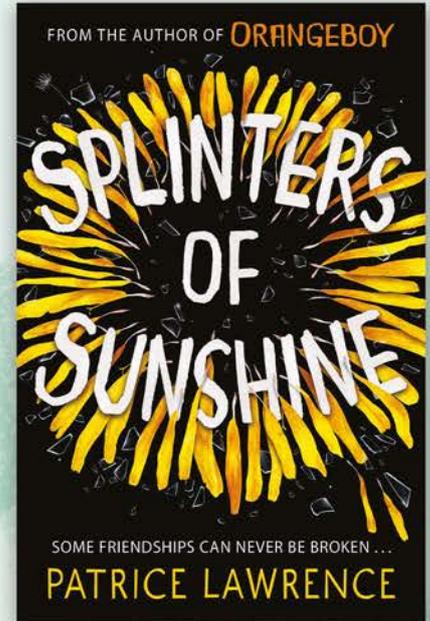
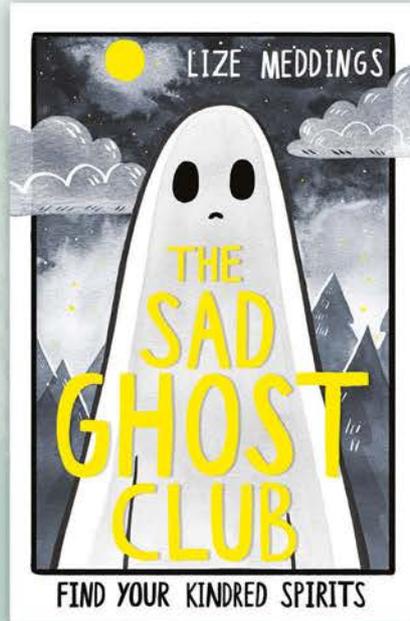
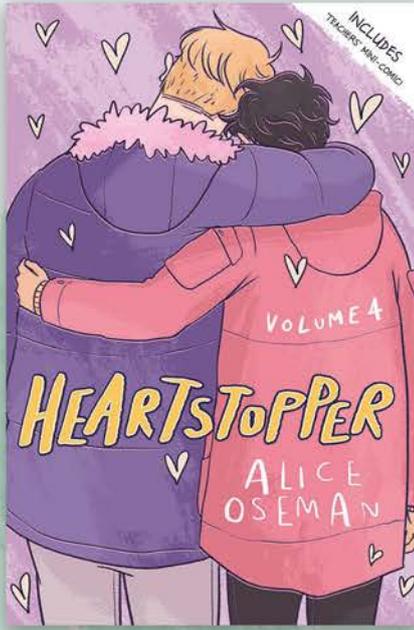
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# 3 things we've learnt about... WHAT THE PANDEMIC HAS (AND HASN'T) CHANGED

The coming of COVID-19 undoubtedly altered some aspects of teaching forever – but at the same time, it didn't transform everything...

**1 Changes in behaviour**  
When students fully returned to school, teachers had mixed views on how multiple lockdowns might affect their in-school behaviour. One year on, the picture remains cloudy.

Before the pandemic, 75% of secondary teachers reported having to remove at least one student from a lesson during the spring term due to misbehaviour. Post-pandemic, this figure has dropped to 67%. So has behaviour improved?

Possibly not, since despite fewer students being removed from lessons, more teachers are telling us that their lessons are being interrupted by lateness. In January 2019, 66% of secondary teachers said that student lateness had interrupted their lessons; in 2022, that's up to 82%.

One phenomenon that seems consistent, however, is behaviour incidents related to fire alarms, with one in three teachers saying that their students had deliberately set off a false alarm in just the last term alone – no change from when we asked that back in 2019...

**2 Less time with the red pen?**  
Mention the word 'marking' to teachers, and many will shudder. Yet recent evidence suggests that time spent marking – once the bane of teachers' workload – is actually starting to decrease.

Firstly, we've seen a change in marking policies. Back in 2018, 62% of teachers told us that their school's marking policy dictated the frequency with which they should be marking books. Among secondary teachers this rose to 72%, but four years on, that percentage has dropped dramatically to just 48%.

As you'd expect, this shift has had a marked impact on overall workload, with many teachers now reporting a drop in the amount of time they spend marking outside the classroom.

In the pre-pandemic days of early March 2020, 60% of secondary teachers reported spending three or more hours marking outside their classrooms each week. Now, just 45% of teachers say the same.

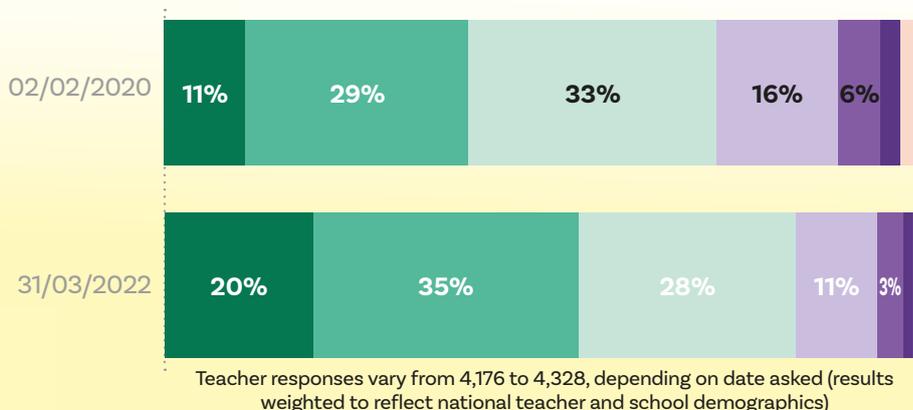
**3 Observations are up and down**  
In 2018, 10% of secondary teachers told us that they had undergone classroom observations within the previous week. In 2022, that's up to 21%.

Does that mean observations are back? Not quite – in 2018, 91% of teachers said they had been observed during the current academic year, but in 2022, so far just 84% of teachers have been able to say the same. It appears that some schools are making up for lost time, while others are yet to restart properly.

Approaches to observations have also changed over the past four years. Fewer teachers are confirming that their schools grade lesson observations, with just 12% of secondary teachers telling us that that's the case for them – representing a fall from 27% in 2018.

Within that 12%, however, only 3% describe actually being happy with the practice, while the remainder would far rather see their schools get rid of it altogether!

## HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND MARKING WORK OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM EACH WEEK?



- Less than one hour
- One or two hours
- Three or four hours
- Five or six hours
- Seven or eight hours
- Nine or ten hours
- Over 10 and up to 15 hours
- Over 15 and up to 20 hours
- Over 20 hours

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## KEY POINTS

#### Comprehensive

Complete coverage of all mandatory and optional units, structured to match the specification and provide the information required to build knowledge

#### Practice, practice, practice

Plenty of exam and NEA assignment practice questions, with online answers / mark schemes to develop skills and test understanding

#### Confidence-building

A range of opportunities to facilitate both formative and summative assessment, to ensure students are ready for the internal and external assessments

#### Supports all learners

Designed to be easy and straightforward to use for students of all abilities and teachers with varying levels of experience and confidence

April 2022 has served up some vivid examples of just how important standards, consistency and a common purpose really are for leaders – and the negative repercussions that can quickly ensue once those qualities are abandoned...

# Vic Goddard



**I write these words during a very strange few days for the country and our profession. In just a single week, we've seen the Prime Minister issued a fine for breaking laws he'd been responsible for implementing; an MP blithely inform the world that at the height of the pandemic, 'a few glasses of wine' were being shared in school and hospital staffrooms at the end of difficult days; and the annual conference of the profession's largest teaching union conference creating unexpected headlines.**

In one way or another, these three events all involve influential leaders. We all have our own expectations of what good leadership is, be it in our professional or personal lives. When those expectations aren't met by those in authority, it will inevitably have an impact.

## Leadership expectations

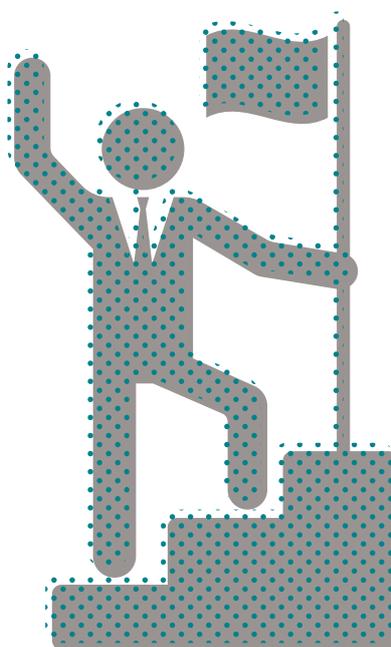
Recent events have made me wonder whether the world has now changed so much that we have to expect different standards of behaviour from our leaders.

Thankfully, there has been a positive, albeit slow shift away from white, middle-aged men forming our default image of what political and community leaders should look like. (Yes, I'm aware of the irony of me writing that.) Yet while we might have moved on from 'Great Man' theories of leadership, we still need to consider the expectations we should have of our leaders as we advance further into the 21st Century, particularly in light of the challenges presented by the pandemic.

It's a frequent habit of mine to see what's being written in business-oriented books and articles, while searching for parallels in my own professional life. That's how I came across a report (see [mck.co/3LhQfbO](https://mck.co/3LhQfbO)) produced in late 2021 by McKinsey – the world's largest and oldest management consultancy company – outlining what it saw as the five key priorities for business leaders after the pandemic.

According to the report's authors, the guiding principles of business leaders should revolve around focusing on sustainability strategies; leveraging the transformational potential of cloud computing; cultivating and developing existing talent; delivering outcomes more quickly; and operating with a clearer sense of purpose.

Personally, I haven't got the space to address all those areas, despite them resonating with schools as much as business organisation – but I do want to focus on operating with purpose.



## Betraying the common purpose

In a survey of employees contained in the McKinsey report, almost two thirds stated that COVID-19 had caused them to reflect on their purpose in life, while nearly half confirmed that they were reconsidering the kind of work they do.

Those sorts of findings have implications for all leaders. People who live their purpose at work are more productive than those who don't. They're also healthier, more resilient, and more likely to stay.

It's easy to see how behaviour from influential leaders that works against this kind of common purpose generates disquiet. The country previously got behind the common purpose of controlling the pandemic, expending a great deal of collective effort and personal sacrifice in the process. The betrayal of this is what lies at the heart of the outrage that many people continue to feel over 'Partygate'.

When Mr Fabricant attempts to deflect media attention away from lawbreaking by government officials by attacking whole professions united in a common purpose, he should rightly expect a backlash (though I suspect he was rather happy with the diversion his remarks served to create).

And when the NEU plays into the hands of the mainstream media by allowing the genuinely important work it's doing to be overshadowed by a motion on the war in Ukraine, it shouldn't be surprised if members who want their voices heard on matters such as workload are left unhappy.

Post-pandemic, people are now placing higher expectations on leaders to behave in ways consistent with a wider common purpose. If we see evidence to the contrary reflected in their behaviour, then their leadership will – and indeed should – be called into question.



Vic Goddard is co-principal at Passmores Academy – as seen on Channel 4's *Educating Essex* – and author of *The Best Job in the World* (Independent Thinking Press, £14.99)



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Far from being mere ‘idle chatter’, a solid grounding in oracy can help students prosper in all manner of unforeseen and far-reaching ways

# Melissa Benn



**This March, I attended a conference that was buzzing with talk about talk. Voice 21 – a charity set up to encourage oracy in schools – was holding its first in-person, post-pandemic conference.**

Voice 21 was originally co-founded by education leader Oli de Botton and Peter Hyman after the latter – a former speechwriter for Tony Blair – left government to enter teaching, eventually setting up the School 21 free school in East London.

School 21 was built on some of the principles Hyman had learned in politics, particularly the notion that anyone able to express themselves eloquently and forcefully is more likely to do well in the world. Hyman understood that officials’ obsession with literacy targets had missed something crucial about how the world of work, and public life in general, actually operates in practice.

## Reinventing the wheel

From School 21 came Voice 21, a charity that has gone on to develop primary and secondary oracy programmes that have been used around the country.

I can still recall an early Voice 21 event held at the Houses of Parliament, where several Y7 and Y8 students spoke from the podium about their life experiences, and hopes and dreams for the future. Their contributions were clear, compelling, moving and, quite frankly, more impressive than many speeches I’d heard from professional politicians.

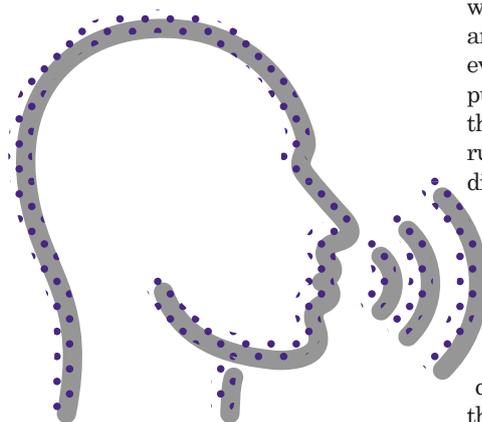
Voice 21 now operates in 604 schools nationwide, offering three tailored programmes (or ‘pathways’ as the charity calls them) on classroom practice, curriculum design and leadership development.

While listening to the spirited debate among teachers, schools leaders and policymakers on matters ranging from vocabulary to curriculum expansion at the organisation’s conference, it occurred to me that Voice 21 is cleverly reinventing the wheel for the modern era.

## Part of the brand

There’s nothing new about emphasising the spoken word in education. The practice has a storied history, with well-resourced private schools having long grasped just how important oracy really is. At schools like Eton, the promise of learning how to not just express your ideas, but project yourself in a larger than life way is a key part of their brand. It seems to have worked, after a fashion, for our present Prime Minister.

Perhaps less well known is that state education has also played host to remarkable educators who understood the power of the spoken word and encouraged ‘student voice’ in all its forms. Figures like Alex Bloom, headteacher of St George-in-the-East – a richly creative and experimental secondary modern that opened in London’s impoverished East End in 1945.



The innovative work of Bloom and his colleagues – who encouraged pupils to trust their own views and participate in the running of the school itself – was immortalised in the book and film, *To Sir, with Love*, the latter starring Sidney Poitier.

The need to encourage children’s talk was also central to the seminal Plowden Report of 1967, as well as the important work of Professor Robin Alexander and the Cambridge Primary Review.

## Sound principles

In more recent years, however, this rich tradition has been dismissed by government ministers as mere ‘idle chatter.’ Yet Voice 21’s continued work shows how sound educational principles never go away, but have a habit of returning in new forms. The charity deploys contemporary political priorities to emphasise the ways in which oracy can promote ‘social mobility’ for disadvantaged students, and help foster success in the workplace.

That’s all well and good, but we could still take lessons from the more radical aspects of our progressive inheritance, and expand our ideas of what ‘student voice’ really means. If school is meant to be the place where we learn about how society works and how to contribute effectively at every level, then why shouldn’t pupils have a hand in ‘co-creating’ their own curriculum and helping to run the schools they attend, like they did at St George-in-the-East?

With that broader vision in place, we could move beyond simply producing more eloquent graduates and effective team workers, to preparing our children and teens to be questioning and confident citizens of the future.

# We owe our students THE TRUTH

School curriculums shouldn't be in the business of propagating myths and erasing the contributions of key historical figures, writes **Meena Wood**

**I**n the UK, school students tend to be more familiar with Britain's involvement in the abolition of slavery in the 19th century than with the financial benefits Britain gained from the slave trade over the preceding two centuries.

Any so-called 'values-led' curriculum should include a close examination of the British Empire and its impact on peoples from Africa, Asia and closer to home, Ireland. One of the conclusions reached by the 2018 review of the Windrush scandal by Wendy Williams was that "The Windrush scandal was in part able to happen because of the public's and officials' poor understanding of Britain's colonial history." (see [bit.ly/ts114-mc1](http://bit.ly/ts114-mc1))

## A nuanced narrative

The reality is that whoever gets to choose what 'source evidence' is studied will get to determine the 'values' and shape the narrative our students ultimately end up learning.

Winston Churchill is widely admired and applauded for his leadership during WWII, but he also contributed to notable human rights atrocities. As the Indian politician and author Shashi Tharoor has observed, (see [wapo.st/37xNKNm](http://wapo.st/37xNKNm)), during the great Bengal famine of 1943, millions died as the British government diverted rice stocks to Europe and other Empire territories. When questioned about the harms this had caused,

Churchill blamed the resulting famine on Indians "breeding like rabbits."

Generations of young people have since been taught that Britain was an intrinsic force for good against Nazi tyranny, saving the World from the forces of evil in both the First and Second World Wars. Many young people therefore now believe that the British Empire was a force for only good, and that WW2 was 'won by the British', rather than by a massive, worldwide coalition.

Our children have the right to be taught that history is a multifaceted prism that heavily influences the lives we lead in the present. And they certainly deserve a more nuanced narrative than that currently being taught through textbooks.

## Ignorance and distortion

In history and geography, students ought to learn of the unity among European nations that emerged in the wake of their combined fight against tyranny and fascism; about the critical role played by Polish, ANZAC, African and Asian troops, and how the outcome of WWII led to the establishment of the European Union and the gradual dismantling of the British Empire. These are themes that continue to have urgent relevance today.

Following the Brexit vote in 2016, I met with a class of predominantly White British students in my school. I remember seeing 13-year-olds who were jubilant about

'leaving Europe' and goading another student to "Go back home to Poland" – remarks that reduced him to tears. The students' reasoned that their grandparents had died freeing Britain from the Europeans, and that they now they wanted their 'freedom from Europe'!

So it was that a mishmash of ignorance and distorted history influenced these young students into meting out racist taunts on fellow students hailing from Eastern Europe. Given the complexity and sensitivity of such discussions, what can we do to ensure a more inclusive, informed and genuinely diverse, values-led whole school curriculum?

## Real inclusivity

Firstly, we can't simply continue 'celebrating diversity' through iconic figures such as Mandela and Gandhi, or by scheduling activities during Black History month – however well-intentioned these might be.

Implementing *real* inclusivity and diversity means consistently respecting the UK's hidden heritage and broadening all students' horizons. Global cultural influences are best threaded through a curriculum that showcases prominent achievements by a diverse range of individuals across all subjects.

There's certainly no shortage of credible and inspirational role models. In science, we can look to Mae Jemison, who in 1992 became the first Black woman to

journey into space. In mathematics, we can turn to Musa al-Khowarizmi, who first assigned 'zero' the value between -1 and +1 that we still use today. In history, there's the Indian princess Sophia Duleep Singh – god-daughter of Queen Victoria and a key figure in the suffragette movement, who led the 'Black Friday' protest for women's rights alongside Emmeline Pankhurst.

A knowledge-rich curriculum can be powerful, but we must also enable White, Black and Asian children alike to learn about the myriad different facets of their history and respective heritages. White British students need to know about the contributions made by other nations to the UK's economy and society. When learning about the British Empire, are students made aware of the legacy left by East India Company employees, who 'acquired' riches and invested them in some of Britain's finest 18th century buildings and statues?

## A polarised view

In GCSE history, students will likely acquire different knowledge perspectives depending on the exam board selected. This can

potentially result in students studying the legacy of colonialism, Windrush, the East Africa Asian exodus and Jewish migration under one exam board, and the Weimar Republic, Nazi Germany, the American West and the British Empire under another.

Perpetuating a polarised view of Britain's role in global history will only serve to

create further schisms throughout society, thus worsening the risks presented by entrenched prejudice and racist attitudes. This runs counter to the sense of global citizenship we should be trying to cultivate – particularly now, when the world is shrinking in terms of communication and culture, just as its geopolitical boundaries are being redrawn.

Inclusion training and checklists can help raise awareness and provide a good starting point for discussions around diversity, but how likely is it that such activities will fundamentally change students' attitudes? How can we evaluate their

impact if what students learn for their secondary examinations remains essentially static?

### Cultural intelligence

Exploring the portrayals of racism in *Of Mice and Men*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Othello* remains vital, but just as important is the need to expose all students to positive representations of different cultural heritages.

The CLPE's 2021 'Reflecting Realities' report ([bit.ly/ts114-mc2](https://bit.ly/ts114-mc2)) found that only 5% of primary level reading books published in the last three years contained main characters of different heritages. A diet of monocultural contexts will provide students with few opportunities to see themselves in the books they read, be it for study or pleasure.

Cultural intelligence can only be acquired through acknowledging the ways in which we are different and similar, and respecting how our individual perspectives are subsequently shaped. A values-led, culturally intelligent curriculum will interpret events and people not as 'good' or 'evil', but as an interconnected mosaic linked together by a vibrant narrative.

To gain deeper understanding and meaningfully apply what they learn, young people must acquire critical literacy skills. Only as critical thinkers and discerning readers can they

## CRITIQUE YOUR CURRICULUM

Questions that teachers and leaders can use to support a curriculum review

- 1 Are the pasts of all the students we teach represented in our curriculum?
- 2 Does our use of visuals and text respectfully present a diverse range of positive role models?
- 3 When citing work by historians, researchers and other 'authorities', are we drawing on a suitably diverse and representative sample?
- 4 Does our curriculum help students understand why some historical topics remain highly sensitive for certain groups of people?
- 5 Where appropriate, do our materials take a sufficiently transnational approach that avoids Anglocentrism?
- 6 Do our materials reflect up-to-date research and scholarship?

interpret the nuances of knowledge for themselves, and come to realise that we are all united more by our similarities than our differences.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the lawyer Atticus Finch conveys precisely this when sharing the following life lesson with his daughter, Scout: "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meena Wood (@WoodMeena) is an educational consultant, trainer and author of *Secondary Curriculum Transformed: Enabling All to Achieve* (Routledge, £19.99)

### DOWNLOAD

A 4-page guidance document on how teachers can utilise critical literacy from

[bit.ly/ts114-mc3](https://bit.ly/ts114-mc3)

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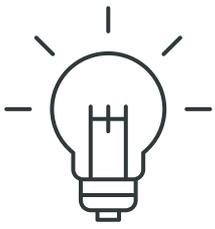
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## THE NEXT BIG THING...

