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FROM THE EDITOR

"Welcome...

When the last issue of *Teach Secondary* was published, Nadhim Zahawi was the Secretary of State for Education. The role has since changed ministerial hands twice. For a brief period, top-level decision-making spanning all areas of the DfE's operations rested with an Education Secretary barely hours into the job and *no one else*. It still seems extraordinary to be able to write that.

A change at the top then, following those tumultuous days in early July, and one which dramatically reframes some major education announcements made earlier this year. How likely is it now that we'll see the professed 'levelling up' ambitions of March's Schools White Paper brought to fruition? What about the SEND and AP Green Paper's acknowledgement of systemic issues and proposed recommendations?

What's less a matter for conjecture are the financial difficulties that many schools can expect to be grappling with over the coming months. As if the post-COVID impact upon students' academic progress and mental health wasn't enough to be contending with, they can soon look forward to a budgetary squeeze partly caused by teacher salary increases of 5% to 8.9% (without any additional funding, but still below the rate of inflation and thus unacceptable to teaching unions now preparing to ballot their members on strike action) and compounded by skyrocketing energy bills, in line with those faced by everyone else in the country.

From the vantage point of late August, the present moment feels like an ominous pause before the inevitable deluge. Maybe things won't be that bad. We've all seen for ourselves just how quickly the supposed certainties of a domestic administration can be swept away (with a working majority of 71, no less) and the rapidity with which the geopolitical situation can be transformed from one day to the next, after a country decides to attack its neighbour's territory with aerial bombardments and ground troops.

The uncertainty is worrying, but in the absence of direction from above, it falls to everyone else – teachers, leaders, parents, different schools and authorities – to help each other out, share advice, provide support and offer reassurance that when times are tough, we can only do the best we can to make it through.

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser
callum.fauser@theteachco.com

On board this issue:

Tracey Leese is an assistant headteacher

Steve Kenning is co-founder and CEO of Aspirations Academies Trust

Rebecca Leek is CEO of the SEAMAT trust

Dr Nick Smith is a retired headteacher

Bhamika Bhudia is a head of English

Ed Carlin is a deputy headteacher at a Scottish secondary school

KEEP IN TOUCH!
Sign up for the weekly TS newsletter at **teachwire.net/newsletter**

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SEP/OCT '22

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Customer services: aceville@dctmedia.co.uk, 0800 904 7000

Published by: Aceville Publications, 25 Phoenix Court, Hawkins Rd, Colchester, Essex, CO2 8JY. Tel: 01206 505900

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The newsletter

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

The UNINFORMED teacher's guide to...

THE 'SHOOK' FILTER

Amid all the fancy, AI-driven image manipulation tools that have taken the internet by storm of late, it seems almost quaint that a humble Snapchat filter has been getting tongues wagging and prompting many a belly laugh.

Behold the unholy visage that is the 'Shook' filter – bulging eyes, above lips contorted into a shape somewhere between demonic smile and comical grimace. On one level, it's your standard-issue Snapchat silliness – dial up the filter in the app, point your phone's camera at an unsuspecting friend, family member, teacher or retail employee who's *just working here to try and pay my way through uni, please, seriously guys, take it somewhere else, yeah?* and cackle with glee as their expression morphs into ol' Bug-Eyed McSmirkface before your very eyes.

However, the real magic begins when applying said filter to acclaimed works of cinema and other media. As a cursory glance at the #shookface TikTok tag will show, there are countless hours of fun to be had desecrating the work of casting directors by giving everything from *Titanic* to *The Seventh Seal* the Shook treatment...

DO SAY

"Ohmigod, do the funeral scene from *Endgame*!"

DON'T SAY

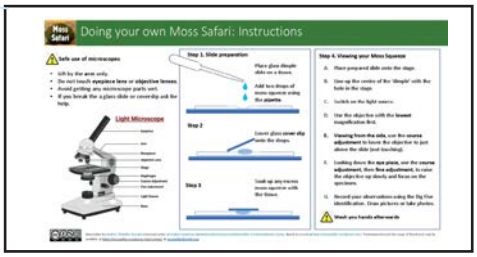
'He looks familiar – what else has he been in?"

BEAT THE BUDGET

What are we talking about?
Moss Safari

What's the targeted age range?
KS2/3

What's on offer?
Resources to support the study of moss – its biological properties, function within wider ecosystems – as an extracurricular activity for science and STEM clubs.



How might teachers use the resource?
Moss Safari author Andy Chandler-Grevatt regularly presents in-person Moss Safari school workshops that the resources are meant to accompany, but has encouraged teachers to 'download and use the resources, adapt them as you need'. The resources in question include presentations and worksheets, along with instructions for preparing a 'moss squeeze' and a self-directed moss safari observation activity.

Where are they available?
mosssafari.wordpress.com

DON'T QUOTE ME...

"I haven't been long in the job, but I want you to know that I am determined to work as hard as I possibly can to champion your interests"

Secretary of State for Education, James Cleverly

Think of a number...

23%

The proportion of children referred to mental health services in 2020/21 who received treatment within a four-week waiting target

Source: Commission on Young Lives report, 'Heads Up – Rethinking mental health services for vulnerable young people'

26%

of teachers feel confident assisting students with applying for an apprenticeship

Source: Teacher Tapp poll of 5,000 teachers commissioned by PLMR

£60.8 million

The collective amount raised by PTAs for their schools in 2021 – down from £121 million in 2019

Source: Parentkind

ONE FOR THE WALL

"Young people today are tomorrow's people; we must try our best to make them a good tomorrow's people"

Roy Hackett

Intervention suspended?

In early July, the DfE announced plans for a raft of new measures aimed at supporting underperforming schools, the most notable – and contentious – of which was that schools receiving two or more Ofsted ratings below Good would be matched with 'strong' MATs in effort to drive improvement.

The following week, however, saw a raft of ministerial resignations prompted the ousting of Boris Johnson as Prime Minister, and a near total substitution of Ministers at the DfE, with only Will Quince – formerly Minister for Children and Families, now Schools Minister – still at the Department.

The current Education Secretary, James Cleverly, has thus far commented publicly on this year's teacher pay award, and the announcement that every state school site in England will be issued with at least one defibrillator by 2022/33.

Whether the reforms set out in the Schools White Paper published in March this year and the aforementioned underperformance measures will still proceed has yet to be confirmed, beyond Cleverly perhaps alluding to them in comments he made to media outlets in late July, with *Schools Week* quoting him as saying "Although we have been through a period of upheaval in Westminster I want to assure you that in the Department for Education, we have remained focused on the job. I am delighted to have Will Quince and Diana Barran in the department and also a team of talented and committed new ministers. We all have a job to do and we will be focusing 100% on that."

STATEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

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

THE SPEECH:

Amanda Spielman shares thoughts on schools' duty of impartiality

WHO? Amanda Spielman, Ofsted Chief Inspector
WHAT? Keynote speech given at the 2022 Festival of Education
WHEN? 7th July 2022

"We don't live in a consensual era. Argument is hard-wired into how we communicate. A quick jaunt around social media opens up a world in which the mainstream media aren't to be trusted; clashes of opinion rapidly descend into personal insults; and people identify their ideological group with slogans, hashtags and flags.

The reality is that children are growing up in an online world that both reflects and fuels the atomisation and polarisation of society. People exist in self-sustaining echo chambers that encourage conflict, rather than discussion.

So teachers need to be expert guides through disputed territory, while maintaining their own impartiality. The DfE guidance on political impartiality [see bit.ly/ts116-SC1] is detailed and helpful here. It reminds us that impartiality isn't just about keeping one's own politics out of the classroom; it's about providing balance. It makes clear that doesn't mean being neutral on every issue, just because contrary opinions exist on the fringes. Teachers should teach that racism is both wrong and illegal; and that climate change is supported by evidence.

What balance does demand is being a teacher not a campaigner where matters are contested. And that is very often the case when discussion moves from the problem to the solution. Even when there is consensus on a desirable social or economic goal, there are nearly always competing solutions, often hotly advocated. A teacher's impartiality truly helps young people."

THE STATEMENT:

NASUWT members reject teachers' pay offer

WHO? Dr Patrick Roach, NASUWT General Secretary
WHEN? 11th August 2022

NASUWT
The Teachers' Union

"NASUWT members had been clear in demanding that we reject the imposition of a below-inflation pay award. This pay offer [a 5% rise for most teachers in 2022/23, 8.9% for starting salaries] is yet another pay cut for teachers which will cause even greater damage to the morale of the profession.