# PEER-ON-PEER ABUSE

With allegations of peer-on-peer abuse on the rise, it's more important than ever that schools implement secure, reliable and intuitive reporting systems

### [ THE TREND ]

It is vital that every school creates a safe environment and culture for the children and young people in its care. This includes zero tolerance for peer-on-peer abuse, educating students on what peer-on-peer abuse is, and having a secure system for recording any concerns.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

In 2021, the 'Everyone's Invited' website ([everyonesinvited.uk](http://everyonesinvited.uk)) began highlighting the extent of sexual abuse, sexual assault and sexual harassment suffered by children and young people at the hands of their peers. The mission statement of Everyone's Invited is to expose and eradicate rape culture with empathy, compassion, and understanding.

To date, the site has received over 50,046 testimonies of sexual assault, sexual abuse and sexual harassment. Many of these testimonies relate to incidents occurring inside education settings, with the victims' peers being the instigators of said harassment.

We know that peer-on-peer abuse continues to be a growing concern. In an Estyn report, 'We Don't Tell Our Teachers' (see [bit.ly/ts114-sc1](https://bit.ly/ts114-sc1)), 61% of female pupils reported having experienced peer-on-peer harassment, while 82% reported seeing others experience it.

### WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

2021 saw Ofsted make several inspection framework changes (see [bit.ly/ts114-sc2](https://bit.ly/ts114-sc2)) after recognising the extent of peer-on-peer abuse within schools. Consequently, schools will now be judged 'ineffective' where they do not have adequate processes to deal with harmful sexual behaviour, including sexual harassment and violence. Ofsted has also stated that all education settings should have organisation-wide policies in place making it clear that sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence - including sexualised language - are unacceptable.

Schools should offer a sanctuary to their students, creating safe spaces and a culture that enables them to



thrive, rather than survive. To achieve the best outcomes for their students, staff need support and guidance to handle, intervene and prevent incidents of this nature effectively, swiftly and professionally.



**Contact:**  
[info@thesafeguardingcompany.com](mailto:info@thesafeguardingcompany.com)  
[thesafeguardingcompany.com](http://thesafeguardingcompany.com)

### WHAT'S NEXT?

Education staff need support to not only handle allegations of peer-on-peer abuse, but also effectively intervene and prevent similar incidents from occurring in future. There is also a belief that schools must do more to educate students on topics such as consent, online bullying and peer-on-peer abuse.

St Benedict's independent school has been using MyConcern safeguarding software for five years to record safeguarding concerns and support student wellbeing (see [bit.ly/ts114-sc3](https://bit.ly/ts114-sc3)). The school's senior deputy headteacher, Luke Ramsden, recommends MyConcern to any organisation, because of how vital it is that schools are able to record instances of peer-on-peer abuse - whether it be cat-calling and inappropriate language, or allegations of sexual assault and abuse. Schools can then track how concerns of this nature have been dealt with, and put measures in place to better educate their students.

## GET INVOLVED

MyConcern is our Queen's Award-winning system for recording all levels of pastoral and wellbeing concerns. MyConcern allows you to better protect those at risk of harm by facilitating early intervention using a trusted, secure and intuitive platform. With MyConcern, you can securely record a concern on any device, refer to automated chronologies that display a complete history of any concern or person, and create customised reports based on types of concern, time frame or profile. MyConcern is also bespoke to schools' specific needs, putting you in control and ensuring that your particular safeguarding requirements are reliably met.

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# Schools

# THE TS GUIDE TO... **HEALTH & WELLBEING**

How should schools look to monitor levels of wellbeing among their staff and students, and at what point should leaders enlist external assistance for help with specific needs?

## IN THIS SECTION

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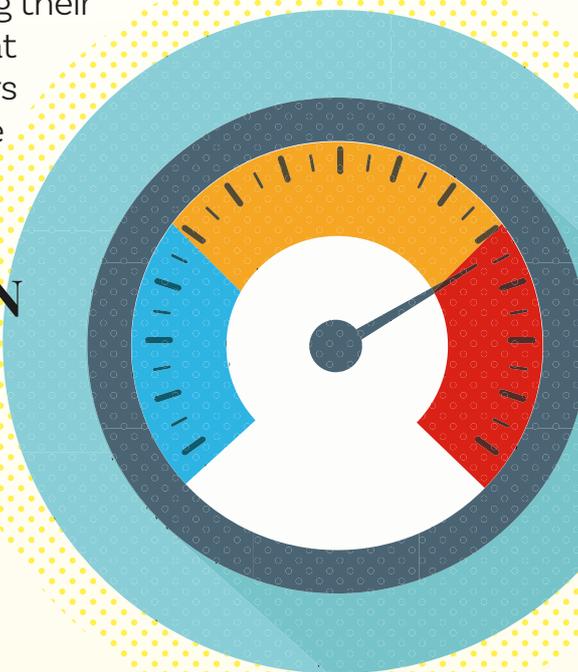
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Schools can do lots to support their students' mental health, but at a certain point, they may need help from external agencies. Adam Riches looks at what usually happens next...



## IN FIGURES:

**HOW ARE TEACHERS FARING IN TERMS OF THEIR WELLBEING, GIVEN THE MULTIPLE PRESSURES AND DEMANDS OF THE JOB?**

**91%**

of teachers report that their job has adversely affected their mental health within the last 12 months

**52%**

of teachers cite workload as being the main contributing factor to increased work-related stress, followed by the impact of the pandemic (34%) and worries about pupil behaviour (24%)

**78%**

of teachers say that their school doesn't provide staff with workspaces that promote wellbeing

Source: NASUWT Teacher Wellbeing Survey 2022 completed by 11,857 teachers

## 3 TEACHWIRE ARTICLES FROM THE ARCHIVES

### "STAFF MORALE IMPROVES WHEN WE DON'T STRIVE FOR IT"

Often, the best way to improve staff morale is for leaders to just get out of the way and let things happen, observes Ian Mitchell

[bit.ly/114special1](https://bit.ly/114special1)

### BANISH THE BURNOUT

Preventing burnout requires self-awareness, knowing your limits and being attentive to those who care about you the most, advises Dr Emma Kell

[bit.ly/114special2](https://bit.ly/114special2)

### CAN NEGATIVE MOODS BE 'CONTAGIOUS'?

Adam W Hunter finds out whether a study examining how teenagers can 'catch' moods from friends could have implications for schools...

[bit.ly/114special3](https://bit.ly/114special3)

# The missing METRIC

We routinely quantify so much of what happens in schools, yet most don't formally measure levels of wellbeing – and that needs to change, asserts **Adrian Bethune**...

**T**he wellbeing of pupils and teachers has been high on the education agenda for a long time, and only intensified as schools continue to cope with the mental and physical impact of the pandemic.

Yet even now, less than half of the country's schools actively measure wellbeing within their populations – a difficult fact to compute, especially in the current era.

## Made to measure

At the height of the pandemic, it felt as though *everything* was being measured. We had regular updates on the number of COVID cases, how many vaccines had been delivered, how

many children were able to attend school each day, the amount of schooling that had been missed – even how far apart we were able to stand from each other.

COVID arrived at a time when schools were already having to carefully monitor progress towards attainment and attendance targets, and in which exam results were often used to evaluate the quality of education delivered.

But amid all this, one measurement that's received comparatively little attention has been rates of wellbeing within schools. It's a situation that has to change.

Well Schools is a free-to-join community of like-minded professionals and stakeholders who believe that wellbeing should be at the heart of schools, to

which more than 1,000 primary and secondary across the country have already signed up.

There are many headteachers and school leaders out there who have always wanted to measure wellbeing, but previously believed this to be too complicated or expensive to implement. It's now possible for them to form connections with peers, who can provide support and share their experiences of how they've been able to measure wellbeing in their own settings.

## Wellbeing challenges

One of the best ways of measuring wellbeing in school is to survey pupils and teachers about their lives and how they feel about them. The questions should cover their experience of positive and negative emotions; how satisfied people are with their lives and their sense of meaning and purpose in life.

The results can then be analysed alongside other

whole school measures, giving you rich insights into the challenges many disadvantaged students can often face in accessing education. If school staff are unaware of, or don't understand these specific wellbeing challenges, it's likely that any subsequent school improvement efforts will become harder to realise.

Measuring wellbeing in schools can deliver a number of advantages. If you don't measure or track levels of wellbeing among staff and students alike, how certain can you be of fully appreciating the problems your students and teachers may well be experiencing?

An absence of wellbeing monitoring will also make it harder to assess whether the various systems your school has in place are delivering as they should be.

## JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Well Schools is a movement which aims to place child and teacher wellbeing at the heart of the education system. It is powered by the Youth Sport Trust, the UK's leading charity improving every young person's education and development through sport and play, and the BUPA Foundation.

To join and register for the Well Schools Movement, visit [well-school.org](http://well-school.org); further details about the Youth Sport Trust can be found at [youthsporttrust.org](http://youthsporttrust.org) and you can visit the Bupa Foundation at [bupafoundation.org](http://bupafoundation.org)

### What do parents think?

Wellbeing measurement is a vital first step towards improving overall levels of wellbeing within a school, and creating environments in which pupils feel happy and able to learn, and where teachers feel happy and able to teach.

The Well Schools movement believes that improving wellbeing in schools can help our most disadvantaged pupils make gains in attainment, but also develop higher self-efficacy. Improved wellbeing will further work to increase student motivation, improve behaviour and lower the likelihood of exclusions.

In our experience, there is strong support among parents for schools placing a greater focus on wellbeing. This was borne out by a recent YouGov survey conducted in March 2022 on behalf of the Youth Sport Trust (YST) and the Well

Schools movement. The survey polled 4,253 people across the UK, of whom 1,069 were parents of children aged 18 or under, and found that:

- 76% of parents believe all schools should measure and track the wellbeing of their pupils, just as they do with their academic progress
- 80% of parents state that the wellbeing of pupils should be a high priority following the pandemic
- 70% of parents believe that placing a greater focus on wellbeing in schools would reduce pupils' stress levels



## GET MEASURING

Well Schools, with support from the Youth Sport Trust and the BUPA Foundation, recently launched a guide that aims to demystify the process of measuring wellbeing and provide some practical advice on how to get started.

It explains how to devise a wellbeing survey, what questions to ask, how the survey should be administered, how the resulting data can be effectively analysed and shared, and how such surveys can be used to generate an action plan.

There's growing evidence that this approach has a positive impact on not just the wellbeing of pupils and teachers, but also on attainment and students' capacity to achieve their full potential, be it in or outside school.

Readers can download the Well Schools wellbeing measurement guide from Teachwire via [bit.ly/ts114-ws1](https://bit.ly/ts114-ws1)

**“An absence of wellbeing monitoring makes it harder to assess whether the systems your school has in place are delivering”**

We hope that with our guide and our assistance, we'll be able to help schools to start the process. There's an old saying – *'We treasure what we measure.'* It's well within our means to measure wellbeing in schools via reliable methods developed by economists,

psychologists and governments over the course of decades. By doing so, schools will be much more likely to value wellbeing as a result.

More than 1,000 schools have already joined Well Schools movement, and we hope many more will follow their lead. When you consider what everyone has been through over the last two years, there's surely no better time than now to grasp the nettle and place wellbeing at the very heart of schools up and down the country. Measuring wellbeing is a crucial first step towards enabling that to happen.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Adrian Bethune is vice chair of the Well Schools Board, founder of the wellbeing training provider Teachappy and author of *A Little Guide To Teacher Wellbeing and Self-Care* (Sage, £10.99); to find out more, visit [well-school.org](http://well-school.org) or follow @well\_schools

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# LIFE-AFFIRMING NATURE

**Dr Sara Collins** tells us why the introduction of a Nature Premium would help schools unlock the many wellbeing benefits to be had from spending time in natural surroundings

**A**s a biologist that regularly works with schools on matters relating to outdoor education, I've often seen how young people react when they're out in nature, and the inspiration it can give them.

You'll very often see the balance and makeup of classes change. I've seen young people break out of their usual cohorts and friendship groups, and demonstrate a willingness to interact and play with peers they haven't previously spent time with. It can really help them develop their social skills, and generate some hugely positive outcomes.

## Inequity of access

These benefits can extend to teachers too. When I go into schools, I've sometimes heard teachers tell me at the end of a session, *'Well, I hadn't expected to enjoy that.'* I hope that's partly down to something I've done, but it ultimately shows how getting out into the green environment can help you relax, and often see the children you teach in a very different light.

We know from research and interviews carried out by Natural England that

spending time in nature can improve young people's happiness, but that there's also a significant inequity of access to nature.

Those of us involved in the Nature Premium campaign argue that children need to get out into nature more – both to realise the benefits outlined above, but also so that they can develop a better understanding of their place within the wider natural world, and potentially develop an interest in taking the new natural history GCSE, once it's fully introduced in 2025.

As such, we're calling for the introduction of a Nature Premium in schools, similar to the existing Sports Premium. A key advantage of having a Nature Premium is that funding would go directly to schools, enabling staff to decide what natural education priorities are best for their children. Above all, it would remove that inequity of access to nature, allowing children from all backgrounds to discover the richness of nature and the chance to explore it further.

## Learning opportunities

I'm based in Portsmouth, and at one of the schools I visit

there's no green space at all – but there is a nearby park, and it's just a 15-minute walk to the seashore. The problem the school has is that it's under multiple pressures and has to deal with multiple demands on its time. A Nature Premium would provide that school, and others like it, with the financial capacity to get children into nature; it would almost give them 'permission' to do it.

We know that many staff are interested in taking more classes into nature, but they lack either the time or financial resources they need. We're not suggesting it's an 'either/or' situation – our view is that you can creatively spend time in the natural world, while still delivering fantastic outcomes in writing, mathematics and other areas. Any lesson you can teach in a classroom, you can teach in nature.

By spending the time in the green environment, students will not only receive a boost to their mental wellbeing, but also be presented with many different learning opportunities, from the behaviours of bees inside their hives, to the natural processes that produce trees.

An important part of the campaign is that we know children develop their own

ways of managing their mental wellbeing. If they're feeling rough, or down, and know that that they can help themselves by spending time outside in a green environment appreciating their natural surroundings, that can be hugely valuable.

## Looking and seeing

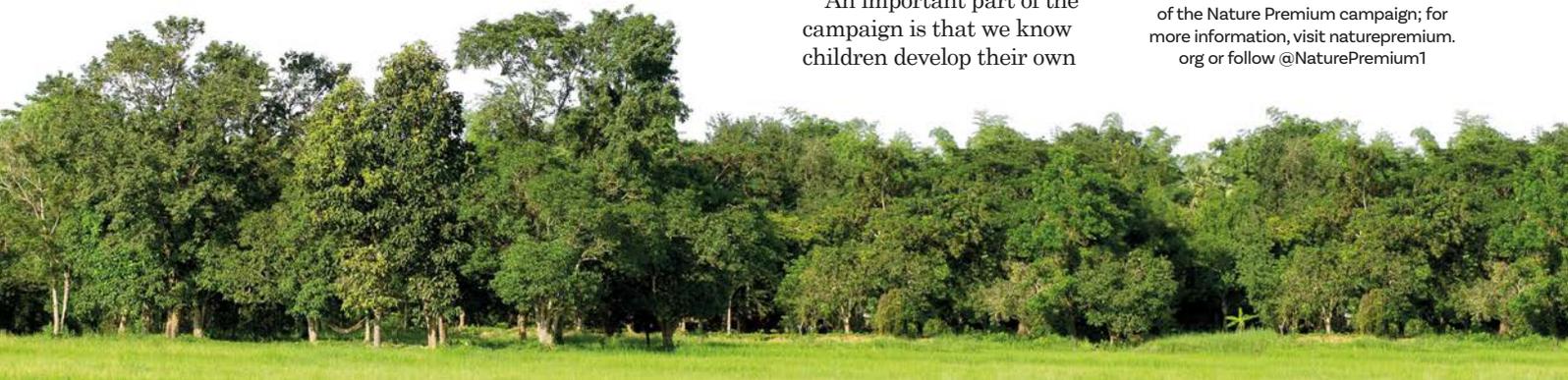
I've previously taken a group into a local Woodland Trust wood, and had a teenager ask me *'Is this a real wood?'* I didn't know how to respond to that question at first, but I took it seriously.

Many of the students hadn't actually been in a wood before, so there was initially some concern among them about getting lost. But just being there helped to give them some important skills in how to navigate maintained woodland, the confidence to explore for themselves, and an awareness of how to keep themselves safe.

It's about getting students used to looking and seeing, so that they start to notice more. And if they can then engage in nature more often, the process can become self-fulfilling.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Sara Collins is deputy chair of the Forest School Association and co-lead of the Nature Premium campaign; for more information, visit [naturepremium.org](http://naturepremium.org) or follow @NaturePremium1



# Outside ASSISTANCE

Schools can do lots to support their students' mental health, but at a certain point, they may need help from external agencies. **Adam Riches** looks at what usually happens next...

**I**n schools, we're equipped to support students in a number of different ways. Occasionally, however, there may be times when we need to seek additional support from external agencies.

Following the COVID pandemic, there has been a sharp rise in the number of school students presenting with mental health needs. Consequently, the burden placed on the educational sector to triage these students has notably increased – yet there comes a point where, if a student's mental health support needs outweigh a school's internal training and experience, they will need to be referred for additional mental health support.

Where does that line lie? What is our duty to students? What can we do for them in school, and what can we not?

Teachers within schools are well-placed to observe children day-to-day, and identify behaviour that suggests a child may be suffering from a mental health problem, or be at risk of developing one.

While the government continues to educate teachers on mental health difficulties in children and young adults, it must be noted that teachers aren't professional psychologists. They are under no duty to identify mental health difficulties, nor should they

be. What teachers can provide, however, is multilayered support prior to cases being escalated to an external agency.

## Pastoral teams

The strength of the support available in a school relies heavily on the quality of its communication and interpersonal exchanges. Students need to know who they can talk to if they have an issue or a concern, and who they can speak to if they feel that their mental health is suffering or declining.

Quite often, the first port of call will be a school's

**“Teachers aren't professional psychologists – they're under no duty to identify mental health difficulties, nor should they be”**

pastoral team, who should be able to effectively triage the students' needs. An inclusion team may also be able to help students in the first instance, providing advice and communicating with home, which can often significantly help students suffering from anxiety and stress.

Throughout, communication really is key. There must be clear lines of discussion that leave no space for ambiguity.

## Counselling support

For students whose needs can't be met through pastoral support alone, additional help may be required. Many schools now retain trained on-site counsellors, or have arrangements in place to call in independent counsellors when needed. There are also a number of programmes available that provide support for helping students overcome mental health issues, such as Suffolk Young People's Health Project (AKA 4YP – see [4yp.org.uk](http://4yp.org.uk)).

While some of these organisations are charitable, schools may be required to

to set up or improve their counselling services. If your school currently lacks any in-house counselling support, it may be helpful to refer to that document's guidance on getting such provision off the ground.

## Interventions and workshops

Students may be exhibiting mental health issues due to them not possessing the skills required to cope with certain situations. Until they learn more about themselves, the challenges they face and how those challenges might be overcome, they'll have a tough road ahead of them.

Providing one-to-one workshops on resilience, mindset, anxiety and other aspects of mental health will give young people a better chance of understanding the psychological processes affecting them. Removing the taboo around mental health is a huge challenge, but as we educate young people in such matters, we'll often find that these kinds of worries can be quickly dissipated.

## When to seek additional support

We might be well-placed to identify mental health difficulties and provide support for lower level conditions, but it's important that teachers are able to recognise when they're not adequately equipped to

provide longer term support – especially when it comes to more serious mental health issues. Put simply, we must ensure that we do everything we can to ensure that our learners are kept safe and well-supported.

Schools also have a duty of care towards any members of staff dealing with students experiencing mental health issues. The teacher and support staff burden when dealing with such cases can be incredibly taxing, particularly with more difficult cases. Given how damaging professional fatigue can be, schools must therefore consider the knock-on effects of students' mental health on that of staff.

There's no clear-cut answer as to when external agencies should be involved in a given case, but it's prudent to contact the relevant service(s) as soon as you deem it necessary, and potentially before

### EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE CHECKLIST

- Do you have the expertise in school to fully cater for the young person's needs, emotionally and professionally?
- Can you ensure that parents are supporting at home? Are you seeing true engagement or disguised compliance?
- Are your staff comfortable with the situation? Is supporting the young person affecting them adversely and impacting their mental health? Is a colleague having to spend so much time with the individual that it's affecting their capacity to support other students?
- Have external agencies been involved in the past? What has their advice been with regards to future support?

required, on the basis of your professional judgement.

### The reality of external agencies

The NHS provides support for young people through the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. CAMHS is the collective name for specialist NHS children and young people's mental health services that can offer a variety of trained mental health professionals

such as social workers, occupational therapists, psychologists and many more.

The reality of using these services, or at least making a referral to them, must be noted, though. Waiting times for CAMHS can be long – in some cases *seriously* long. Those of us on the ground, working with students who have significant mental health issues, will tend to need help quickly, not in a year's time.

GPs can provide some level of support with mental health, and may be able to work in tandem with a CAMHS referral. In the short term, some GPs can be hugely helpful to schools. Again, clear communication with parents is key to ensuring that the young people in your school get what they need quickly. While schools can broker referrals, it's usually parental support that's the deciding factor in such referrals succeeding in the long run.

### Can schools still help after a referral has been made?

Schools can and should continue to support young people after a referral has been made. As noted above, waiting times for external agencies can potentially be measured in months, thus leaving schools with the task of providing some form of practical

support until further help becomes available.

Our continued responsibility for the welfare of learners means that often, mental health issues will remain the responsibility of schools in many ways, even after treatment has started or concluded.

At all points, it's of paramount importance that schools communicate and collaborate with external agencies on the continuing and changing needs of any students receiving mental health support. Regular meetings with the relevant professionals should ensure that the support provided is sustainable over time. In turn, school staff must be able to build a picture of how to support students who have previously been referred to external agencies once their time with said agencies has concluded.