The government's proposals fall way short of what teachers are demanding, following a decade of real terms pay cuts and the current cost of living crisis. Ministers have refused to respond to our calls for proper negotiations and, once again, we are calling on ministers to get around the table to find a solution.

However, in the event that there is no improvement, the Union remains committed to balloting its members in the autumn term for industrial action."

SAVE THE DATE

29 SEPTEMBER 2022 Free and Equal? #2 | 7-8 OCTOBER 2022 Tes SEND Show 2022 | 10 NOVEMBER 2022 The Education People Show

29 SEPTEMBER 2022

Free and Equal? #2
Lytchett Minster School in Dorset and online
beyondthis.co.uk/standup2

Following on from last year's inaugural 'Free and Equal?' human rights education conference for teachers and school students, teacher and speaker Peter Radford has once again partnered with Amnesty International and Unicef for the in-person and online event 'Free and Equal 2'. This year's theme is 'Sexism, Misogyny and Harassment', with talks and seminars set to cover a range of areas, including gender bias and how patriarchal views shape society.

7-8 OCTOBER 2022

Tes SEND Show 2022
The Business Design Centre, London
tessendshow.co.uk

A two-day event dedicated entirely to all matters SEND-related, with lots to interest SENCos, school leaders and educators alike. As well as the CPD-certified seminars and hands-on workshops you'd expect, there will also be an informative Parent, Carer and Teacher Forum, an extensive products/services exhibition and the self-contained SEND Leadership Summit conference, where leaders and senior staff will convene to discuss, among other things, the SEND review published by the government earlier this year.

10 NOVEMBER 2022

The Education People Show
Kent Event Centre, Maidstone
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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TEACHER TALES

True stories from the education chalkface

'Testing, testing...'

The headteacher was a commanding figure, and in an exceptionally bad mood one particular day, after some students had behaved very badly in the local community the day before. Presenting that morning's assembly in the main hall, he very forcefully expressed his disapproval. You could have heard a pin drop. As he reached a crescendo, his voice rising, he said *'I've just got one last thing to say to you...'*

At that precise moment, an on-site engineer was repairing the school's PA system. Over the hall tannoy suddenly came the voice of said engineer testing the system – *'I'm H A P P Y, I'm H A P P Y'*, jocularly and blissfully spelling out the letters.

Staff and students could barely contain themselves as the headteacher stormed out of the hall, determined to find the meddlesome PA tester...

Going the distance

Each year, our school holds inter-house competitions across a range of activities, including music, art, drama and sport.

In the build-up to one year's inter-house cross country, I told a group of Y7 boys how important it was to run as hard as they could in order to earn points for their house, while also stressing the need for teamwork and detailing the course they would be running. As I was sending the boys outside to the start, one asked, "*Sir, how long is the intercourse..?*"

From the sick note archive

'Dear Sir – Plees excus Brain (*sic*) from doin P.E. this mornin. He's not feelin well as he had an axident. He's bin hit in ver stommick wiv an hammer'

Find more true tales and amusing anecdotes at schoolhumour.co.uk

A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

#22 ORGANISING RULES

Empty onto a surface the contents of your bag, pencil case, desk drawer or any other container that holds a variety of small, handheld objects.

Think of a method or rule for organising the objects.

Organise them into a composition following your own rule. Take a photo of your composition.

Now, reorganise the objects using a different rule. Again, take a photo each time you change the rule.

Can someone else work out your organising rules?

Get Into Film

DO THE RIGHT THING (1989, 15, 125 MINS)

CURRICULUM LINKS:
Film studies, citizenship, history

This essential piece of cinema captures Brooklyn at a time when it was predominantly home to communities of African-American, Latin American and Italian families, amongst others. Spike Lee stars as Mookie – a young man working at an Italian pizzeria who is struggling to earn enough to support his girlfriend and their child, but lacks ambition.

Frustrated by his boss Sal's son, who makes racist remarks about the black people in the neighbourhood, and the fact that a 'wall of fame' in the pizzeria doesn't include any Black stars, Mookie and friends demand that it be changed. When Sal refuses, tensions begin to rise, escalating into a shocking conflict that affects the whole neighbourhood.

While a quintessentially 80s film, *Do the Right Thing* presents a timeless exploration of gentrification and racism in American and inner-city communities.

Discussion questions:
- What triggers the boycott of Sal's pizzeria?
- Re-watch the scene with Radio Raheem and the Puerto Rican men. How is Radio Raheem portrayed?
- Why do you think Spike Lee chose to set the film over a single day and in one neighbourhood only?