Ultimately, it's schools that will be left providing longer term support, given how external agencies will typically only be providing additional help for a finite amount of time.

### Final words

Mental health in schools is something that needs to be carefully managed. External agencies are available, but we can't rely on being able to receive their help immediately.

Schools must therefore have an effective infrastructure in place for supporting any and all learners affected by mental health difficulties. Because in reality, we're all on the front lines, and will continue to be for the foreseeable future.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Riches is a senior leader for teaching and learning and author of the book *Teach Smarter: Efficient and Effective Strategies for Early Career Teachers* (£16.99, Routledge); follow him at @teachmriches

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2021/22

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# TECHNOLOGY + INNOVATION

New solutions for outstanding teaching and learning

## ONLINE CPD

How to take control of your training

## PURCHASE POWER

Be a better e-buyer



6 WAYS  
TO ENSURE  
YOUR EDTECH  
HAS IMPACT

LADY  
MARIÈME  
JAMME  
"LET'S INVEST IN  
DIGITAL SKILLS"

## Press start

What teachers can learn from video games

## MEET & GREET

Digital tools to engage parents

Is your school making the most effective and economical use of its learning technology?

Which of the many innovative learning solutions out there can deliver great outcomes for your students?

These are the questions we seek to explore in **Technology & Innovation** – a specialist publication by The Teach Company aimed at teachers and school leaders working across secondary school settings.

## Inside this issue...

- Take control of your online CPD training
- 6 ways to ensure your edtech has an educational impact
- How to engage parents using digital tools
- Using video games in secondary schools – what teachers can learn



# Membership networks

SSAT – the Schools, Students and Teachers network – talks us through the many benefits of connecting with fellow practitioners nationwide

## Need to know

What are the benefits of networking for leaders in education? School leaders around the country are currently trying to juggle the standard demands of their role with finding opportunities to maintain self-care and promote pupil outcomes – and networking could be the key to succeeding at this.

Networks afford great opportunities for supercharging how we support lifelong learning, and can provide us with a more rounded view of education.

Digital transformation has accelerated exponentially over the past two years, with the result that access to networks, comprehensive information and support are all just a click away, enabled by communication structures from which school leaders and teachers can all benefit.

Education leaders can network in the way businesses often do – to develop best practice or save costs. The ability to engage with peers outside your local community is a key benefit of joining a nationally recognised network, and can contribute in a positive way to CPD activity.

Networks also have the potential to create societal change. At SSAT, we encourage our members to consider issues relating to social justice and engage with outstanding leaders across the profession. We prompt members to consider their ‘non-negotiables’ – the principles that drive them, and practice that can improve outcomes for their students. We aim to connect members with other practitioners and leaders based all over the country, thus forming a sophisticated support network.

Educators are natural collaborators, frequently drawing on interpersonal skills to derive value from teamwork. This is the ethos that informs SSAT’s social media platforms, where individuals can regularly be found building empowering relationships with others working within the profession.

Being part of a network will give you opportunities to:

- Improve your skills and knowledge
- Re-ignite your motivation and purpose
- Work on generating solutions with like-minded peers
- Be the change you want to see in education
- Find future work opportunities.

## What next

Embracing technology, SSAT holds free webinars every month for our members, offers leading CPD programmes online and facilitates access to online conferences that bring together educationalists from all over the country.

Explore your membership options and the available benefits at [ssatuk.co.uk](http://ssatuk.co.uk)



### Contact:

0207 802 0955  
[adviseme@ssatuk.co.uk](mailto:adviseme@ssatuk.co.uk)  
[ssatuk.co.uk/ssat-membership](http://ssatuk.co.uk/ssat-membership)



## TECH TALK

The ability to network virtually, seek counsel or offer counsel to your peers has become increasingly critical to how we teach, learn, and interact with others.

Of course, having a powerful resource of evidence-informed publications and school improvement tools, webinars, policy documents and whitepapers on all things education focused are just some of the benefits of joining a membership organisation like SSAT.

### Online CPD programmes

As experts in areas such as Lead Practitioner Accreditation and Embedding Formative Assessment, and with a portfolio of one of the country’s best suite of CPD programmes for educationalists at all levels, SSAT has, for over 30 years been the membership network of choice for thousands of schools across the country.

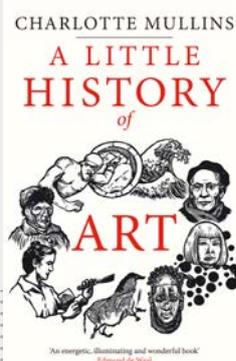
### Support, wherever you are

SSAT has embraced digital transformation, allowing its members to experience remotely all the benefits that membership affords.



# Off the Shelves

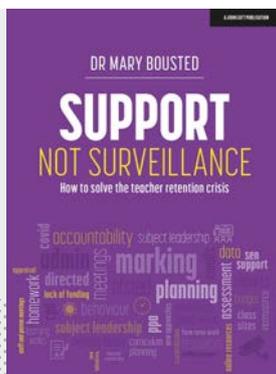
Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore



## **A Little History of Art** (Charlotte Mullins, Yale University Press, £16.99)

Taking an historical approach that starts with cave paintings, Mullins covers all the major movements in art, as well as important developments, such as perspective. Readers will find chapters focusing on political contexts, propaganda, freedom and religion, and there's also some space given over to sculpture. Each chapter begins with a lively introduction that makes various key artistic figures really come alive. It would make an excellent reference book for art teachers to keep around in their classrooms, and a worthy addition to the shelves of your school library. In addition to being an easy read, it's comprehensive, but not overwhelmingly so. For those who 'Don't know much about art but know what they like,' this "Little History" will be an informative corrective. Nicely illustrated, too.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman



## **Support Not Surveillance: How to solve the teacher retention crisis** (Dr Mary Bousted, John Catt, £16)

Dr Bousted makes a strong case here for reforming those parts of the education system in England that have the most direct impact on teachers. In this book, she seeks to demonstrate how Ofsted is, in effect, not fit for purpose, observing that the framework it relies on has changed five times in the last nine years, and pointing out how over 80% of teachers believe the regulator has a negative impact on teaching and learning. Much of the data the book draws on is based on surveys by the NEU (which has Dr Bousted as one of its Joint General Secretaries), but it's unlikely that many teachers will disagree with the findings presented, even on an anecdotal level. Not that it's all negative, since the book closes with some interesting and thoughtful suggestions for reform.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman



## **Tools for Teachers: How to teach, lead, and learn like the world's best educators** (Oliver Lovell, John Catt, £15)

Lovell draws on a series of interviews with several well-known educators to produce what is, in effect, a toolbox of techniques in areas such as explicit instruction, behaviour management, leadership and evaluating educational research. The book's explanations are presented very clearly, though I was less convinced by its suggested scripted introductions to a new class, given how long they would take to deliver. The similarly scripted explanations and whole class instructions also seemed somewhat pedestrian, and be advised that Lovell seems to accept Cognitive Load Theory as fact. But as a hand-holding guide for new teachers and fledgling leaders, there are some useful suggestions and astute observations on school culture, motivation and curriculum. Overall, a good investment.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman

## ON THE RADAR

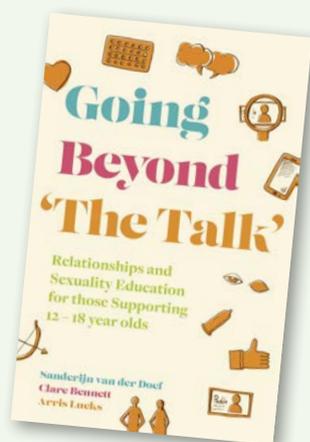
Everything you always wanted to know about sex education but were afraid to ask...

### Going Beyond 'The Talk'

(Sanderijn van der Doef, Clare Bennett and Arris Lueks, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, £14.99)

This book sets out to provide an informative and approachable roadmap through the tangled complexities of pubescent development to two sets of readers simultaneously – parents/carers and educators. That might sound like a lofty aim, but as the authors note in their introduction, the traditional separation between 'family' and 'formal' contexts when it comes to RSE isn't one necessarily recognised by teenagers, equally affected as they are by their experiences in both. As such, there's plenty of material on how professionals and non-professionals can work together on ensuring that the young people in their care are safe, clued up, respectful of their peers and self-aware, without being self-conscious.

Above all, *Going Beyond 'The Talk'* isn't afraid to grapple with the problematic and alienating realities of modern adolescence – many of which have been shaped by the breakneck speed with which digital technologies have transformed popular culture, reshaped interpersonal communications and enabled access to pornography. Bracing in the picture it presents, but encouraging in the advice it offers, it's a book with a lot of wisdom to impart.



## Meet the author

### MICHAEL HOLDING



**What do you believe teachers and students can get from reading *Why We Kneel, How We Rise*?**

It explores the current situation with, and the origins of racism. If everyone had been taught the right thing and not brainwashed like so many of us have been, we wouldn't have the racism we have now. Racism is caused by people being taught to believe that one set of people are superior to another, which then leads to the 'other' set being inferior. If our world hadn't been constructed and taught that way, there would be no racism. Everyone would just accept each other as human beings.

**As you write in the book, after that first Sky Sports video made such an impact, you were initially wary of giving further interviews and speaking publicly on matters of race. What made you reconsider?**

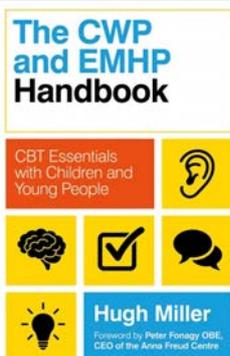
I've seen the history of Black people who have spoken out about injustice, how they have been treated by society and how their careers have suffered. Colin Kaepernick's picture is on the book's hardback cover – we saw what happened with him.

The only reason I went further and ended up writing the book was because of the positive feedback to what I'd said. There was so much positivity from so many people – some I knew, some I'd never met, emails forwarded on by the ECB – that I decided, with some prompting, that I had to go forward.

**There are some who argue that attempts to 'diversify history' are divisive, and can even perpetuate racism – how would you respond to that?**

What I'm interested in doing is revealing what has not been revealed. For instance, everybody talks about Thomas Edison inventing the light bulb; nobody ever talks about Lewis Howard Latimer, who invented the carbon filament without which the lightbulb would never work. Nobody talks about the first man to set foot on the North Pole, Matthew Henson, being a Black man.

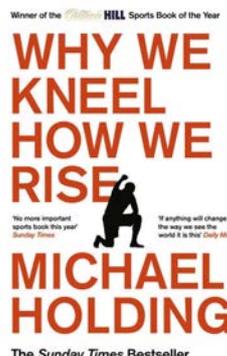
History has been whitewashed. History has been used to indoctrinate and brainwash. We need to teach everything, not just what suits one set of people. The British Empire, the evils that it did – that has been discussed and talked about. Let's move on from that and teach now what was not taught.



### The CWP and EMHP Handbook

(Hugh Miller, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, £22.99)

Pitched as a survival guide for professionals starting out as an education mental health practitioner or children's wellbeing practitioner, *The CWP and EMHP Handbook* might not be specifically aimed at teachers, but will likely prove an interesting read for those considering a career change, or wanting to know more about the practices, procedures and processes that underpin the activities and decision-making of CAMHS services. Some of the material on meeting with parents and carers could be usefully applied outside of a CWP/EMHP context, but it's important to note that the book does assume a certain level of specialist training and experience on part of the reader. It can offer an illuminating glimpse inside a difficult, yet vital field that many teachers rely on – but to use it as intended, only committed professionals need apply.



### Why We Kneel, How We Rise

(Michael Holding, Simon & Schuster, £9.99)

On a wet July day in 2020, as rain stopped play in the England v West Indies Test series, former international cricketer and Sky Sports commentator Michael Holding was asked what he thought about both teams kneeling in recognition of the Black Lives Matter movement. The impassioned and eloquent commentary he gave concerning racism, education and injustice over the next four minutes went duly viral, prompting supportive responses from a number of sporting professionals – some of whom were subsequently persuaded by Holding to share their own perspectives and experiences of racism with him across a series of interviews. Documented here, the recollections of Thierry Henry, Usain Bolt, Naomi Osaka and others are given context by Holding's supporting commentary, and make for compelling, sometimes devastating stories. An urgent, timely and necessary read.

# Make peace with the KEYBOARD WARRIORS

**Debby Elley** explains how teachers can avoid combative exchanges with parents of children with SEND and build mutually beneficial partnerships

**A**s co-founder of the autism parenting magazine *AuKids*, I've seen many parent-teacher relationships disintegrate after a flurry of confrontational emails sent during moments of heightened tension.

These type of exchanges are more common than you might think. However, the question from a teacher's viewpoint shouldn't be, '*How do I respond to them?*' but rather, '*How do I stop these from landing in my inbox in the first place?*'

## The only route in

First, let's consider why they happen. To illustrate this, I'll share with you the event that came to inspire my current project. I'd offered to meet a local parent who'd told me she was desperate for help concerning her son's mainstream schooling. Our conversation began with her recalling how, "I asked Will what he learnt at school, and he told me he'd learnt that if he gritted his back teeth hard enough, it would stop him from crying."

As a carer, what can you do when your protective instincts are mobilised so suddenly? When the school gates are closed, your only route in is via the computer keyboard.

This is the root cause of what I call 'blazing keyboard syndrome'. I've urged parents who have contacted

me to not succumb to BKS, but instead arrange a face-to-face meeting to better understand the full context and plan a way forward. And I believe it's vital that teachers do the same.

## Reactive responses

Upon receiving an upset and perhaps accusatory email from a parent, the immediate temptation may be to respond with a (hopefully reassuring) sound and logical defence. However, to do so would be to miss the subtext – namely '*I'm upset and anxious. My child doesn't feel safe or cared for at school.*'

**"I've yet to hear from a single parent who's been angry at a teacher for admitting a mistake"**

When parents say they don't feel heard, it's often because teachers are reactively responding to them on a case by case basis, rather than expressing an understanding of their underlying concerns.

Responding to such emails with yet more emails also establishes a precedent, whereby carers soon learn that if they want to discuss something urgently, typing works.

If you'd rather not form partnerships centred around

these kinds of mismatched exchanges, avoid letting them become that way in the first place. Allowing emails to define your relationship with a family means that when things go wrong, you're likely to receive an inbox of fireworks.

The keyboard can sometimes be a time-saver, but building a positive working relationship will save far more time, and do more to prevent further crises in the long-run.

## Friendly 'catch-ups'

It's always a good idea to meet carers face-to-face from

the outset, especially at the first sign of any problems. This will help to familiarise you with their emotional landscape, including their past experiences with schools, and inform your understanding of what drives their approach to you.

Gareth D. Morewood was my son's former SENCo, and is now educational advisor at the staff training and psychological services provider, Studio 3 – as well as my collaborator on the book *Championing Your*

*Autistic Teen at Secondary School*. As a SENCo, Gareth got to know me in my capacity as a parent straight away, which later reaped rewards through the pooling of our experience to create a calm environment for my son.

We both managed to forge a productive partnership over the course of 15-minute chats at the end of the school day every month or so over a cup of tea. These weren't 'meetings' – implying arduous, perhaps intimidating talks – but friendly 'catch-ups'. Gareth ensured that together, we could predict potential difficulties and put strategies in place to avoid them, while noting what was going well and why.

This honest exchange of information helped forge a fruitful and trusting partnership, which inspired us to help others replicate it. By adopting a straightforward exchange involving face-to-face contact, you'll soon find yourself operating more within the realm of collaboration than confrontation.

## Anger at the system

If your parental counterparts don't immediately embrace your ideas, don't dismiss them as unhelpful collaborators.

Remember that SEND parents may well be emotionally exhausted. By the time our children have reached secondary school age, we'll have explained their difficulties in detail to countless educators and professionals, sat in numerous meetings, filled in lengthy, indecipherable forms and attended umpteen appointments.

Our energy and commitment can sometimes become depleted, and our trust eroded. Often, we'll have gone to immense efforts that don't amount to much. There may be fatigue, disillusionment or anger at the system as a whole.

Take time to really absorb that last paragraph. Be aware that you may not be starting with a blank canvas; you may need to paint over a dark background.

If a parent seems resistant to a particular proposal, try to unpack their reasoning. What's happened in their past? Attempt to pick apart their fears. By addressing underlying concerns now, you'll be more likely to avoid conflict in future.

### 'There was an incident...'

Anger and anxiety can be flip-sides of the same coin. If a parent feels powerless to influence decision-making on behalf of their vulnerable youngster, either or both can become evident. Including parent input within your strategies will reduce that sense of powerlessness.

It also pays to be honest when mistakes are made. I've yet to hear from a single parent who's been angry at a teacher for admitting a mistake. I've heard from many who were furious at mistakes being swept under the carpet, or blame being assigned to the wrong parties.

Being mindful of the language you use is also essential for avoiding conflict. Using the word 'incident' to denote a negative situation might seem well-meaning, but from a parent-carer's perspective, it's a term often associated with police

cordons and flashing sirens. If I heard a teacher use the word in relation to my child, the hairs on the back of my neck would rise.

Careful phrasing can show that you've comprehended a young person's distress and be far less inflammatory. Instead of *'There was an incident in which he lashed out at another student...'* try *'Paul felt really upset and angry this morning because [insert situation], so we could do with chatting about how we avoid that.'*

If you'd rather avoid the slings and arrows, make sure your stage is set for a proactive and personal – rather than reactive and impersonal – approach to your parent-teacher partnerships.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Debby Elley is the co-founder of AuKids magazine ([aukids.co.uk](http://aukids.co.uk)) and a parent to twin sons, both with autism

*Championing Your Autistic Teen at Secondary School* by Debby Elley with Gareth D. Morewood is available now (£14.99, Jessica Kingsley); *Teach Secondary* readers can receive a 15% discount when ordering the title from [jkp.com](http://jkp.com) by quoting the offer code **TeachSec** until July 31st 2022

## 10 PARTNERSHIP TIPS

1. When deciding on strategies to address social or learning obstacles, share ideas with parents at the planning stage
2. Create personalised 'Stress Support Plans' to predict and avoid anxiety-provoking situations
3. Don't wait for a crisis; consult parents/carers for their ideas on how to deploy early troubleshooting
4. Respond to parent/carers anxieties via phone rather than email, and try to meet up ASAP
5. Summarise a parent's concerns in your own words before arranging a solution-focused chat
6. Introduce new plans through stepped processes rather than overnight; review approaches together after a set time
7. Share good news about a child's social, emotional and educational progress as often as possible
8. Establish rapid communication channels so that parents can warn you of difficult mornings before school, or difficult evenings afterwards
9. Be honest when mistakes are made; trust is built when you're able to reflect on and refine your methods
10. If you encounter disagreement over particular interventions, bring in an outside expert



# An upskilling REVOLUTION...?

After what feels like years of stasis, the models schools use for their ITT and CPD needs are finally undergoing some major changes – and **Anthony David**, for one, is glad to see that happen...

**C**PD has changed considerably in the time that I've been a leader. Where previously I might have prioritised tying CPD to school demands, my emphasis now is more on finding ways of helping all all colleagues to flourish.

In truth, I've attempted this a number of times before with shared Masters initiatives, but the block has always been the accompanying costs. However, with the government's recent investment into professional development as part of its recovery package for schools, could we actually be witnessing a new golden age for professional development in schools? If so, what might it look like in practice and what purpose will it serve?

## The (new?) purpose of CPD

Let's consider that last point first. The purpose of this level of investment – which is beyond anything I've seen before in a quarter century of leading schools – is twofold; to increase professional capacity, and retain teachers for longer.

There is no great secret to this, since both typically go hand in hand. An academy I once worked with had a scheme in place under which it would pay for colleagues to take a master's course, with the caveat that they had to remain within the academy for at least the next four

years. Typically, those who took up the scheme up stayed longer – the maths and incentives involved weren't that complicated.

One of DfE's core aims is to keep teachers in schools. The twin benefits of increased pay over the next two years, alongside a commitment to providing staff with high levels of CPD, will no doubt help to retain some teachers who might have otherwise decided to leave sooner.

## ECTs you can invest in

It's important to note, however, the huge changes to probation periods that were ushered in with last year's introduction of the two-year induction for early career teachers. This significantly overhauled the 1-year NQT programme that had hitherto been around, in one form or another, for decades.

The new model's two-year probation period carries with it some extended conditions, including two years of regular professional development, two years of extended non-teaching time (0.5 days in the first year, reducing to 0.25 days in the second), a dedicated mentor and high quality training provided by a professional training body, rather than an LA or diocese as was previously the case.

At the time of writing, this new model is still in its first year and hasn't been without teething problems

(insufficient college spaces in the first year being the most challenging). The new time frame will arguably be challenging and expensive for schools, which will now have to manage a two-year period of reducing non-contact time, which would mean that colleagues covering those lessons will see their own contact reduce.

That aside, however, it signals commitment to a new approach to teaching – one that prioritises long-term investment over one-off courses. Even during the heyday of the Strategies at the turn of the millenium, the training provided rarely equated to more than a few days. The intention here is clearly to try and seed deep, pedagogical skills that will hopefully enrich teachers (and therefore their students) over the course of their careers.

## Career pathways

The natural question, once that initial two-year period has been completed, will be 'What next?' If you've become used to experiencing high levels of professional development, it would be quite the anticlimax to see that end after two years of work-based training.

Increasingly, schools are talking about 'career pathways' – mapping out a colleague's journey and the subsequent professional development required to support them. It's here where we see the subtle shift

from 'school-demand' CPD to 'colleague-need' CPD. By that, I mean a shift from what's in the best interest of the school, to what's in the best interest of the teacher.

Why has this happened now? The reality is that most education careers reflect school needs at the time. A subject leader will naturally gravitate towards their subject's specialism. A maths department leader will want to ensure they retain high levels of maths skills. In among those appointments will be qualified education professionals who want to learn how to lead a team, manage change and utilise various other typical leadership skills – but at the heart of it all will be the desire of individuals to improve on their own specialisms.

## Market competition

The availability and range of CPD has mushroomed over the last couple of years. Not long ago, the main challenge faced by aspiring education professionals wasn't that appropriate CPD courses couldn't be found, but rather accessing what there was.