Retweets

Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?

Exec Head, George McMillan @MrGMcMillan
Nobody in mainstream is picking up on the (mostly) unfunded pay rises (so read massive cuts, again) and the huge increases in energy costs coming.

I'll speak out: it's a cliff edge for schools. Add worst recruitment deficit I've experienced. Many at crisis point this yr to come.

Sam Strickland @Strickomaster
I really do not understand the thinking when schools say to staff that attending a funeral/ major event will be unpaid or it has to be really close family to allow you to go. Staff routinely give up so so much of their time doing extra. This archaic thinking is poor.

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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: SPELLING SPRINTS

How can we combine vocabulary development with improving important areas like spelling accuracy? 'Spelling sprints' let us do just that. Put simply, spelling sprints describe the focus sharing of a complex word root (e.g. *'tract'*) or prefix (e.g. *'exo'*), followed by a 'sprint' to generate as many words as possible.

'Spelling sprints can be done individually or in small groups. They work best when focused on tricky spellings – like words featuring *'ei'* patterns, such as 'foreign' – or used to generate lots of vocabulary links (e.g. via the *'de'* prefix). This engaging approach can have double the value for word and spelling development.

Cracking the academic code

A key feature of pupils developing a sophisticated style of academic writing is their ability to extend sentences, so that they demonstrate reflection and evaluation. *'So that'* sentences are an accessible way of ensuring pupils can elaborate upon their ideas.

For instance, if a pupil is evaluating a product design in a textiles assignment, working in *'so that'* into a sentence can make pupils reflect upon their design choices more explicitly. Similarly, in art and design, *'so that'* can be added to prompt reflective notes on their use of colour or artistic techniques.

DO THEY KNOW?

There are around 47,000 words in the English language that have become obsolete

ONE FOR: GEOGRAPHY STUDENTS

ECONOMY

Derives from: the Greek root *'eco'*, meaning 'home', and *'nomos'*, meaning 'accounts'
Means: the structure or conditions pertaining to the economic life of a country, or period in history
Related terms: wealth, budget, commerce, capital, financial system
Note: the term 'economics' can be commonly found right across the curriculum, from maths, to geography and English literature – and, of course, economics itself!

One word at a time

What do you associate with the word '**gossip**'? You may consider gossip to be something inconsequential, reflective of unimportant chatter – but an insight into its etymology may reveal something a little more important...

The word originated in the Middle Ages with *'godsibb'*, meaning the 'sponsor at a baptism or a godparent'. Over time, however, it gradually evolved to describe women who supported one another during childbirth – an important form of female support that came to be highly valued. Today, however, 'gossip' is deemed as something negative and largely valueless. A change that perhaps reveals the subtle misogyny hidden within the English language itself...