The growing demands for CPD that can be delivered online has reduced that problem dramatically. I myself recently led training for over 150 teachers from across the country who otherwise wouldn't have been

able to attend the course. This creates greater opportunity, but also increases competition within the market.

A SEND leader no longer has to simply attend their local SEND courses, when one delivered

## “One of DfE’s core aims is to keep teachers in schools”

from another part of the country might fit their needs better (due to either time, cost or course demands). As professional learning continues to migrate online, one could argue that the deals open to remote learners will only get better as time goes on.

### Times are changing

What has also changed is the duration of courses. The government expanded its range of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) last summer to include six more, and is poised to grow them again this autumn with a further two new courses. At least one more is promised in the near future, with a SEND course set to join the NPQ line-up, and there are

rumours of a CEO course to support the ambitions set out in the White Paper.

Each of these master's courses runs from 15 to 24 months, and their coverage would support most teachers at various levels of their professional development. It's not inconceivable that today's ECTs will have collected enough master's credits in their first few years of teaching to enhance their qualifications to master's level.

This is a long-term approach that's radically different from what we've seen in the past, and could bring about transformational changes in those schools that embrace the opportunities they present.

However, time is tight. The government's funding commitment lasts only until 2025 – after which there are, at best, only speculative promises that it will continue. That said, if the government plans to get anywhere close to reaching its stated ambitions of 90% pass rates, it will have to invest accordingly.

It appears that professional development of this kind is what's generating the most interest in Whitehall at the moment. Either way, we currently have a medium-term window of opportunity to support teaching careers in a whole new way – in what might eventually prove to be a unique time for the profession.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anthony David is an executive headteacher

# How will the Online Safety Bill affect schools?

**Mark Bentley** considers whether the government's Online Safety Bill will do enough to allay many schools' concerns regarding their students' technology use, both on-site and at home...

In 2018, The NSPCC launched its Wild West Web campaign. At the time, it stated that "For over a decade, social networks have repeatedly failed to protect children from abuse," going on to accuse said platforms of being "cavalier when it comes to keeping children safe."

Some are now hoping that's about to change, following the publication earlier this year of the government's Online Safety Bill. But will it?

## Transformative change

Education professionals will be used to watching for announcements from the DfE and Ofsted, but over the past few months, it's been worth also keeping an eye on the press releases concerning online safety that have emerged from the Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport. This new legislation will directly affect how we approach protecting children and young people as they use the internet, and in turn, how we support students and young people in our care.

So what's set to change? The bill's overall aim is to make activities illegal online if they are illegal offline, and afford the same protections to children and other vulnerable users in the online space that we would expect offline.

I personally believe that the most transformative change we could make to students' online experience is to restrict them from



accessing apps, websites and games intended for over 13s or over 18s.

Pornography is the classic example here, which is something the bill will cover with respect to commercial providers and social media platforms.

## True user identification

Various studies have shown the scale at which online porn is being viewed by students, and the harms occurring as a result. Much of the content in question is extreme in nature, portraying harmful sexual behaviours that are, in effect, being 'taught' to our young people via their internet connections.

The bill paves the way for the introduction of mandatory age verification systems to prevent underage users from making unlawful purchases. Not the classic 'enter your date of birth' or 'grab your parent's credit card' fields, but *true user identification*. Some parties have raised privacy concerns in relation to this, but the last

few years have seen the development of some great BSI standards on how such systems could be implemented, without requiring individuals to share their personal information with tech companies and verification providers.

That's important, because a similar approach is expected to be adopted in relation to social media use more widely. This may ultimately lead to more age-appropriate and child-friendly apps and platforms thriving, if they no longer need to compete with large, established platforms nominally aimed at older users, but which are in practice used by large numbers of children.

In time, this may help schools, and indeed parents, promote messaging around the requirement for students to only use age-appropriate sites and platforms.

## Parental controls

It's interesting to note that the bill doesn't specifically cover parental controls. If passed, it will see Ofcom

assume independent regulatory oversight of online safety, so I'd hope that the codes of conduct we'll see from the regulator will cover parental controls and make them more effective. More can certainly be done here, such as having them enabled by default and making them easier to use.

Schools can, and do already perform work in this area, pointing families to the controls already in place across different devices and services. Putting in a little effort before providing children with new devices, or granting them access to new apps and games, definitely pays off in the long run, so it's worth regularly reminding parents of such settings and other measures they can take.

You can find examples of how to do this, plus tips on how to talk to students about online harms, at [parentsafe.lgfl.net](https://parentsafe.lgfl.net).

The bill will never be perfect. It remains to be seen how Ofsted will fare with its implementation and enforcement – but anything that helps keep students safe online should be welcomed, and it's great to see us ultimately moving in the direction of creating a safer internet.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Bentley is Safeguarding and Cybersecurity Lead at the edtech charity LGfL – The National Grid for Learning; for more information, visit [lgfl.net](https://lgfl.net) or follow @LGfL

# Share your classroom stories... TO WIN EDTECH PRIZES

Schools from across the UK and Ireland are being given the chance to win premium edtech prizes in return for sharing their most passionate, innovative, and imaginative classroom stories.

Organised by global education technology company Promethean, the annual Classroom Stories competition invites schools, teachers, and ICT managers, to share their exciting stories by submitting a two-minute video.

Valued at around £3,000 each, the prize packages include an advanced ActivPanel interactive display, installation, training, and support.

Promethean is offering 20 schools the chance to win, with a guest judging panel ready to view this year's entries.

Guest judge, Jim Wallis, Head of UKI at Promethean, explains why he is excited

to see Classroom Stories return: "We continue to be amazed by the stories and experiences that schools share. There's so many innovative ideas, and entries are always full of enthusiasm and passion. It's a real opportunity to celebrate education and the people who create inspiring learning opportunities every day. I can't wait to see what this year's nominations have in store."

The Classroom Stories competition is open for entries from now until Friday 24th June 2022, so if you've got an inspiring story - get ready to share it now!



**IT'S REALLY EASY TO ENTER...**  
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[www.prometheanworld.com/gb/microsites/classroom-stories](http://www.prometheanworld.com/gb/microsites/classroom-stories)

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# Non-uniform days? No thanks

**Jason Bridges** makes the case why non-uniform days shouldn't be the 'go-to' solution for schools when it comes to charity fundraising events...

**N**on-uniform, or 'Mufti' days have been part of school life for as long as anyone can remember. They're most commonly used as a quick answer to the question of how to raise money on national charity days, but some schools also use them as rewards for students who have achieved certain milestones, such as a high level of attendance.

They're viewed by many as a treat – a day off from having to wear the same businesslike attire as every other day. For some, it's an opportunity to show off their best clothes and fashion sense. Sadly, however, for others it's a day that makes them anxious and nervous about coming to school, due to fears of being judged on their old, cheap, or unfashionable clothing.

## Poverty shame

At Cockshut Hill School in Birmingham, we have chosen to never again hold a non-uniform day, for several reasons. It's clear to me that they penalise children from less well-off families, and it's not right to enact something that largely only serves to highlight their relative disadvantage amongst their peers.

The dip we saw in attendance on one previous non-uniform day was the last straw for me. A dramatic dive from 95% to 73% meant we weren't having another. Children shouldn't be missing out on their education over concerns about their appearance. The attainment gap between poorer and more privileged children is already stark, and shouldn't be exacerbated by disadvantaged children skipping school out of embarrassment at their material belongings.

This issue was raised a few years ago in Scotland, during a Holyrood education

committee inquiry into why pupils from more affluent families were leaving school with higher qualifications than those from poorer ones. The inquiry heard from the Child Poverty Action Group, which highlighted how non-uniform days could cause 'poverty shame' and increase the educational attainment gap.

## The easy option

Non-uniform days are a popular means of charity fundraising in schools because they're easy. The only effort children have to make is wearing their own clothes, and the only real burden placed on staff is that someone has to stand with a bucket in the playground as the pound coins are slung in.

We should be asking for more from young people when it comes to charity fundraising. At our school, we believe that tolerance, respect and understanding are the cornerstones by which we should all live. It's important to us that our students demonstrate compassion and awareness of those less fortunate than themselves.

We therefore engage in a wide variety of charitable work – from partnering with our local church and mosque, to running a food bank, to collecting toys and books for young children to support families in poverty. We take part in the Christmas Shoe Box appeal, and regularly fundraise for the National AIDS Trust.

## Reflect on the cause

Participating in charitable causes is a worthwhile end in itself, but ideally, charitable engagement should make you reflect on the cause you're supporting. This is especially pertinent for those in secondary school, as their teenage years lay the groundwork for what sort of citizen they'll be.

Simply wearing your own clothes takes very little thought or effort. Having run the London Marathon for charity several times myself, I'm of the mind that students should do something above and beyond the everyday when fundraising – preferably something that allows them to empathise directly with those they're trying to help, such as sleeping rough for a night to raise money for the homeless.

I don't doubt that non-uniform days are here to stay, though I would hope that other schools start to take a similar approach themselves, and begin thinking about alternative forms of fundraising which allow them to protect the educational attainment of their most disadvantaged students.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Bridges is principal at Cockshut Hill School in Yardley, Birmingham – part of the Summit Learning Trust; for more information, visit [cockshuthill.org.uk](http://cockshuthill.org.uk) or follow @CockshutHillSch



# JERKS AT WORK

**Gordon Cairns** considers the options teachers have when confronted and undermined by the behaviour of their own colleagues...

**W**hen we're asked about dealing with problematic relationships in schools, we tend to assume that someone's looking for advice on working with teenagers, rather than adults.

Yet for many teachers, 'people issues' can actually be caused by troublesome colleagues or gaslighting bosses, to the extent that stepping into the classroom may be a relief from the poisonous personalities of workmates in the staffroom.

## Low-level stressors

I know of one teacher whose regular debilitating migraines – which had been affecting them for years – disappeared almost overnight after an awkward colleague moved to a different school. I myself can remember spending many nights working late to create a booklet of materials, and my subsequent surprise at seeing a colleague's name at the bottom, claiming authorship while the ink was still wet.

And then there was the deputy head who sent back report cards covered in red ink to teachers 'who needed to be corrected' due to their use of split infinitives.

This kind of poor behaviour is easy to recognise, but difficult to call out. You can't complain to the head of school about the fellow teacher who was the first to volunteer for the working group on discipline, but then didn't show up to any of the after-school meetings while still insisting that their name be

included on the list of members. Nor, indeed, the colleague who seemed so nice when they were desperate for your help in organising a trip abroad, but now cuts you in the corridor.

These daily, low-level stressors might seem inconsequential when compared to the considerable pressures of classroom teaching, but the anxiety caused by such interactions can negatively impact our immune systems and sour our relationships outside of work.

disagreeable personality types wouldn't end up working in a caring profession. Yet as Professor West explains, the actual nature of the work being carried out doesn't matter; it's the coming together of particular personalities, and a certain kind of ethos within an organisation that allows 'jerks' to thrive:

"I think it's a combination of traits people have – being naturally competitive, Machiavellian, anxious or eager to prove themselves, for example – and the workplace environment. It's

colleagues. "Gossip serves an important social function," Professor West notes. "It helps us learn about and regulate each other's reputations at work, but usually does little to actually solve 'jerk at work' problems."

Professor West stresses that we can't simply categorise our colleagues as 'jerks' and 'non-jerks' and try to avoid the former, as we could all improve our workplace behaviour and communication: "I don't think there are two types of

**“The nature of the work doesn't matter; it's the coming together of particular personalities and a certain kind of ethos that allows 'jerks' to thrive”**

## A problem of ethos

Far from being trivial, in fact, Professor Tessa West, of New York University's psychology department, considered the issue important enough to write a book about it – the snappily-titled *Jerks at Work*.

In it, she breaks down the poor behaviour of workplace colleagues and bosses into seven broad categories – from the credit-seeking colleague, to the neglectful boss – and observes how, "Most of us have worked with someone who had an outsized effect on our emotional well-being."

Before entering teaching, I'd naively assumed that

hard to be a jerk at work without an environment that enables bad behaviour."

She adds, "Some workplaces are perfect breeding grounds for jerks, and others make life uncomfortable for them. Most places fall somewhere in between; they don't explicitly encourage jerk behaviour, but they don't do much to punish or discourage it."

## Changing the norms

Nor should we expect that traditional teaching crutch of gossip – as crucial to a staffroom's sanity as a box of biscuits – to solve the problem of poorly behaving



people at work – the ‘goodies’ and the ‘baddies’. I think most of us can be both, so the onus can’t be on one or the other to solve this issue.

“Making a workplace healthier involves recognising our own jerk-like behaviour, and learning how to confront others in a healthy, less-threatening way that will bring down their defences. Above all, we need to change norms around how to behave

at work, and how to talk about these difficult issues, so we aren’t playing wack-a-mole with jerks at work.”

Finally, West points out that we need to work on seeing these poor patterns of behaviour in ourselves, and that we shouldn’t expect anyone else to point them out to us: “Honestly, most people never get feedback that they are the jerk. We all have a worst-case-scenario version of ourselves that comes out when we’re exhausted, overworked and under-supported at work.

“Learn what your tendencies are under these conditions, and develop healthy alternative strategies for dealing with them.”



## ROGUES' GALLERY

### A few of the ‘problem colleagues’ identified by Professor West...

#### 1. Kiss up/kick downers

Kiss up/kick downers will do anything to impress the boss and belittle their colleagues. They’re the type who just so happen to be talking about the incredibly successful lesson they gave that morning as the departmental head enters the room. When discussing a student’s behaviour, they’ll be the first to say, ‘*They don’t do that in my classroom.*’ West advises school leaders to seek a wide range of opinions when allocating leadership roles, to avoid the over-promotion of the sycophants.

#### 2. Credit stealers

With the advent of #EduTwitter, this type of teacher has found a new avenue for self-promotion – posting beautifully curated images of interesting wall displays, exemplary pupil work and organised classrooms. Management will often admire the online glitter without questioning the images’ origin. West asks us to carefully consider our own credit stealing tendencies – “We think our work is more visible to others than it is, and believe we influence outcomes more than we do. These biases can lead us to assume we deserve more credit than other people.”

#### 3. Bulldozers

This is the loud voice dominating staff meetings, confidently expressing what the ‘best’ discipline solution is and convincing the head by sheer force of will that this is what the majority of staff want. West says many bulldozers have no agenda – they just like to be heard. She suggests that school leaders could give them a project so they can feel useful, and provide space for them to cascade their progress to colleagues.

#### 4. Freeriders

Many job sharers know the pain of the partner who doesn’t acknowledge that tasks ought to be shared evenly. In teaching, the reward for working hard tends to be more work, as management teams delegate on the basis of getting the work completed, rather than equity – thus giving freeriders a, well, free ride. In West’s view, these teachers could be encouraged to enjoy the processes of work rather than the outcomes, with greater autonomy and praise for good work potentially enough reward for them to re-engage.

#### 5. Micromanagers

For this type of boss, West advises the following: “If events bring out the anxiety in you, and you become a micromanager because it makes you feel in control, develop an alternative behaviour when you’re about to hit send on that ninth email to your employee. Ask for very specific feedback about your behaviours. People are more likely to open up if you ask them, ‘*Is that turnaround time too quick?*’ rather than ‘*Am I smothering you?*’



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gordon Cairns is an English and forest school teacher who works in a unit for secondary pupils with ASD; he also writes about education, society, cycling and football for a number of publications

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# TAKING IT ON TRUST?

The DfE's arguments in favour of a fully trust-led education system are in sore need of specifics and evidence, observes **John Galloway**...

**S**ometimes I feel like that awkward student who keeps asking the, 'Yes, but...?' questions; the one who just won't accept what they have been told and let the lesson move on.

That's how I felt when reading 'The case for a fully trust-led system' ([bit.ly/ts114-jg1](http://bit.ly/ts114-jg1)) – an addendum intended to provide supporting evidence for the recently published White Paper, titled 'Opportunity for all: Strong schools with great teachers for your child'. Perhaps it does, but you're still left with the feeling that something is missing. That its contents are partial, perhaps even partisan.

## 'Robust analysis'

For a start, there's the fact that the majority of primary schools in England – 61% – remain under LA control, along with 20% of secondary schools, despite more pupils overall now being educated in academies. Why is that?

There's no examination of why secondaries have been more willing to convert than

primaries. Nor of the regional variations that see less than 20% of schools in the North West region converting, compared to more than 50% in the South West. If academisation carries benefits that should see every school embracing it by 2030, how come it's still so patchy? What are the drivers and impediments? It seems no-one wants to ask.

Instead, we get lots of truisms: "Strong trust leaders are relentlessly focused on improving outcomes." I should hope so. But we could replace 'trust leaders' with 'headteachers' or 'LA education directors' and that statement would be just as true. The implication seems to be that only those leading academies have this imperative.

Then there's the assertion that the compulsory conversion of underperforming schools into 'sponsored' academies has been transformative, with "More than 7 out of 10 sponsored academies... now rated Good or Outstanding compared to about 1 in 10 of the local authority maintained schools they replaced." Which suggests that the policy is working 70% of the time. What's happening to the 3 in 10 that don't improve? Why has it been ineffective for those schools?

Elsewhere, reference is made to 'robust analysis' suggesting that MATs improve schools more quickly than LAs, yet no reasons are given as to why that is. Is it just a matter of money? That academy status provides access to previously unavailable funds? That their deficits get written off upon conversion? That LA resources are denuded as more schools convert? Or is it something else?

## Lack of evidence

It's the lack of analysis that provokes such questions. There's acknowledgement of the Education Endowment Foundation's evidence-led approach, which sees different ways of working rigorously assessed and compared before recommendations are made based on the resulting evidence. Here, though, comparisons are often made by inference: "Strong MATs can utilise evidence-based teacher and staff development." Are we to therefore assume that LA-maintained schools simply pluck theirs out of thin air?

The addendum goes on to state that, "MATs are able to determine the capacity, culture and conditions in which professional development is implemented across multiple schools." But well-led LAs do that too.

Finally, the document states that "Ensuring public funding is spent effectively and efficiently on improving outcomes for children is vitally important," and that "MATs typically achieve financial stability". But it doesn't address any of the issues that the Public Accounts Committee happened to raise in the week before the White Paper was published.

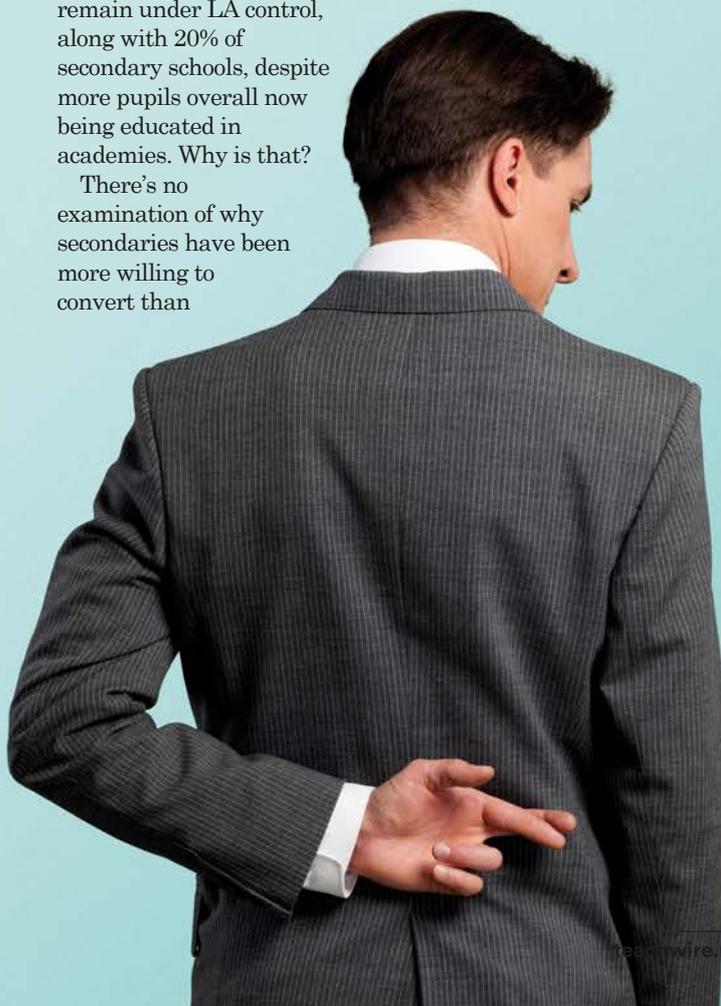
The PAC had expressed concerns around the Education & Skills Funding Agency's "Decision to use public money to prop up academy trusts in difficulty," due to failures in addressing "Poor financial management within academy trusts." It also observed that the DfE "Does not yet have a sufficient handle on excessive pay within the sector, and therefore cannot assess whether public funds are being well spent in this area." Yet more questions in search of answers.

Asking how we can improve educational outcomes for learners is part of our responsibility as educators. But if we're going to succeed in doing that, then we need an open and well-informed debate. Not partiality and obfuscation.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Galloway is a freelance writer, consultant and trainer specialising in educational technology and SEND





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# Out, proud and celebrated

**Alison Ollett** makes the case for why every school should have its own Pride Group

**L**GBT+ is a hot topic. It's on our TVs, in our social media feeds, in the headlines – but venture into many school settings, and you'd barely know that LGBT+ students and staff even exist.

That was certainly the case for me and my school of 1,700+ children, but in 2016 everything changed. That was the year in which I took on responsibility for LGBT+ inclusion at my academy, and from the very start, it's been my intent to embed a whole academy approach, ensuring all of our students can fully develop their unique characters.

Updating academy policies, delivering staff training, developing a robust anti-bullying programme, organising academy-wide awareness events such as a LGBT+ History Month and School Diversity Week – these are just some of the ways we've sought to champion LGBT+ inclusion in the years since.

Through this work, we've been able to make effective changes that have had a positive impact on our students, while also developing a culture of acceptance – one in which diversity isn't just acknowledged, but rightfully celebrated.

## Setting up our Pride Group

It was at the height of the pandemic, when we were predominantly teaching remotely, that I started to realise just how important the work we'd been doing

really was. A group of LGBT+ students reached out and requested that we develop an online Pride Group, as they were missing the sense of community and support they'd had pre-lockdown.

I sent an email invitation out to all students, and thus Plume Pride was born – our very own student-led LGBT+ and ally group, which has since grown to over 60 student members. The group currently holds weekly in-person meetings, arranges special one-off evening sessions and has an online team who are always available to students for assistance and sharing topical news.

Our Pride Group offers a safe space for students that enables them to meet with peers and seek support from staff. Since the regular meetings began, many of our trans students have been able to start their social transition. Many of our LGB+ students have received support when coming out to friends and family, navigating potentially challenging conversations and building crucial relationships with their parents and carers.

## Representation matters

The group also provides family support, through which our staff can sit as student advocates in parent/carers meetings, in cases where conversations surrounding young people's gender identity or sexual orientation can prove somewhat difficult and challenging.

One of the main lessons I've learnt from our Pride

Group is how much representation matters. According to research by Just Like Us, pupils attending schools with strong positive messaging about being LGBTQ+ exhibit drastically better levels of wellbeing compared to other settings and feel safer – regardless of whether they happen to be LGBTQ+ or not.

Our Pride Group regularly meets at Friday lunchtime. Admittedly, there have been occasions when I've watched my colleagues make their way to the staff room and felt tempted to join them. But then the corridor outside my classroom becomes filled with giggles and chatter before a steady stream of students enters, all smiling and full of energy.

I return to my seat and watch as the room fills with students from each year group. Salutations and compliments criss-cross the room as they take their places in front of me. As I sit and watch these amazing young people socialise, support each other and continue to change their academy for the better, I'm reminded of how thankful I am for the role I have as their facilitator.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alison Ollett is a drama teacher at Plume Academy in Maldon, Essex; for more information on setting up a Pride Group, visit [justlikeus.org](http://justlikeus.org)

# Why schools need IMPERFECT LEADERSHIP

Instead of embarking on a fruitless quest to become a 'perfect leader', you can achieve far more for yourself and your school by embracing imperfection, advises **Marie-Claire Bretherton**

**H**ave you ever been led by a perfect leader? Do you work in a school where the leaders always get it right, 100% of the time? Do *you* get it right 100% of the time?

The truth is that there's no perfect school, no perfect leader and no perfect teacher. We all know that, really.

## The problem with perfection

Perfectionism is a problem. When we aim for perfection, we're usually driven by concerns relating to what people around us might think about us. We can find ourselves trapped in a world of comparison.

I confess that I sometimes catch myself scrolling through Twitter, marvelling at the wise and witty things people seem able to cram into 280 characters, and feeling a little 'less than' for my poor attempts at contributing to threads. (*How do you write the perfect tweet!?*) It's even worse on Instagram – so many perfect houses, perfect gardens and perfect holidays!

Why is it that we are so uncomfortable with being imperfect? Is it because we see imperfection as a failure? Is it because we feel ashamed of the ways in which we aren't perfect? Or do we view our mistakes as

personal defects in a world of perfect people?

The truth is that we are all imperfect.

## Restless learners

In our new book, *Imperfect Leadership in Action*, Steve Munby and I outline 10 characteristics of what we call the 'imperfect leadership mindset' – 10 ways in which leaders who know that they're imperfect can create strong foundations for personal growth and development, as well as organisational and team success.

It starts with self-awareness. Leaders who know they're imperfect are open to examining their leadership, and exploring how they're perceived and received by those they lead. Because they're secure in their 'imperfect leadership', they can acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, without fear that they have to be good at everything and know everything.

Yet despite this, they're still restless learners at heart – always seeking to develop and grow. They cultivate curiosity and ask great questions. Their aim is to know more tomorrow than they did today, and to be a better version of themselves tomorrow than they are today.

Since they know their own strengths and weaknesses

well, they're able to develop and empower great teams of people around them who possess complimentary skills and strengths.

They aren't threatened by other people's successes, skills, contributions, and achievements. In fact, they're keenly aware of their responsibility to develop more great leaders, who can then step up and make a difference in our schools and colleges in the future.

What's more, the leaders they develop don't need to be perfect either. Instead, they will go on to coach and mentor new future leaders in turn, helping them to develop similar levels of self-awareness and growth as imperfect leaders themselves.

## Telling it like it is

Imperfect leaders manage their egos well. They each have what we describe as a 'healthy ego' – not too big, and not too small. No-one wants to be led by someone who's insecure and needs constant reassurance and ego-massages, but neither do we want to be led by someone with an over-inflated ego that leaves little room for others to contribute.

Imperfect leaders hold the middle ground with a balance of confidence and

humility. They're neither overwhelmed, nor overbearing. They're happy

to be in the limelight, but also to take a backseat when the occasion demands.

Leaders who know they're imperfect are quick to admit their mistakes, and even quicker to put things right when they get something wrong. They don't need to cover up their mistakes and pretend they haven't happened. They're able to tell it like it is and admit '*That didn't work,*' or '*I'm sorry, I got that wrong.*' They view mistakes and failures as opportunities for learning and improvement.

If we think that we have to be perfect all the time, we can find ourselves becoming too scared to make a decision in case it's not the perfect



decision. Or too scared to try a new approach, for fear of it not being flawlessly executed first time. Being imperfect means realising that all we can do is make the best decision we can, based on what we know.

### Asking for help

Imperfect leaders are deeply committed to doing the

right thing and are authentic. They know themselves well, and they have moral purpose. This means they're able to make difficult decisions when needed, in order to do the right thing by the children and young people they serve.

Finally, imperfect leaders are quick to ask for help from others. They will ask for input and ideas, and even encourage others to share opposing opinions or disagree with

## “Imperfect leaders are committed to doing the right thing and are authentic – they know themselves well and have moral purpose”

them. In the words of Sue Belton, headteacher of a school in Lincolnshire that's part of the KYRA teaching and leadership partnership, “No school is an island, no leader is enough on their own.” Imperfect leaders are aware of this, and will therefore reach out and ask others to support, challenge and guide them, knowing that they will make better decisions as a result.

We all want to be led by leaders determined to do all they can to make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people. Leaders who create

being an imperfect leader will open up a whole new world of learning for you.

In his 2012 poem ‘Looking for the Castle, Second Time Around’, William Ayot describes the realisation of knowing when it's time to put away our self-doubt and step forward along the path before us:

*“It is time to stop looking upwards at others  
What you have is enough  
What you are is ready...”*



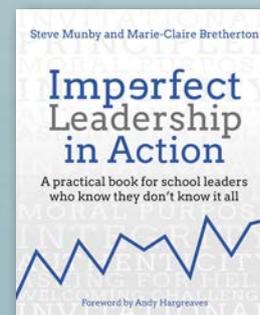
#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marie-Claire Bretherton is a former headteacher, now director of school improvement for Anthem Schools Trust, and education director for the teaching, leadership, research and school improvement partnerships community KYRA

a culture where the whole team thrives and succeeds. Leaders who follow through on what they say they'll do. But we don't need 'perfect' leaders.

What we need is more *authentic imperfect* leaders who will consistently ask, ‘How can I improve?’ and are open enough to hear the answer and act on it. This is the kind of leadership I believe we need more of in our schools and colleges.

For any aspiring leaders reading this – we need you! You don't need to be perfect. On the contrary,

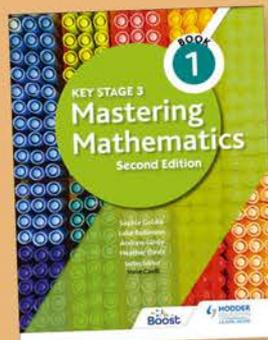


*Imperfect Leadership in Action – A book for leaders who know they don't know it all* is co-authored by Bretherton and Steve Munby and available now (Crown House Publishing, £20)

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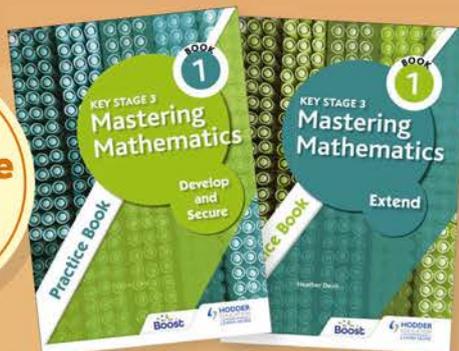
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# FOCUS ON: MATHS

We look at how maths can help prepare students for life after school, investigate the reasons for lack of engagement with the subject and try our hand at some detective work...

**What can we do to help students recognise the relevance and importance of maths to their daily lives?**

## THE AGENDA:

### 58 CAREER CALCULATIONS

Richard Coles explains why there's a case to be made for going beyond the curriculum and using maths to better prepare students for the world of work

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If your maths lessons simply aren't cutting through to students, it could well be one of several causes that's to blame, says Jemma Sherwood

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# Career CALCULATIONS

**Richard Coles** explains why there's a case to be made for going beyond the curriculum and using maths to better prepare students for the world of work

**W**e often hear from employers, officials and members of the public that today's school leavers lack the kind of mathematical skills the economy and wider society really need. But what skills might those be, and are schools themselves really to blame for this alleged shortage?

Here, I'll look to share my experiences as both a careers provision lead and maths teacher, examining how students can be given the opportunities they'll need to be successful in life and work beyond school, and how your subjects – particularly maths – can be used as stepping stones to reach those goals.

## 'Ofsted-ready'

When I first joined Brockhill Park Performing Arts College, there was still a year to go before the Gatsby Benchmark statements became a compulsory requirement. This gave us time to evaluate the needs of our pupils, assess the (often excellent) work already taking place and design a program that could support our pupils in gaining local employment, accessing top universities or entering apprenticeships.

In the view of Ofsted, at least, we succeeded in what we'd set out to do. Our most recent inspection rated the school's careers provision as Good, based on a review of our website's careers information, a follow-up discussion I had

## “Linking your maths teaching to your careers provision can improve engagement and outcomes in a range of different ways”

with inspectors regarding our careers program and visits to several subject areas to corroborate what I'd said and ensure we were being consistent in our careers provision.

At Brockhill Park, we expect subject departments to engage with our careers provision in several key ways. What I will now share with you here are the suggestions we have given our own maths department on how to prepare for an inspection:

### Research your school's careers information

Familiarise yourself with how it aims to support departments, and what it suggests should be covered in schemes of work. Is there a non-exhaustive list of activities and/or discussions detailed somewhere?

### Read your department's Schemes of Work

Are there any opportunities within your scheme of work for establishing career links, and are these matched to the whole school plan? Does your scheme of work take account of important maths-related career days throughout the year, such as 'Pi Day'?

### Consult with your local universities

Regular collaborations with local universities can help to seed aspirations for further study or entry into specific careers, particularly for students in Y9 and Y10.

### Embed careers education into your curriculum model

Are there related careers posters in your department's classroom? Showing aspirational jobs that can be attained via entry from different routes may be an easy win. Stating the average earnings for such jobs could help generate discussions, though remember to balance out your discussion of FE, college, apprenticeships and other potential routes your students could follow.

### Ongoing activities

Outside of inspections, effectively linking your maths teaching to your careers provision can improve engagement and outcomes in a number of different ways.

When introducing a new topic, why not inform pupils of the topic's links to specific jobs and careers? That way,

you can get ahead of at least some of the usual 'When am I ever going to need this?' protests and complaints.

If you were to introduce constructions and loci, for example, you *could* serve up the classic 'goat on a rope' activity – but wouldn't it be better to demonstrate the principles of the topic via an activity linked to, say, town planning – deciding where to lay vital infrastructure, and setting out conditions that will require students to draw on different concepts?

Another approach could involve the use of careers plenaries. A quickfire plenary might involve posing students the following questions, among others:

- How might you use the skills you learnt today in the world of work?
- Did you learn any new skills that helped to develop you as an individual?

Set your pupils the tasks of really engaging in such discussions, and get them talking to each other.

Whatever you decide to do as a department in this area, try to be creative. There's a whole world of jobs out there, and a good place to start can be to enlist the help of business owners in your local community. If possible, get *them* to show your pupils why certain subjects and topics are important, and how learning about them

helped to advance their own careers and subsequent professional success.

### 'Real world' maths

Many of the local businesses I've worked with have expressed a similar message – that pupils often leave school knowing lots of 'stuff', but without necessarily utilise the knowledge and skills they have, due to a lack of contextual understanding or application practise. I've heard it said by multiple business leaders that school leavers would greatly benefit from developing a broader understanding of how businesses operate in practice.

Mathematics lends itself well to learning how businesses are run, since financial capability is obviously a crucial factor in any business' success. If you're designing foam for use in trainers and need to make it affordable, where can you cut costs? What level of quality can

you afford to sacrifice in order to hit a certain price point? There are many such ways in which students can apply the maths knowledge they possess to the activities taking place within a realistic business setting.

Outside of their working lives, of course, adults also have a variety of other financial commitments to maintain, ranging from the simple to the highly complex. We do our students a disservice by not teaching them how mortgages function, how credit cards and APR work, or how PAYE is calculated.

As a maths teacher, I would routinely link certain topics directly to some of the aforementioned concepts.

Pupils were always appreciative when I did this and would want to know more. Other areas ripe for exploration might include ways of being smarter with respect to one's personal income, which could

encompass investment opportunities, devising a sustainable family budget and something frequently overlooked

– retirement planning.

Schools can deliver significant positive impact by developing real-world synergies with their learning; the more the better. Maths teachers can benefit from liaising with their school's careers lead, and utilising external speakers who can talk to students about the reality of work and adult life.

If you want your curriculum to have a careers-centric approach, then explicitly telling students what you're doing will give them a deeper understanding of the content,

helping them see the importance of the maths they'll need to be an effective, well-rounded employee and member of society.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Coles is an Associate Assistant Principal at Brockhill Park Performing Arts College (Kent), with responsibility for Careers and Guidance, and the Sixth Form. He is an experienced teacher of maths, having previously been head of department for seven years; for more information, follow @richardcoles10



## LIFE LESSONS

The majority of business leaders I've had dealings with agree that school leavers would benefit from learning about, or experiencing the following:

#### How businesses operate

- Placements that give pupils experience of working as part of a business
- How businesses are run, in terms of organisation and responsibilities
- How a business makes money
- The revenue streams that businesses can typically make use of
- The role that government can play in supporting these processes

#### Personal finance

- Knowledge of how to make smarter and more sustainable use of one's income
- An awareness of the processes involved in understanding and paying household bills
- How to make use of investment opportunities
- Good habits when it comes to budgeting
- Planning around retirement



# 5 REASONS TO TRY... Money Confident Kids

Equip young people with the practical skills and know-how they'll need to confidently plan and map out their financial futures



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

Following a successful launch in the US, global investment firm T. Rowe Price has launched its free financial education programme, Money Confident Kids, here in the UK. The programme equips young people aged 11-16 with the skills and knowledge they'll need to set goals and plan for confident financial futures.

### 1 CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKED MODULES

Research by the Money and Pensions Service (see [bit.ly/ts114-mck1](https://bit.ly/ts114-mck1)) found that only 48% of the UK's young people receive a meaningful financial education. That's why T. Rowe Price has designed the Money Confident Kids programme to link directly to the curriculum, helping you to deliver impactful, finance-focused lessons. With links to the maths and PSHE curricula, the programme concentrates on financial wellbeing, as well as financial topics such as setting goals, budgeting and investing.

### 2 FUTURE-FACING AND ASPIRATIONAL

Setting financial goals and planning how to get there can seem remote and unachievable for young people who, especially in today's climate, may feel pessimistic and disengaged regarding their financial futures. Money Confident Kids invites them to explore financial topics through the eyes of a relatable young character called Nikki, developing their knowledge and skills as they help her navigate topics like financial goal setting, decision making, investment and inflation. Your students will see how choices they make today can help them achieve their financial goals in the future.

### 3 DETAILED EDUCATOR SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

Inflation, asset allocation and investing are important for young people to understand, but they're also complex and 'remote' topics that can be hard to contextualise. That's why each module in the programme contains detailed educator guidance to aid you in lesson planning and delivery. All activities are packaged together in a



**Find out more:**  
[moneyconfidentkids.com](https://moneyconfidentkids.com)  
[Financial.Education@troweprice.com](mailto:Financial.Education@troweprice.com)

### 4 ABLE TO MEET YOUR NEEDS

The flexible nature of the programme allows you to pick and choose which module to start with, based on your teaching priorities and class' needs. For instance, if you're working with Y7s, it might be a good idea to focus on modules 1 and 2, which cover goal setting and decision making respectively. Older or more advanced students may benefit more from modules 3, 4 and 5, which cover inflation, investment and diversification.

### 5 A RELATABLE, STORY-BASED APPROACH

The programme follows Nikki and her family as she journeys through education and into the world of work, setting herself financial goals and putting plans in place to achieve them. This story-based approach encourages students to put themselves in Nikki's shoes and apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills to her situation, thus contextualising their learning and helping them understand how to apply what they've learned to their own lives.

Teacher Guide and Student Workbook; the Assessment sections that follow each module embed learning and help ensure that students have fully grasped the topics covered.

## KEY POINTS

Since 2009, Money Confident Kids has reached 13.5 million people in the US; T. Rowe Price has now tailored its free resources to the needs of UK educators

This is a step-by-step financial education programme that aims to give young people the skills and knowledge to build a confident financial future

Money Confident Kids consists of five easy to follow modules that cover goal-setting, decision making, money and inflation, asset allocation and diversification

Each module is designed to help young people better understand how key financial decisions made now can affect the prospects and futures that lie ahead of them

# CAN'T CALCULATE, WON'T CALCULATE

If your maths lessons simply aren't cutting through to students, it could well be one of several causes that's to blame, says **Jemma Sherwood**

It's Wednesday afternoon and you're waiting for your Y7 class to come in from lunch. You know there are four or five students in the class who are going to give up today, probably before they've even started: "This is too hard." "I don't get it." "I can't do maths."

It's not that they can't be bothered and are making excuses. It's more that they have a wall up when it comes to maths. One gets in a muddle with calculations and forgets where they were, while the others simply shut down during most lessons. What causes these kinds of responses?

## Is it dyscalculia?

Students who struggle to subitise, count backwards, remember their tables – however much they practise – or get lost in multi-step questions may be suffering from dyscalculia.

Closely related to dyslexia, this is a specific learning difficulty associated with understanding numbers. Dyscalculia affects an estimated 5% of the population, and while research around it in its infancy, we know it's a likely factor in some students' lack of achievement.

## Lack of motivation?

Students who lack motivation in mathematics tend to say they find it difficult or confusing. Motivation is difficult to engender, and students can take the easy option of saying, "Maths just isn't my



thing." We know, however, that those who feel successful in maths show more intrinsic motivation, so it's a good bet that as we work on students' mathematics confidence, their motivation should follow.

## Feelings of anxiety?

"You're a maths teacher, you work out the bill." Six faces watch as I try to divide the total by seven, and all of a sudden my brain shuts down and a mental fog descends. I grab my phone, blaming it on my tiredness. I knew precisely how to work this out, but under the gaze of people expecting me to do it quicker than them, I froze.

If that can happen to me, an experienced maths teacher, how much more likely is it that students lacking my confidence will experience something similar in the classroom?

Maths anxiety is observable and commonplace, yet we don't know the cause. It's often associated with subjective feelings of poor historical

performance ('subjective' because higher attainers aren't immune), and more commonly reported in girls than boys. It can make students avoid doing maths and reduce performance, thus increasing their anxiety further and establishing a vicious cycle.

## What can we do?

Our students need to feel successful in mathematics. We need to teach them where they are, gradually taking them from something they can already do to something new. If we don't, they'll fall at the first hurdle, so find out what they can do and go from there.

Pay attention to working memory. Anxiety reduces it, and dyscalculia is associated with weaknesses in it. Keep presentation materials free of clutter and easy to follow. Model mathematics live, rather than clicking through the steps. Students need to see how it's done in real time.

With multi-step processes, introduce them gradually.

Give students opportunities to practise component parts before putting everything together. Backwards-fading can be a powerful tool – instead of 10 questions, provide all steps, bar the last, in question 1. Then all steps bar the final two in question 2. Continue to fade out until they're completing questions without any scaffold.

If you have pupils who are scared of making errors, let them work with mini whiteboards or on tables with drywipe pens. Once you've got them trying, gradually transition them to paper so that they no longer see their books as evidence of failure, but as tools to help them think.

## Messages count

Don't inadvertently transmit anxiety-inducing messages. Avoid throwaway comments such as, 'This bit's hard', or 'You might struggle with this.' Show students that you value mathematical thinking over calculation speeds, and praise them when they engage in mathematical thought – not just when they're correct.

Use your questioning to demonstrate that you value solutions and processes over final answers. Once they're happy to engage in the process, the answers will come.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jemma Sherwood is the senior lead practitioner for mathematics at Ormiston Academies Trust

# THE USUAL SUSPECTS?

Colin Foster looks at how algebra can be taught via an engaging activity based around detective work...

Sometimes, an apparently simple mathematical scenario can lead to interesting and challenging detective work for students. Such tasks provide opportunities to draw on and develop students' emerging skills in algebra while at the same time putting the student in the driving seat. Instead of providing ready-made methods to students, in which their role is to imitate what the teacher does as accurately as they can, investigative tasks put the responsibility on the student to make sense of a potentially quite complicated situation. What can they work out? How can they find the order and patterns within the details that make a situation understandable and predictable?

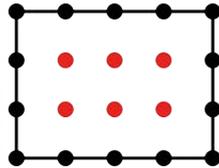
How can they use their creativity and ingenuity to make sense of a situation and represent the ideas by using and applying mathematics that they already know? And how can they communicate their ideas clearly, both to the teacher, and to one another?

## Connecting the dots

A good task for this kind of work is 'Dots in a rectangle':

*How many dots are contained inside a  $4 \times 3$  rectangle? We **aren't** counting the dots on the boundary.*

Give students dot grid paper and ask them to draw a  $4 \times 3$  rectangle:



Some students may be initially confused when they are drawing it about whether they should be counting the *dots* or the spaces, because a 4 cm by 3 cm rectangle, when drawn on dot grid paper, consists of 5 (i.e.,  $4 + 1$ ) columns of dots, with 4 (i.e.,  $3 + 1$ ) dots in each column. So, it is important to check at the start that all of the students have correctly drawn a  $4 \times 3$  rectangle, as above. They should find that it contains 6 dots in the

**“A mass of drawings and numbers, with suitable detective work, reduces to a (relatively) simple rule or two”**

interior (shown in red here), since we're not including dots on the boundary. Make sure everyone agrees about this before proceeding.

*Can you find a connection between the size (i.e., the dimensions) of the rectangle and the number of dots contained inside it?*

This is a big question, and so students will need some time to make sense of it and come up with ideas. Some

students will progress more quickly than others, and some may benefit from drawing multiple examples to help them see what's going on. They will benefit from being systematic and trying, say,  $1 \times 3$ ,  $2 \times 3$ ,  $3 \times 3$ , etc. rectangles, and tabulating their results clearly. (It is worth discouraging students from wasting time by drawing enormous rectangles that fill the paper. They will gain more insight from looking at a few smaller ones instead.) Other students may recognise fairly quickly that the number of rows is always going to be 1 less than the height of the rectangle, and the number of columns will always be 1 less than the width of the rectangle.

Students might express this in words, or perhaps diagrammatically, via a generic example:

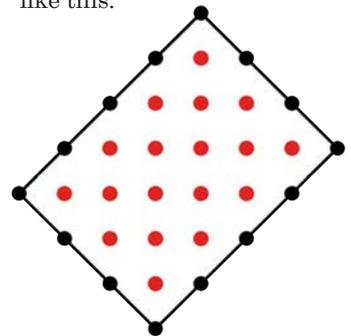
A  $4 \times 3$  rectangle will have  
 $\begin{array}{c} -1 \\ \downarrow \\ -1 \end{array}$   
 a  $3 \times 2$  array of dots inside.

This may be formalised algebraically by letting  $x$  be the width and  $y$  the height of the rectangle, and writing number of dots inside =  $(x - 1)(y - 1)$ .

Depending on how they think about it, other students might arrive at equivalent expressions to this one, such as  $xy - x - y + 1$  or  $x(y - 1) - y + 1$ , and it would be a good exercise for students to verify that these are equivalent. Just because one student's answer looks different from another's, it doesn't mean that one of them is wrong! Different detectives, chasing down different leads, may arrive at the same suspect, just viewed from a different angle!

## A twist in the tale

Once students have completed this initial stage, it is then time to give everything a twist! What if we now think of a  $4 \times 3$  rectangle a bit differently, like this:



This time, we are drawing the  $4 \times 3$  rectangle on the same dot grid, but this time it is drawn at a  $45^\circ$  angle to the sides of the paper. Students will see that there are now a lot more dots inside this rectangle than there were inside the previous one!

We can call this a 'gradient 1' rectangle, because the '4' side is going



up with a gradient of 1, whereas the rectangle we had before can now be thought of as a 'gradient 0' rectangle. (Note that the '4' side here is no longer exactly 4 cm long, but we can still refer to it as '4' in our new, longer diagonal units.)

Encourage students to find *efficient* ways to count the interior dots (i.e., not haphazardly, one by one!). Here, they may perceive 4 rows of 3 and 3 rows of 2, or 3 rows of 4 and 2 rows of 3, or other patterns. Counting efficiently is not only faster, but also much more reliable. It is also more likely to generate insights into the structure of the problem that will help with generalising what's going on! However the students count the interior dots, this should come to  $4 \times 3 + 3 \times 2 = 12 + 6 = 18$ .

*Can you find a connection between the size (dimensions) of the 'gradient 1' rectangle*

*and the number of dots inside it?*

This is much more challenging than before, and students will need to explore the patterns in some systematically-varying 'gradient 1' rectangles and investigate the numbers that they obtain very carefully. Tracking down this second suspect is going to require more time and cunning!

### Case closed

In general, a 'gradient 1' rectangle, with dimensions  $x \times y$ , will contain a total of  $2xy - (x + y) + 1$  interior dots. In the case above, where  $x = 4$  and  $y = 3$ , this correctly gives us  $2 \times 4 \times 3 - (4 + 3) + 1 = 18$  interior dots. One way to obtain this general formula is to exploit the structure of the interior dots mentioned above. An  $x \times y$  'gradient 1' rectangle will always contain  $x$  columns with  $y$  dots in each,

plus  $x - 1$  columns with  $y - 1$  dots in each. The total number of interior dots is, therefore,  $xy + (x - 1)(y - 1)$ , which simplifies to the expression  $2xy - (x + y) + 1$  given above.

Keen student detectives may pursue this even further, and discover that, in general, a 'gradient  $m$ ' rectangle, with dimensions  $x \times y$ , will contain a total of  $(m^2 + 1)xy - (x + y) + 1$  interior dots. Students who get as far as this have really come to grips with the entire 2D situation, which is quite an achievement! Extending the scenario even further, to 3 dimensions, looking at the number of dots inside  $x \times y \times z$  cuboids, poised at various angles, is guaranteed to provide a considerable challenge for any student!

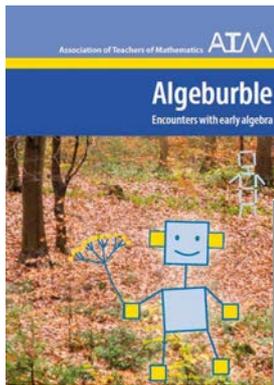
Investigative work of this kind gives students the chance to apply their algebraic skills, such as simplifying expressions to show that two different-

looking expressions are actually equivalent. More importantly, such tasks let students draw on their mathematical powers to make sense of seemingly complicated situations. A mass of drawings and numbers, with suitable detective work, reduces to a (relatively) simple rule or two. This really shows the power of mathematics to produce generalised statements that capture a huge amount of detail, and the multiple possibilities within a concise, accurate and simple statement.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colin Foster (@colinfoster77) is a Reader in Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics Education at Loughborough University. He has written many books and articles for mathematics teachers. [foster77.co.uk](http://foster77.co.uk)



### Algeburble

Encounters with early algebra  
Ideal for transition from KS2 to KS3

Ella and Dan decide that this pattern should continue, with a number in every square.

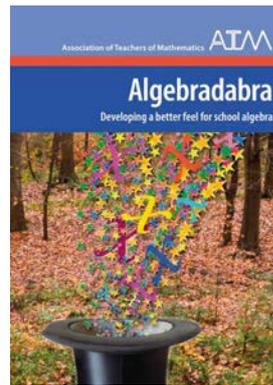
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
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|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

Ella: I'm going to add the two numbers in the yellow squares.  
Dan: OK, I'll add the two numbers in the pink squares.  
Ella: I think we'll get the same answer.  
Dan: Oh! Why should that be?!

- Explain why they do get the same answer.
- Find another pair of numbers that gives this answer.

A collection of over 100 tasks to help pupils engage with early or pre-algebra. All the tasks are flexible and can readily form the basis of a lesson or sequence of lessons. Ideal for transition from KS2 to KS3.

"This is brilliant..." Richard Perring



### Algebradabra

Developing a better feel for school algebra  
Tasks for learners at KS3 and KS4

Look at this triangle ABC. →

These drawings show the triangle for  $x = 5, 20, 35$  and  $50$ .

For what values of  $x$  is the triangle right-angled? Draw the resulting triangles.

A collection of 100 tasks together with a commentary aimed at Secondary learners. The tasks should help students to make better sense of school algebra and to see its purpose and utility. KS3.

"A rare teaching resource building up algebraic thinking that is constructed on and around a clear understanding of generality and cognition." Peter Gates

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CLASSROOM VOICE

# “We don’t all want to be headteachers”

Chris Curtis asks whether the education jobs market is currently serving teachers as well as it could be...

**T**he rising number of teachers leaving the profession is a growing concern to us all. Aside from reasons related to workload, student behaviour and stress, there’s another possible reason why holding on to teachers in a school is becoming increasingly difficult.

Before becoming a teacher I was employed in a number of different sectors, ranging from construction to insurance. I remember how surprised I was when I first discovered the extent to which education is different to other fields of employment. ‘Different’ being an understatement...

## THE RUNGS OF PROMOTION

‘Progress’ is an obsession in the education world. So much so that it’s spilled out into how we perceive the job itself. There seems to be an expectation that you must always have one eye on the next rung of the ladder, gazed fixed permanently upwards: “*So, when are you thinking of promotion, Chris? Must be time now...*”

I’ve worked with some excellent people who have moved up those rungs of promotion – some quickly, some leisurely. Yet promotion and progress aren’t for everyone, which is something the education system doesn’t seem to cater for.

It’s relatively rare for teachers to move sideways, be it in or across schools. At most companies, employees can expect to change teams, move into different departments, relocate to other sites, or indeed join a different company altogether. Where we have a ladder, other sectors have a climbing frame.

The routes on offer within education serve to limit teachers’ options. For those teachers wanting progression,

the two principal routes are pastoral or leadership. Qualified teachers effectively end up either bossing people around, or passing students a tissue as they explain their problems. Neither option involves much branching out, and both will inevitably pull you further away from your specialist subject.

In other sectors, employees are able to specialise or diversify. You can develop your career by getting better at something. In education, we develop our careers by dedicating ourselves to something completely new. If I love my subject, then what will keep me in the job is the promise of opportunities to do more of what I enjoy.

## THE EXPERIENCE TRAP

As budgets shrink, the costs of employing experienced teachers quickly becomes an issue. Experience isn’t cheap, with

the result that schools have to carefully consider whether they can afford to employ

certain members of staff.

Education is one of the few job sectors

where experience can actively hinder you. I have friends who chose not to advance to the upper pay scale because it would make them too costly.

Sadly, there are some teachers stuck in schools because they’re too costly to move elsewhere. They want to move but can’t, trapped as they are by their own levels of experience.

Nor is that the only trap. Would you rather employ an assistant head with experience of the role or one without? I know of individuals who have missed out on senior jobs due to lack of experience – but how can they earn that experience without ever serving in the post? We have staff who want to move on, but are prevented from doing so through no fault of their own.

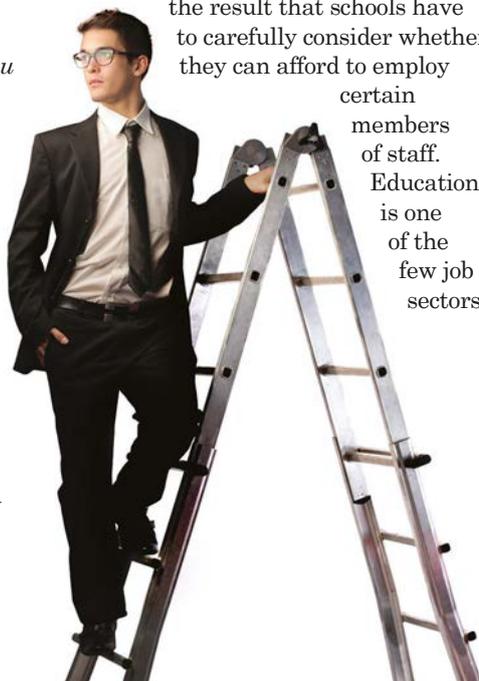
## SECURITY VERSUS FLEXIBILITY

The business world tends to operate around supply and demand, but not so the education profession. This lack of responsiveness is part of the problem – schools can quickly change exam boards, GCSEs and marking policies, but the speed at which teachers can change their context is glacial.

We may have a certain level of security with our jobs, but with that security comes comparatively little flexibility. If we want to retain teachers, we must empower and support them in finding the right job for them. This needn’t always involve promotion; rather, we should afford them the opportunities and support they’ll need to identify their ideal school and role.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris Curtis is an English teacher and author of the book *How to Teach English* (£16.99, Crown House Publishing); follow him at @Xris32 or visit [learningfrommymistakesenglish.blogspot.com](http://learningfrommymistakesenglish.blogspot.com)



# The language of LANDSCAPES

**Steve Brace** explains how geography teachers can tell rich stories and unravel puzzling mysteries while teaching students about landscape features...

Wherever we live, be it in one of the UK's largest cities or a rural village, the location's physical geography will inexorably influence our lives, shared environment, economy and communities.

Consequently, landscape features are the focus of much cutting-edge academic research – such as the explorations by Dr Chris Skinner into whether it's 'small and often' or 'large and infrequent' change that does more to alter landscapes. Such questions lead to the fascinating geomorphological conundrum of *'Which came first – the valley or the river?'*

Whether it's the inherent characteristics of coasts or drylands, or the features created by rivers and ice movements, these are the essential elements of pupils' knowledge regarding physical geography. Such knowledge is vital if the impacts and interdependencies of humans on the environment are to be understood – from our need to manage flood risks and coastal erosion, to how the retreat of glaciers will impact on our water supplies.

At the heart of all this are the processes of weathering

and erosion, the means by which the Earth's surface is broken down and changed, and how the resulting sediment is transported and subsequently deposited. Typically, this will include teaching about weathering and erosion, and how the two differ.

## Weathering

Weathering is the process by which rocks and minerals at the surface are broken down or dissolved 'in-situ'. There are different types of weathering, which include:

- Physical weathering, such as by freeze-thaw and exfoliation
- Biological weathering, stemming from the impact of plants and animals
- Chemical weathering, resulting from reactions with the atmosphere and/or water

Weathering breaks rocks down to create sediment which, when combined with organic materials, creates soil. Tried and tested ways of recreating weathering include:

**1. Freezing a can of drink to show how the expansion of ice puts pressure on the can and deforms its shape.** When water gets into the cracks of rocks it can break those rocks up. The resulting materials then fall downwards, forming the scree slopes often seen below escarpments.

**2. Placing a piece of limestone (or concrete, which contains limestone) in vinegar to replicate the effects of acid rain.** The acid in the vinegar reacts with the limestone to produce bubbles of CO<sub>2</sub> which, over time, will weaken your rock sample. This same process – albeit over a very long period of time – is what shaped the famous limestone pavement found at Malham Cove in North Yorkshire.

**3. Sowing seeds between the cracks of paving slabs, and waiting to see how the plants' growth may lead to heave and subsequently crack the slabs.** In a similar vein, you

can search a beach for rocks and pebbles with round holes bored into them. In the UK, these will typically be the result of a clam that bores into rock called a piddock.

## Erosion

Erosion differs from weathering in that erosion involves the transportation of materials via the movement and actions of water, wind or ice, with gravity providing a helping hand. The processes of erosion typically covered in the geography classroom will include:

**Hydraulic action:** The power of water crashing against a sea cliff can crack, splinter and ultimately remove rocks.

**Abrasion:** This refers to how the transportation of materials can lead to the surfaces they travel over becoming worn down. Consider how, for example, glaciers will grind any rocks frozen in its ice against underlying rock surfaces.

**Attrition:** As a river transports rocks and pebbles downstream they will collide with each other, thus causing their edges to chip off and the pebbles themselves to become smaller and smoother.

**Solution:** The presence of water (particularly sea water) can dissolve certain materials. Cliffs composed of either chalk or limestone are especially vulnerable to this type of erosion.

There are many ways of visualising such processes within a school setting. Hydraulic action can be readily demonstrated by using a power-hose to sweep away gravel, while scraping a frozen tub of pebbles and ice across a paving slab will replicate the striations of glaciers. You even illustrate the impact of attrition on pupils' bags of crisps or biscuits following a full day of fieldwork...

### Landscape 'nouns' and 'verbs'

Geography teachers can foreground the dynamism of these natural change processes by adopting an enquiry-based approach to

exploring the why, how and where of the features they produce. This can in turn encourage the use of geographically-focused (and therefore relevant) questioning that draws on appropriate data, modelling and concepts. Examples of this might include:

- Why is there a road in the Norfolk village of Happisburgh that goes straight over a cliff?
- Why is there a WWII-era concrete pill box situated on the beach at Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex?
- Around the turn of the 20th century, large erratic boulders made up of volcanic rock were discovered around Birmingham, which were subsequently found to have originally formed in the area we now know as North Wales. How did they manage to travel so far?

Looking beyond the UK, many pupils will also enjoy finding out about the features of unfamiliar landscapes, such

## MAPPING THE CHANGES

The study of features and their underlying processes can be aided through the use of maps at different scales. Good examples include an online case study of the erosion that's affected the Holderness Coast produced by Esri UK (see [bit.ly/ts114-geo1](http://bit.ly/ts114-geo1)), and a resource exploring the erosion of Happisburgh by the Digimap for Schools online mapping service (see [bit.ly/ts114-geo2](http://bit.ly/ts114-geo2)).

The Royal Geographical Society meanwhile has a resource that shows the changing morphology of the River Thames along its 346km course from Thames Head to the sea, which draws on three Ordnance Survey map extracts ([bit.ly/ts114-geo3](http://bit.ly/ts114-geo3)).



desert yardangs or permafrost pingos. That said, there's value in using non-UK case studies to study 'common' geomorphological processes – not every process occurring beyond the UK will be markedly different, and exploring such commonalities can provide useful context.

Indeed, pupils could get as much out of studying coastal processes locally – thanks to no UK school being more 70

miles from the sea – as they could from exploring their impact in other countries, such as the UAE or Ghana.

Geography as a subject is sometimes described as equating to 'The language of our landscapes'. By gaining a firm grasp of our landscape's 'nouns' (the characteristics of its physical features) and 'verbs' (the dynamic processes that help create them), pupils can become much more fluent in their understanding of how landscapes are formed and change over time.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Brace is a former geography teacher, now head of education at the Royal Geographical Society, working closely with the DfE, Ofsted and Ofqual – follow him at [@stevebracegeog](https://twitter.com/stevebracegeog)

For more information about the RGS' support for geography, visit [rgs.org/schools](http://rgs.org/schools) or follow [@RGS\\_IBGschools](https://twitter.com/RGS_IBGschools)

**“Foreground the dynamism of natural change processes by adopting an enquiry-based approach to the why, how and where of the features they produce”**

# 5 REASONS TO TRY... The Met Office education programme

Discover free learning resources that explore the impact of weather and climate change



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

The Met Office's education programme combines world-leading meteorology expertise with a sense of fun and adventure. Its free, curriculum-linked learning materials help young people understand the wide-reaching impacts of weather and climate change locally and globally – for people, places and businesses.

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Our re-energised education programme has been created with primary and secondary school teachers across the UK to ensure it's rooted in what teachers really need. Our free resources aim to spark young people's curiosity in the world around them, and help them understand the effects of weather and climate on their community. As well as being designed to align with curriculums across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the majority of the materials are available in Welsh language versions.

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The programme is flexible, enabling it to fit into whatever timeslot you have with little preparation. You can combine activities to cover topics in greater depth, or use shorter activities to supplement planned teaching. To help you get started we've created schemes of work that can be delivered in as little as 10 minutes, or take up to 90 minutes for those who want to deliver the resources as part of a themed day or week of planned activities, or focus on a particular topic. Further details on this can be found on the schools' hub's Educator Guide.



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as students navigate different viewpoints and information from multiple sources.

### 4 OPENS UP THE CLIMATE CHANGE CONVERSATION

We know that teachers and students alike are looking for a greater focus on climate change in lessons from a reliable source. That's why we've introduced a new collection of climate change education resources that cover jargon-busting, interpreting climate data, exploring emotional responses to climate change and more. Building knowledge and understanding of the effects of climate change is crucial, as it will impact many more people and the jobs they do in the future.

### 5 OFFERS A RANGE OF DELIVERY METHODS

As well as adopting a cross-curricular approach to weather and climate teaching, we've created a range of activities to suit different learning styles. These include creative explorations, research tasks, individual and group challenges, hands-on practical experiments and design projects. All have been created to focus on building four key skills – creativity, problem-solving, leadership and teamwork – while highlighting careers and pathways relating to weather and climate throughout.

## KEY POINTS

The programme has been co-created with educators to ensure materials align with different curriculums, offer support for a range of ability levels and build essential transferable skills

You can explore brand new Philosophy for Children (P4C) inspired activities that encourage young people to explore 'big questions' around weather and climate change through healthy group discussion

Our supporting resources also seek to introduce students to the wide range of career avenues available within weather and climate, to support your in-school careers provision

Accompanying step-by-step activity plans, supporting slides and videos can be freely accessed via the Met Office website – visit [metoffice.gov.uk/schools](https://metoffice.gov.uk/schools)

# CHANGE THE CULTURE, SHARE THE POWER

The spread of sexual abuse and harassment within schools demands a response – so let's change the systems that allow such harms to thrive, says **Barry Mansfield**

**D**uring summer 2021, in the wake of the 'Everyone's Invited' revelations, Ofsted launched an inquiry into sexual abuse in schools (see [bit.ly/ts114-tc3](https://bit.ly/ts114-tc3)) that produced some shocking, if perhaps not unexpected findings.

The resulting report attempted to highlight long-standing problems, while providing leaders and safeguarding teams with guidance on how they might tackle related issues in their schools. Its proposed remedies could be categorised under three areas – training, robust behavioural standards and improved systems.

What it didn't do, however, was identify causes or acknowledge wider structural problems – at least not intentionally.

## Teaching consent

For example, the report asks schools to 'Reinforce a culture where sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are not tolerated' – which seems to assume that there are competing cultures, some of which might have greater tolerance for abuse than others.

Abuse is fundamentally the exercise of power by one individual or group over another. At its simplest, power is expressed through action and language, which in turn shapes culture. 'Entitlement' is simply the unspoken, or unacknowledged expectation that one has power – that one's words or actions need no justification or reflection, because this is



the accepted norm.

None of this is revelatory. But if there's no recognition that *teaching consent* amounts to *confronting power*, and all its associated cultural norms, then the guidance starts to seem rather reactive and lightweight.

According to the government's own RSE and Health Education guidelines (see [bit.ly/ts114-tc2](https://bit.ly/ts114-tc2)), schools are now tasked with teaching consent, including "The age of consent, what consent is and is not, the definitions and recognition of rape, sexual assault and harassment." Schools are also required to teach "How people can actively communicate and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent, and how and when consent can be withdrawn (in all contexts, including online)."

This is all purposeful and entirely appropriate, of course – but the evidence we have tells us that incidents of sexual assault are chronically under-reported; that withholding consent is not a protection in itself, and that violence against women and girls in particular

remains commonplace – consider the recent cases involving Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa, and Jess Phillips' annual reading out in Parliament of the names of women murdered that year by men.

## Reducing the footprint

If we're to properly examine the overwhelming evidence of widespread sexual harassment within schools, one has to acknowledge that the male exercise of power – be it abusive authority figures in the workplace, inequitable pay structures, the data used to design everyday objects or numerous other areas of women's lives – isn't going to be undone after a couple of PSHE lessons.

We can, however, get our own houses in order by considering the cultures of our schools, and intentionally developing them so that power is diversified and the footprint of entitlement reduced.

Every student arrives at school from a different cultural space. They bring with them a history and context that's largely

unknown to their teachers. Yet every young person – and girls in particular – should find themselves in a place where they're taught that *adults listen*; that as students, they possess some degree of agency, they can make a difference and are secure.

They should learn that the possession of power needn't be tied to caveats or threats. Instead, they should see power modelled equitably, wielded with moral authority, and see that action can and should be invested in women, just as much as men.

This isn't just about creating spaces that give power to young women. It's about creating spaces that simultaneously provide opportunities for young men to explore their entitlement, and understand that their choices around consent aren't particular moments in time, but rather the culmination of a culture that can blind them to their own personal impact on others' lives.

The moral responsibility of school leaders isn't to just be arbiters or enforcers, but to also be facilitators, risk-takers and explorers. By creating cultures in which power is distributed, we can ensure that sexual violence and misogyny have no place to grow.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barry Mansfield is the Director of Halcyon London International School; for more information, visit [halcyonschool.com](https://halcyonschool.com)

# Call of THE WILD

What good can come from taking a group of Y9s wild camping in an environment they're often completely unfamiliar with? Quite lot, as it happens, explains **Steve Priday**...

**C**hallenge 24 is an in-house initiative we've developed at Bedminster Down School. It's an opportunity we offer our pupils to camp overnight in Dartmoor, which for many of them, will be an environment that's considerably outside of their comfort zone.

The key aim is to simply give them that experience of being outdoors. There's no physical training, or even any specific activities involved. It's more a case of us saying, *'We're going to take you to this environment, a place you might not have considered visiting before, and give you the chance to experience what it's like'*.

Some of our students return from a Challenge 24 trip never wanting to go there again, having decided it's not for them. But we've seen time and time again just how life-changing it can be for students who have never been to Dartmoor, or anywhere like it before. We've seen students really thrive in the environment, and decide they want to spend more time in it – something they might never have discovered, had we not provided them with the experience.

## A challenging year

Our very first Challenge 24 trip went out in September 2017. We now organise trips across the Thursday and Friday of each week during half terms 1, 4, 5 and 6 –

they're optional, entirely free of charge for students and their families, and for Y9s only.

While it's true that Y9 can be a challenging year, thus far I've not experienced any untoward behaviours on the trips, beyond the kids being bit noisy and boisterous at times. I've been in the school for 13 years now, so most of the Y9s know me well and what my expectations are.

Dartmoor is one of few places in the UK where you

they wanted to share a tent with – though that soon started presenting logistical challenges when friendship groups would suddenly break up.

What I do now is take a portion of students from the same tutor group at a time. The teacher will come out on the trip with us too, giving them the chance to spend some quality time getting to properly know their tutor group.

A couple of years back we

**“It really opens students’ eyes to possibilities that weren’t there before”**

can legally wild camp, and we've made sure that the campsite location we regularly use ticks a number of boxes. It's a spot close to areas of natural interest that feels remote, but is only around a mile away from where we park the minibus in case there's an issue where we need to call in help or support – not that that's happened so far.

## Quality time

Because it's a non-compulsory activity (albeit one we strongly encourage pupils and parents to take part in), the group sizes can vary, though they typically comprise around 10 to 12 pupils each time. Initially, I took groups drawn from different Y9 tutor groups, letting pupils tell me who

made the further decision to take out single-sex groups only. What I've observed is that without any girls around, the boys on Challenge 24 trips simply become boys again – wanting to run off, play Manhunt and the like.

Boys and girls alike seem much more at ease on the trips now than when they were in mixed groups. They're already staying overnight in what will be a difficult, unfamiliar environment for most them; removing the self-consciousness that students their age can often feel when around peers of the opposite sex helps them to feel much more relaxed, and more willing to engage with their surroundings.

## Set itinerary

Each trip follows a fairly set itinerary. The process begins with a comprehensive letter to parents and carers, outlining what the trip will entail, the kind of clothes participants should wear and what clothes to avoid. On the day itself, the students attend morning registration wearing the clothes they'll going out in and will have a small bag containing a spare outfit and any specific items of food they want to take.

Once the bell goes for period 1, I'll meet the group in a classroom adjoining my equipment store and spend 90 minutes issuing students with all the camping equipment they'll need, talking them through the various items. We never expect pupils to own any of the items – hiking boots, rucksacks sleeping bags, etc. – though they're welcome to bring their own if they do.

I've managed to secure the school's equipment supply via a range of different sources over the years – some from shop purchases, some through charities such as Gift Your Gear, and some picked up from contacts I have in the Armed Forces.

We'll then pack our bags and I'll distribute the students' food supplies – enough items to sustain them over the trip, which at most involve simple preparation with boiling water. After a packed lunch for that day from the school canteen, their evening meal will consist of a Pot Noodle and Jaffa Cakes. Breakfast the following morning will comprise a cereal bar and a porridge pot. That said, the kids have the option to augment that selection with any other foods they wish to bring along.

Having packed, we make our way to the minibus and travel out to Dartmoor, which typically takes around two and a quarter hours. My dog, a little border terrier called Eddie, always comes out with us and is very much a 'part of the offer', being incredibly good with children.

After parking up, we'll

have our packed lunches, put on our bags and strike out towards the campsite, which usually takes as long as it takes. A couple of trips ago we had a child with us who had mild cerebral palsy – two other boys carried his bags, while the rest of us walked at 'ambling pace', taking our time so that the journey was accessible for him.

### Realising the possibilities

At the campsite I'll demonstrate how to put up a tent, encouraging everyone to watch and listen *very closely* – because if they don't, they're not going to have a very comfortable night's sleep. That usually gets their attention. When the tents are all up, the students are given time to independently explore their surroundings – within certain boundaries, but with some free rein to observe some of the local wildlife.

After this, I'll demonstrate how they should use their cookers to boil water and prepare their meals. Once dinner has been eaten and everything's packed away, they get to decide how they want to spend the remaining time until it gets dark – often simply sitting and chatting, sometimes playing games of Manhunt or similar. Depending on the time of year, the cut-off point will usually be 9pm to 10pm, after which they need to be in their tents.

The following morning, we're normally up somewhere between 6 and 6.30. There will be a further cooking demonstration before breakfast, after which we'll take down the tents, pack up, return to the minibus and be back at school by early Friday afternoon.

Our students aren't able to participate in Challenge

24 more than once, though many ask to. I'll usually encourage those individuals to consider training for the Ten Tors challenge, or enrolling in the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Because that's what this experience does – it really opens students' eyes to possibilities that weren't there before, which we as a school do our best to encourage wherever we can.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Priday is outdoor education lead at Bedminster Down School, having previously been a sergeant in the Royal Military Police and instructor for the education charity Skillforce; for more information, visit [bedminsterdown.org.uk](http://bedminsterdown.org.uk) or follow @BdownSchool

# What's New?

Our pick of the latest solutions and innovations for secondary education

## 1 Helping hand

The InDependent Diabetes Trust offers support and information to people with diabetes, their families and health professionals on the issues that are important to them. Our helpline offers a friendly understanding ear when the going gets tough.

IDDT also supplies information packs to parents and teachers to help them better understand the needs of children with diabetes in school, and provides much-needed aid to children with diabetes in developing countries.

Diabetes can cause serious long-term complications – with a cure still elusive, IDDT additionally funds essential research. As a registered charity, IDDT relies entirely on voluntary donations.

For more information, or to join IDDT, contact 01604 622 837, email [martin@iddtinternational.org](mailto:martin@iddtinternational.org) or visit [iddtinternational.org](http://iddtinternational.org)



## 2

### Teaching Teachers Tech

BCS Teaching Teachers Tech is an 8-week flexible programme of study, designed to give secondary school teachers and those aspiring to enter teaching an opportunity to improve or update their knowledge in the Python programming language up to GCSE standard.

This programme, which has previously only been available to graduates undertaking a computer science ITT course, will now be accessible to the wider teaching community.

BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, is looking to run a pilot in the near future – readers interested in finding out more can sign up via [bit.ly/ts114-bcs](http://bit.ly/ts114-bcs), and will receive more information when it becomes available in due course.

### Writing in a changing world!

Back in 2006, Pilot launched its 'Begreen' range – eco-designed products that were 85% refillable and manufactured with a minimum of 70% recycled plastic (excluding consumables). This pioneering approach allowed Pilot to be the first manufacturer worldwide to offer more environmentally-friendly writing instruments.

Pilot is now aiming to offer its Begreen products at the same price point and quality level as its standard products, making them ideal for use in classrooms by both teachers and pupils alike. From ballpoints and gel ink rollerball pens, to whiteboard markers and highlighters, the range spans every item schools might need.

This year has also seen Pilot introduce plastic waste reclaimed from beaches into the composition of its B2P pens, as part of a collaboration with recycling specialist, Terracycle. To mark the occasion, Pilot has launched the B2P Ecoball pen made of 86.64%\* recycled plastic bottles, 2.5% of which comprise recycled ocean plastic. For more details, visit [pilotpen.co.uk](http://pilotpen.co.uk)



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## Can't hold it back

Prepare to fall in love with Disney's *Frozen* all over again, as a brand-new theatrical experience – and winner of seven WhatsOnStage Awards – arrives in London's Theatre Royal Drury Lane.

Incredible special effects, stunning costumes and jaw-dropping scenery all help to bring Elsa and Anna's journey to life in a whole new way. Featuring all the beloved songs from the movie, as well as a few surprises from the writers behind 'Let it Go', you'll be transported to Arendelle from the moment the curtain rises.

*Frozen* is brought to the stage by an award-winning creative team, with direction by Tony® and Olivier Award winner Michael Grandage and a book by Academy® and BAFTA Award-winner Jennifer Lee. The show features the cherished songs from the original film, alongside new songs by Grammy® and Academy Award-winning writers Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez.

Visit [frozeneducation.co.uk](http://frozeneducation.co.uk) for a range of free lesson plans and enrichment resources for schools.



Photo by Johan Persson © Disney

## 4

### Safeguarding connections

The Safeguarding Company is pleased to announce our launch of a brand new online community. Free to access, this community is intended to be a space where safeguarders can connect in order to seek support, share resources and receive advice.

The Safeguarding Community has three different rooms: a 'Staff Room' for day-to-day communications, an 'International Room' and a 'Safe Room', in which anonymous questions can be posted.

We understand that safeguarding can often be a challenging and lonely job. We believe this community will be beneficial to the mental health and wellbeing of those involved with safeguarding, giving them a much-needed safe space in which to connect with others who understand what they're feeling. For more details, visit [thesafeguardingcompany.com](http://thesafeguardingcompany.com)

We have launched!

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## 5





### Prepare for success

As one of the leading vocational publishers, Hodder Education has been publishing resources for the Cambridge Nationals qualifications for over 10 years, and supported over 2,700 centres with our Student Textbooks, digital resources and training events.

Using this experience and feedback from hundreds of teachers, it has now developed a brand new suite of resources that will guide your learners through the redeveloped Level 1/Level 2 Cambridge Nationals courses and beyond. To find out more, visit [hoddereducation.co.uk/cambridge-nationals-2022](http://hoddereducation.co.uk/cambridge-nationals-2022) or contact [cambridgenationals@hoddereducation.co.uk](mailto:cambridgenationals@hoddereducation.co.uk)

### Rapid sanitisation

LapSafe® offers an extensive range of mobile storage and charging trolleys – the safest available on today's market. Having specialised in safe power management solutions, enabling convenient charging and data transfer for laptops, Chromebooks, tablets and other mobile devices, LapSafe® has now introduced a new item for 2021 in the form of the UV-C sanitiser station.

This innovative product can be added to an existing LapSafe® self-service locker configuration or used as a standalone appliance. The semi-automated UV-C sanitising unit will sanitise in around 15 to 20 seconds, deactivating 99% of bacteria and some viruses exposed to its high-intensity UV-C light. To find out more, contact [sales@lapsafe.com](mailto:sales@lapsafe.com) or visit [LapSafe.com](http://LapSafe.com)



### Plug and play

*"I'd put a @HUEcameras visualiser on your 'need' list – I still use mine daily, six years on!"* – Nick Dempster, teacher and computing lead, Southport

HUE products are easy to use, affordable and perfect for classroom teaching and hybrid learning. The award-winning HUE HD Pro classroom camera is capable of Full HD 1080p image and video resolution, and features a built-in microphone and LED lighting. No installation or training is required – simply plug and play with any device or app that can recognise a USB camera, such as Zoom, Teams or Scratch. Flexible, portable and versatile, the HUE HD Pro can be used to variously share maths calculations, livestream science experiments and record videos for revision or flipped teaching purposes.

Priced at £49.95 + VAT, it's available to order from [huehd.com](http://huehd.com); for more information, follow [@HUEcameras](https://twitter.com/HUEcameras)



### Plan now, succeed later

Global investment firm T.Rowe Price has launched a free financial education programme that aims to equip young people aged 11-16 with the skills and knowledge to set goals and plan for confident financial futures.

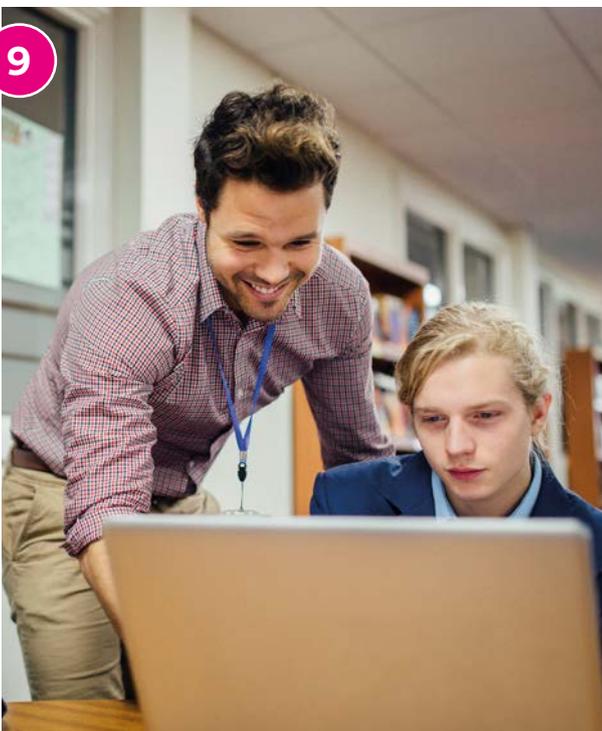
Money Confident Kids links to the maths and PSHE curricula, helping teachers deliver impactful lessons that build confidence and financial skills, while showing how the financial choices students make today can positively impact their lives in the future.

The modular resources follow a young, relatable character as she journeys through education and into the world of work, allowing educators the flexibility to plan according to their teaching priorities and students' needs.

For more details, visit [moneyconfidentkids.com](http://moneyconfidentkids.com)

**MONEY CONFIDENT Kids**

Presented by **T.RowePrice**



### Money savvy

When it comes to delivering quality financial education to your students, it can be difficult knowing where to start – which is why Young Enterprise's Advisory Service is here to help!

From signposting specific Quality Mark teaching resources via the organisation's Resource Hub, to offering guidance on how to create a whole scheme of work with the help of its Financial Education Planning Framework, Young Enterprise's expert team can support you in becoming more confident in your delivery of financial education.

To find out more, contact 020 4526 6389 or email [advisory@y-e.org.uk](mailto:advisory@y-e.org.uk); for further details of how the Advisory Service can help, visit [young-enterprise.org.uk/advisoryservice](http://young-enterprise.org.uk/advisoryservice)

10

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# LEARNING LAB

## IN THIS ISSUE

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- + The trouble with transitions
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- + A short guide to mastering modelling
- + The Commission on Young Lives takes aim at school exclusions
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- + How becoming an examiner could give your career a boost
- + 5 tips for great classroom presentations

## CONTRIBUTORS

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### ADAM RICHES

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PE teacher and school achievement leader



## Thinking about ...

# CHILDREN AND SELF-ESTEEM

When I was 7, a teacher at my school told my class that a character in a play we were doing was American, and asked if anyone wanted to play that role. I was born in America, so my hand shot up and I volunteered. The teacher then made me stand up and instructed me to, 'Be American.' I had no idea what to do. I don't remember what I did in fact do, but I do recall feeling embarrassed and humiliated – and not getting the part.

The teacher probably didn't give the incident a second thought, but it certainly left a great impact on me. I'd buried the memory away for many years, but it came back to me recently when I began writing my new kids' book, *Britain's Smartest Kid...On Ice!*

The main character, Marsham, is very clever. At home, he correctly answers all the questions on the TV quiz shows he watches with his family, but at his new secondary school he's bullied for being clever. Consequently, he hides his intelligence when at school and becomes an average pupil. That way, he can avoid both the limelight and the bullies.

The idea was inspired by a book called *How Children Fail* by John Holt, which I read when training to be

a teacher in the early 1990s. Holt realised something that many children work out for themselves – that if they do well at something, then the expectations people have of them rise, along with the demands and responsibilities placed on them. So many instead choose to fail, or not do as well they could.

In essence, this means that many children don't fulfil their true potential because they're scared to; scared of the consequences of doing well, of succeeding. When I first read that book, I found myself weeping. It felt as if that was the path I'd gone down – one where I knew I could have done better, but was too scared to.

Perhaps the incident with the school play contributed to that, I'm sure there were other factors involved, but it took me years to feel that I was achieving anything like my potential (which can, of course, can mean different things to different people).

In my book, Marsham resorts to entering a 'Britain's Smartest Kid' competition in disguise, with mixed consequences. But eventually, through the story he comes to realise that tough as it may be, he can't hide behind a disguise. If he truly wants to live up to his potential, he has to be himself.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ivor Baddiel is a former teacher turned children's author and writer for television; *Britain's Smartest Kid...On Ice!* is available now (£7.99, Scholastic)

## SPIN YOUR WHEEL



As a teacher, it's not often that you get to idly spin your wheels during a lesson. There are always so many things to think about, and so many different students to support and adapt for in real time. If, however, you've previously felt your energy levels start to wane during a lesson, or haven't quite managed to get the lesson start right, then 'spinning the wheel' can actually be a useful concept to bear in mind.

Imagine that there's an energy line running through your lesson. Does the energy level ever dip? Does the focus of your class gradually dissipate away from you? In either case, energy and focus can often be difficult to restore once they've been lost.

Consider the very start of

your lesson as an initial spin on a wheel, then plan in 'reboots' as the lesson progresses. The most important spin on the wheel is the first – pay this the most attention, and avoid anything that will run the risk of a disjointed start. Don't use this time for housekeeping tasks, like collecting in homework – you can do that once everyone has got going.

Begin with something that's pacy, achievable and interesting. Lots of schools will tackle this with a 'do now' protocol. Personally, I'll often plan a quick set of 'true or false' questions, both to recap recent (and less recent) content, but also to stimulate discussion.

You can then inject some energy reboots at certain points. If you've been

circulating the room giving feedback, and students are starting to chat and stare out the window, seize that moment to have another spin on the wheel. This could involve some quick quizzing, sharing of new information, cold-calling, or even a change of task. Whatever you choose, give it some energy to bring everyone back, and the momentum should propel you all forward.

Design and deliver your lessons with these 'wheel spins' in mind. Some will be planned, others might be performed 'in the moment'. Instead of having to expend energy on reminding individuals to stay on task, you should hopefully find that your energy is instead going into livening up the lesson itself, to everyone's benefit.

## TRY THIS

### TRANSFORM YOUR TRANSITIONS

*EXERCISE BETTER CLASS CONTROL WITH THESE TIPS FROM ROBIN LAUNDER...*

As every teacher knows, periods of transition have the potential to trash your lesson. All that lovely calm and focus can go in an instant, replaced by students wanting to chat to their mates, swing on their chairs, check their phones – the list goes on. Even in the absence of any misbehaviour, transitions are still dead time. The longer they take, the less time there is for teaching and learning.

It follows that transitions deserve special attention. In fact, the trick with transitions is to view them as activities in their own right. We wouldn't let students perform an activity without some planning on our part – likewise, we should pre-plan our transitions.

At the very least, do this:

- End the previous activity crisply, and instantly start the transition
- Have your own resources organised and ready to use
- Have the students' resources organised and ready to use
- Hand out resources when students are engaged in work – they're not to be touched until you say so
- Issue instructions clearly and succinctly (rehearse them beforehand)
- Teach routines for giving out and collecting in work, items of equipment, etc.
- Begin the next part of the lesson promptly

By viewing transitions as activities in their own right, you can rid your classes of dead time for good.

**Robin Launder is a behaviour management consultant and speaker; find more tips in his weekly Better Behaviour online course – see [behaviourbuddy.co.uk](http://behaviourbuddy.co.uk) for more details**



**REBECCA LEEK HAS BEEN A SECONDARY AND PRIMARY CLASSROOM TEACHER, HEAD OF DEPARTMENT, SENCO AND HEADTEACHER; SHE IS CURRENTLY THE CEO OF SEAMAT – A TRUST OF THREE SCHOOLS IN SOUTH ESSEX**

# 31%

of 11 to 16-year-olds say they are unclear as to what measures they can take to be more environmentally-friendly

Source: Research commissioned by the charities 1851 Trust and Hubbub

Last month saw the launch of a new national charity that's seeking better access to general learning and personal/social education for children and young people with Down syndrome.

The organisation, Learn and Thrive, is now hosting two distinct resource libraries aimed at both school and home users – 'Teach me too' for EYFS to KS1, and 'Learning for Life' for KS2 to KS4. The latter includes a resource series for 10 to 18-year-olds dubbed 'Growing Up and Keeping Safe,' which covers themes and topics relating to notions of public versus private, personal space and boundaries.

According to Lucy Clark – a specialist teacher at the training and consultancy provider Inclusively Down, which partnered with Learn and Thrive on producing the material – "The overriding theme for this series is teaching children and young people with Down syndrome to respond appropriately, stay safe and look after themselves within appropriate boundaries. This is such a vital topic, as these skills are so important when engaging in their wider communities and potential workplaces as they get older."

Find out more at [learnandthrive.org.uk](http://learnandthrive.org.uk)

## YOUR GUIDE TO ...

### MODELLING

Modelling is one of the most valuable tools you can call upon to help students effectively and efficiently learn a new topic or skill. Seeing a concept in its final form can strengthen schema, reduce ambiguity and significantly shorten the time required for mastery.

#### I do, we do, you do

Varying your approach to modelling is key to success. By gradually increasing the desirable difficulty, students are able to build self efficacy.

Start by modelling yourself, as an expert, in the 'I do'. Move to collaborative discussions and peer-supported modelling in the 'we do', and most importantly, give students an opportunity to work independently during the 'you do'.

You may find that there is still some level of scaffolding during the latter, but the process of application is what's really important here, as this is what allows us to check for understanding.

#### Live modelling

Live modelling is a valuable metacognitive tool that enables us to narrate the thought process

behind the application of a particular skill or idea. Learners can be walked through step by step, in a way that enables them to see the different moving parts. As an expert, you can then add the additional detail, so that your students can understand how everything fits together.

Using a live approach also lets you address misconceptions as they arise, as there's so much more to success than just arriving the right answer.

#### You're not making it easy

When we model, it can feel as though we're doing the work for our students. In one sense, we are – we're giving them a blueprint for success – but don't see this as detracting from learning. What it's actually doing is *streamlining the learning*.

By providing a variety of stimulus, and giving students tasks through which they can apply the knowledge from modelling phases, we maintain the rigour required for learning. What's crucial is to get learners applying what's been modelled for them. That way, you can check that what you've delivered has been processed.



ADAM RICHES IS A SENIOR LEADER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING;  
FOLLOW HIM AT @TEACHMRRICHES

# 79%

of surveyed education professionals believe that following the COVID pandemic, hybrid teaching approaches will become a permanent part of the education landscape

Source: 'Education in a post-COVID world' research report produced by YPO

## Need to know

The year-long Commission on Young Lives, headed by former Children's Commissioner Anne Longfield, has produced its third thematic report (following two others on social care and family support), this time focusing on what it describes as the 'exclusion culture' within English schools.

Drawing on interviews and testimonials with a number of educators, social workers, youth workers, parents and children, the report sets out how: primary and secondary exclusions remain high; alternative provision arrangements are failing to provide children with a good standard of education; a disproportionately large number of Black children continue to be excluded; and how the existing inspections system creates perverse incentives for 'off-rolling'.

The report's recommendations include banning all primary exclusions from 2026, while providing schools with additional support and resources that enable them to provide specialist provision. For secondaries, the Commission recommends that exclusions become a genuine tool of last resort, subject to sign-off by an academy/MAT CEO or director of children's services.

To read the report in full, visit [bit.ly/ts114-LL1](https://bit.ly/ts114-LL1)



## INCOMING THE NATURAL HISTORY GCSE

**As part of its recently unveiled sustainability and climate strategy, the government has announced its intention to introduce a new natural history GCSE by 2025. Those studying for new exam will apparently, "Explore organisms and environments in more depth, gain knowledge and practical experience of fieldwork and develop a greater understanding of conservation."**

Exam board OCR has been tasked with developing the natural history GCSE, and plans to share more information regarding the subject content in the near future. While the government has committed to seeing it taught as an option for 14- to 16-year-olds within the next three years, it will still need to clear the hurdle of Ofqual approval before that time.

The announcement was warmly received by the Field Studies Council, which hailed the news as a 'major win'. According to the organisation's chief executive, Mark Castle, "The launch of the new natural history GCSE is a major win for young people and the environment, and we are delighted to have played our part alongside many individuals, environmental organisations and leading exam board OCR in making it happen.

"It will meet demand demonstrated

by young people themselves who have a desire to understand the environment in which they live. It will also be an important qualification for those students wanting to work in the environmental sector and play their part in helping to combat biodiversity loss and limit the impact of climate change — it really does mark an extraordinary moment in the development of the GCSE curriculum."

He went on to caution, however, that "While this is great news for older students, we must ensure that learners of all ages, and not just those who study a natural history GCSE, have opportunities to explore the natural world first hand, and are given the chance to connect with nature and experience high quality outdoor learning as a core part of their time at school."

Other changes for schools promised as part of the government's wider climate strategy include the availability of high quality curriculum resources for teaching sustainability and climate change at KS1-3, plus the rollout of 'carbon literacy training'. The latter is intended to support the government's intention to have at least one sustainability lead appointed in all locally maintained nurseries, schools, colleges and universities.



Try this

## Become an examiner

Examining and moderating is a rewarding and interesting experience that can be undertaken alongside your existing role. It can offer a range of professional and personal benefits.

As an Examiner or Moderator, you will gain invaluable insight into the assessment process. You will have the opportunity to enhance your skillset and increase your understanding of your subject, all of which can inform your teaching.

Once you are an experienced Examiner or Moderator, there will be opportunities to progress to a more senior role, such as Team Leader or Principal Examiner / Moderator. Such

roles involve working at the very heart of your subject, undertaking tasks such as writing question papers and mark schemes, helping to develop new specifications or managing a team of subject specialists.

The role also offers ample networking opportunities with other teachers delivering the same specification. The examining and moderating process involves frequent discussion and sharing of best practice that you'll doubtless find beneficial.

We provide first class training, guidance and support throughout the assessment process, to ensure that you're confident in the work you'll be undertaking.

Via our extensive support network you can contact your dedicated Team Leader or Principal Examiner, as well as our Appointees team, while working through your allocated scripts.

The role is flexible, designed to fit alongside your existing teaching duties for the duration of the short marking period, and can be completed from home. We offer Examiners and Moderators a competitive pay package for work undertaken, and also cover travel expenses for attendance at meetings, if required. Terms and conditions apply.

To find out more and to apply, visit [appointees.wjec.co.uk](http://appointees.wjec.co.uk)

## TRENDING

Our pick of the recent resources and launches teachers might find useful...

### YOU HUM IT, I'LL PLAY IT

Music teachers will want to check out Classroom 200 - an online service developed by ABRSM hosting a broad mix of music pieces spanning multiple genres and accompanying lesson plans, a key aim of which will be to help students identify links between divergent musical styles and material they're already familiar with. [classroom200.org](http://classroom200.org)

### HIT THE COURT

The US-based National Basketball Association has launched an educational programme by the name of 'NBA in the Classroom', which includes a range of downloadable resources suitable for UK secondary school teachers. Spanning the subjects of PE and PSHE, the topics covered include mental wellbeing, financial management and careers planning, as well as basketball skills. [classroom.nba.com](http://classroom.nba.com)

## TEACHER WALKTHROUGH

### 5 TIPS FOR GREAT PRESENTATIONS

ADVICE FOR TEACHERS, BY TEACHERS, AS VISUALISED BY ZEPH BENNETT...

1

Minimal  
colour  
palette

#### KEEP IT SIMPLE

Information designers like to keep simple themes running through their work, often using only two colours in their presentations.

2

- Dual Coding
- Concrete Examples
- Interleaving
- Retrieval Practice

#### FOCUS ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT

To reduce information overload, previously addressed points can be faded out or removed completely.

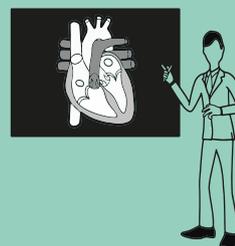
3



#### IT'S A TWO-WAY STREET

Simply reading out information from a presentation reduces students' involvement and will damage the presentation's overall effectiveness.

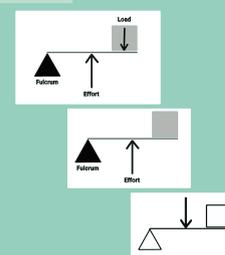
4



#### IT'S NOT A GALLERY

Using only one key diagram or illustration per slide will help focus students' learning and reduce the pressure on their working memory.

5



#### BREAK IT DOWN

Illustrations with multiple labels are best presented via animations that reveal one part at a time, so that the material can be introduced in manageable steps.

ZEPH BENNETT IS A PE TEACHER AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT LEADER WITH 25 YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE; YOU CAN FIND MORE OF HIS EDUCATIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY FOLLOWING @PEGEEKSCORNER

Got a great learning idea? Email [editor@teachsecondary.com](mailto:editor@teachsecondary.com) or tweet us at [@teachsecondary](https://twitter.com/teachsecondary)



## SAFEGUARDING

# MyConcern

Stay on top of your safeguarding obligations and ensure concerns are promptly addressed with this user-friendly reporting system

### AT A GLANCE

- Bespoke safeguarding software for creating customised reports
- Automated chronologies for identifying trends
- Allows for easier inter-agency information sharing
- Up-to-date advice and guidance resources, including templates

REVIEW BY JOHN DABELL



Child protection is a key priority for all schools but one that's become increasingly complicated to manage, as the safeguarding risks children are potentially vulnerable to have grown over time.

Children spend around 7,800 hours in the care of teachers and other staff. The scale of this responsibility is enormous, and its challenges are complex. Staff are regularly informed that if they see something, they say should say something and report it – but how? Schools need to ensure they have robust data and reporting mechanisms in place, so that effective action can be initiated in accordance with existing policies and staff can ensure procedures are being followed, while enabling different agencies to work together.

That's why I unreservedly recommend MyConcern – a Queen's Award-winning secure digital platform created by former police officers, designed to enable staff to easily record, report and manage all safeguarding, wellbeing and pastoral concerns.

The software is brilliantly configured to provide all the expertise school staff will need in one place. As soon as a concern is raised, it's assigned its own unique reference number and a Designated Liaison Person is alerted, thus kick-starting the process of triaging.

Concerns can be grouped under different categories and case owners easily assigned. Users then have the option to view an automated chronology, complete with filtering, redaction and export functions. Separate files can be easily attached to concerns, with all documents securely stored.

A main 'Concerns' dashboard will clearly display any filed, open and new concerns, while a 'Pupil Profiles' function can be made to show aggregated information across all concerns, including body maps, flags and level of need.

MyConcern can provide safeguarding leads with the confidence that they're meeting all statutory, legal and moral obligations. Its reporting tools are second to none, giving you detailed data analysis of the highest order, and the option to present all this data via easy to digest summaries, to help identify trends and deploy resources more effectively.

Crucially, MyConcern will help schools build effective, well-informed safeguarding teams that can respond rapidly when a child appears to be at risk. Accountability processes are baked in, with the platform keeping a thorough audit trail of who, when and what has been involved in any given concern.

Information sharing with external partners is therefore made more accurate, reliable and better able to withstand later scrutiny, allowing you to minimise your own risks and ensure compliance. Even better, any concerns you have can be securely recorded and case managed on any internet-enabled device, either through a web browser or via the dedicated MyConcern mobile app.

The welfare and wellbeing of children is everyone's business. MyConcern can be a powerful ally to you in helping record and manage essential evidence as part of your whole-school safeguarding procedures.

**"Its reporting tools are second to none"**

**teach  
SECONDARY**

### VERDICT

- ✓ An ultra-secure platform for recording and addressing safeguarding concerns
- ✓ Robust and sophisticated reporting tools
- ✓ Smartly designed, with an intuitive and easy-to-use interface accessible via multiple devices
- ✓ Excellent value for money
- ✓ An innovative and outstanding piece of safeguarding infrastructure

### UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to easily record and manage any safeguarding concerns, while saving time and facilitating early intervention. This is a powerful system that can materially improve your safeguarding provision.

For more information, visit [thesafeguardingcompany.com/myconcern](https://thesafeguardingcompany.com/myconcern)

EDTECH 

# LanSchool

A software solution that guides learning, promotes collaboration, and maximizes teaching time



## AT A GLANCE

- Classroom management software that enables engaging learning experiences in connected classrooms
- Popular features include Screen Monitoring, Push Website, Limit Web, and Messaging
- Available on the cloud or locally hosted
- Compatible across all operating systems
- Designed with educators and learners in mind

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES



With technology now playing a larger role in teaching and learning than ever before, effective solutions for managing students' use of devices are in high demand. Lenovo's LanSchool classroom management software is designed to do just that – keep learning current, whilst minimising the strain on teachers.

LanSchool makes teaching with tech easy, both inside the classroom and when overseeing remote learning. It boasts a number of features to help keep the learning process streamlined and safe, beginning with straightforward username / password access and the option to link user accounts to Google accounts. The teacher interfaces on both the 'Air' and 'Classic' versions of the software are highly intuitive, and will take very little getting used to before teachers can fully utilise their functions.

The screen monitoring function lets teachers view all students' screens, thus helping to keep learners on task while making it possible for teachers to monitor and provide feedback on their work in real time. LanSchool also allows teachers to 'blank' students' screens, for when their attention needs to be directed elsewhere. Another nifty feature is the 'push website' function, enabling teachers to send a website to all connected devices at the click of a button, significantly increasing the fluidity of the lesson and reducing lost learning time.

LanSchool can give teachers valuable

insights into what's happening on every device in the classroom, to the extent that they're even warned when the battery is running low on a specific student's device. Hopefully, that should mean no more major lesson disruptions when a laptop packs up half way through...

LanSchool does a great deal to encourage productive collaboration via nicely thought through features, such as the 'raise a hand' notification students can send to get their teacher's attention, and a clear messenger system. The latter is not only helpful for the classroom, but also when learning is taking place at a distance. Such functionality isn't new, of course, but what LanSchool does is allow teachers to efficiently manage all these functions at once via a unified interface, without having to frantically swap between remote calls and various classroom applications. Power is placed completely at their fingertips.

Lenovo has pitched things just right with LanSchool. It's sleek, simple and welcoming, while containing the functionality needed to make teaching and learning easier. All the tools teachers will need can now be found in one place, neatly arranged in accessible pockets.

LanSchool is very much designed with educators and learners in mind. While there are other, similarly-specified packages available, they aren't as closely tailored to the needs of schools, which for me is LanSchool's most readily apparent advantage. Lenovo has done a great job of making this software the perfect fit for teachers' requirements.

## teach SECONDARY

### VERDICT

- ✓ Functional and intuitive software that be used to improve the pace and flow of lessons
- ✓ Includes a powerful feature set that's easily accessed through an inviting teacher interface
- ✓ Puts extensive control of a classroom's various devices at a teacher's fingertips
- ✓ Expressly designed with teachers' needs in mind

### UPGRADE IF...

You're looking for an all in one classroom management system that's easy for teachers to transition to, and actually helpful when it comes to teaching and learning, tailored as it is to education users, rather than business and corporate applications.

Find out more at [lanschool.com/gb](https://lanschool.com/gb)



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Lawson is a former secondary teacher, now serving as a foundation governor and running a tutoring service, and author of the book *The Successful (Less Stressful) Student* (Outskirts Press, £11.95); for more information, visit [prep4successnow.wordpress.com](http://prep4successnow.wordpress.com) or follow @johninpompano



## THE LAST WORD

# Ticking the wrong boxes



Demanding that teachers generate large volumes of intricate lesson plans before even setting foot in the classroom amounts to setting them a near-impossible and ultimately pointless task, suggests John Lawson...

Something is decidedly wrong when teachers are too busy scribing lesson plans to prepare lessons properly.

Throughout my NQT year, I was required to hand in 23 detailed plans in advance every Monday. Each plan required an aim, at least three objectives, a starter, development strategies 1 and 2, a concluding strategy, homework explanation and evidence of differentiation – plus SEND provisions and allowances.

Copies of all differentiated resources and tests were stapled to my lesson plans. I was allotted two 35-minute planning periods a week, one of which was spent with my Head of Department who would often excoriate most of my efforts: *'Ridiculous...redo these.'* I almost suffered a breakdown trying to conform to her rigid ideas of perfection.

This was 1993, with no internet or email. I was earning £13,000 a year, there were holes in the soles of my shoes and I was skipping meals to pay the bills.

### A callous burden

For ECTs in 2022, not enough has changed. The process of submitting accurate lesson plans a week in advance continues to be an exhausting one, and rarely achievable, given that Week 8 plans depend on everything going according to plan in Week 7. How often does that happen?

By mid-October, my own lesson plans would have typically become works of fiction – mere meat thrown to ravenous box-tickers. I'd arrive at school at 7am each morning, sip some coffee while breaking bread with the janitor in his bunker and then secretly scribble some helpful lesson notes. Those 15 hours spent each week on planning blighted my weekends.

So imagine my astonishment when I read recently of a school district in Indiana, USA, demanding that its teachers post lesson plans online *for the entire year*. In the midst of a pandemic, how could anyone impose such a callous burden and hope to keep their underpaid, exhausted teachers on board?

One can just picture the lawyers of the most litigious nation on Earth lining up to help themselves to this Hades-sent gravy bowl: *'Mr. Lawson – you have presented yourself to this court, under oath, as a certified master teacher...yet exhibit 127b establishes that you egregiously misled the children entrusted to your care...'*

The thing is, though, busy administrators rarely read lesson plans – an observation once shared with me by a seasoned cynic who regularly cut and pasted impressive-looking plans that he never taught (and for which he never got caught).

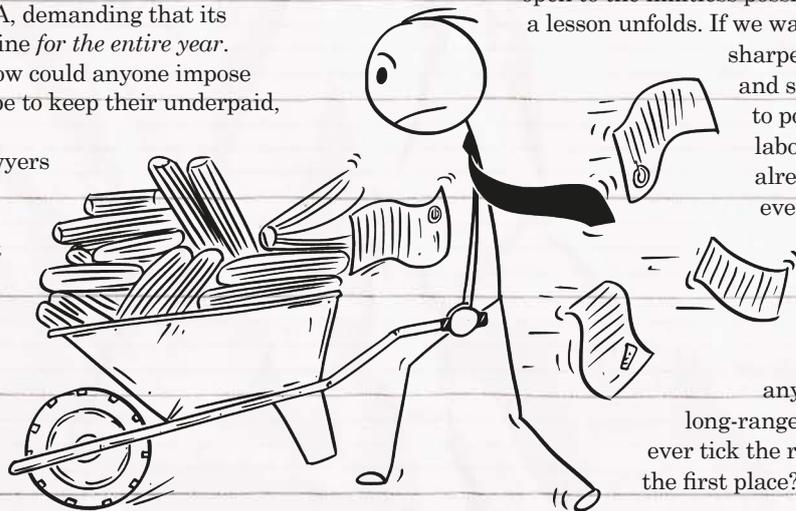
### Mid-lesson epiphanies

Meticulously crafted lesson plans are no guarantee of engaging lessons. Teachers will often devise terrific ideas in their hearts and heads that are difficult to convey on paper. Some of my best teaching moments have often come from mid-lesson epiphanies. We need to address the countless hours that exhausted teachers spend on pro-forma lesson plans, while still recognising the importance of skilful planning and acknowledging the need for an agreed curriculum.

My own attempt at doing that took the form of a simple statement that for 15 years I would regularly submit to my head of department at the Florida High School where I was based: *'I promise that I will teach our published programme, bell-to-bell every day with as much passion and skill as I possess.'* I signed off on this annually, which obligated me to honour my pledge – and I did.

My advice to those administrators in Indiana is to ask themselves which other school authorities in the world have ever made such demands. If it's just them, then they should either defend their proposal or bury it. Because the extraordinary burden their demands would place on teachers at the end of the school year is impossible to deny.

Excellent teaching happens at the hands those who remain open to the limitless possibilities that emerge as a lesson unfolds. If we want teachers to continue sharpening their knowledge and skills, why subject them to pointless box-ticking labour? If teachers are already doing their best every day, as the vast majority are, then formal lesson plans aren't necessary. And if that's the case, why should anyone expect rigid, long-range lesson planning to ever tick the right boxes in the first place?



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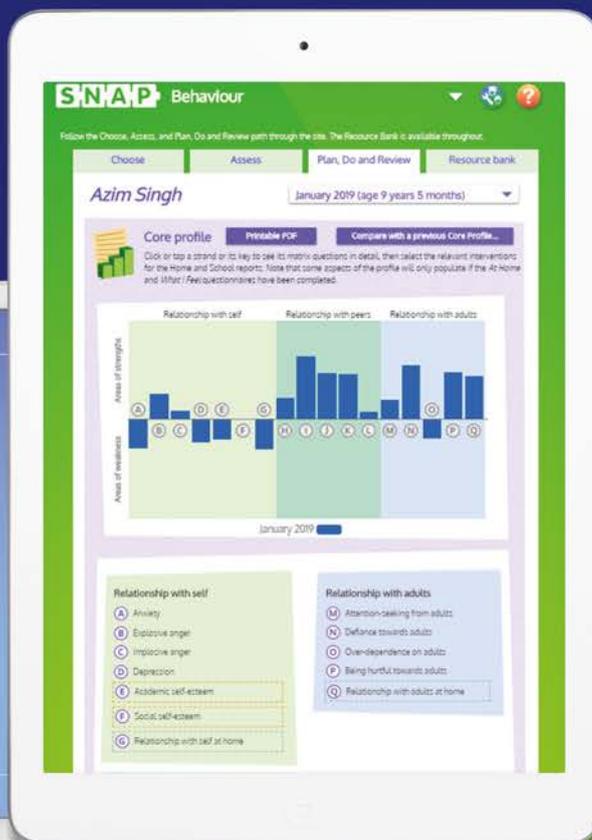
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