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

RELIEF

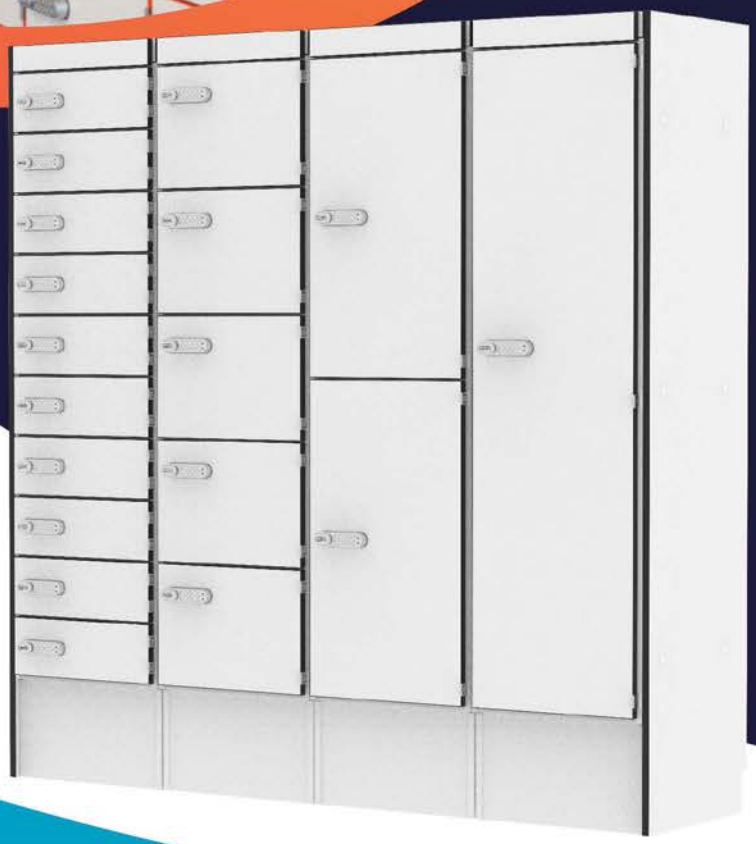
In Geography

The depiction on maps of variations in elevation and ground surface (e.g. through shading)

In English

The feeling of reassurance and relaxation that follows a release of anxiety

Alex Quigley is a former teacher and the author of a number of books, most recently *Closing the Writing Gap*; he also works for the Education Endowment Foundation as National Content Manager



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[MATHS PROBLEM]

A CLEAR ACCOUNT OF EVENTS

Colin Foster looks at how students can confuse 'independent events' with 'mutually exclusive' events when studying probability

In this lesson, students clarify the distinction between these by trying to devise examples of events for which one, both or neither apply.

THE DIFFICULTY

Start by showing students these four quantities relating to events *A* and *B*:

$p(A)$ $p(B)$ $p(A \cup B)$ $p(A \cap B)$

What does each of these mean? How can you best explain them in words?

Students might respond that '$\cup$ means or' and '$\cap$ means and', but other students might use 'and' to describe $A \cup B$, so clearer language is needed. $p(A \cup B)$ is the probability of either *A* or *B* (*or both*), whereas $p(A \cap B)$ is the probability of both *A* and *B*.

What do you understand by 'independent' events? What do you understand by 'mutually exclusive' events? Can you express these in symbols?

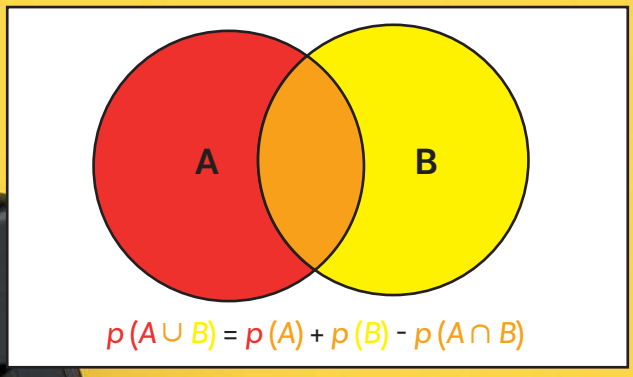
Students could talk in pairs. Many students may be confused about these terms and how they differ.

THE SOLUTION

Mutually exclusive events cannot *both* happen – they are incompatible alternatives, so, if *A* and *B* are mutually exclusive, then $p(A \cap B) = 0$.

If two events *A* and *B* are *independent*, then $p(A)$ doesn't depend on whether *B* happens or doesn't happen, and $p(B)$ doesn't depend on whether *A* happens or doesn't happen. This means that $p(A \cap B) = p(A).p(B)$.

These terms can be quite abstract, and drawings, such as Venn diagrams, can help students to see what they really mean.



#	$p(A)$	$p(B)$	$p(A \cup B)$	$p(A \cap B)$	*Mutually exclusive?*	*Independent?*	*Impossible?*
1	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{3}$	$\frac{2}{3}$				
2	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{3}$	$\frac{5}{6}$				
3	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{3}$	1				

Watch out for students thinking that mutually exclusive means that $p(A) + p(B) = 1$ (i.e., *mutually exhaustive*).

Now look at this table (an electronic version of this with the answers is available at bit.ly/ts116-mp1). Fill in the missing probabilities on each row and decide where ticks should go in the right-hand three columns.

Checking for understanding

To assess students' understanding, ask them to make up their own puzzle table like this one, with some numbers and ticks on each row.

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, blog.foster77.co.uk

Content warnings

Curriculum changes now require staff to teach sensitive topics outside of their expertise, prompting some to turn to external agencies for resources and materials – which is why it's only right that parents get to see what those lessons involve, asserts **Claire Fox**...

If you'd told me 10 years ago that in 2022 there would be angry protesters clashing outside toddlers' reading sessions because 'Rhyme Time' was being replaced with 'Drag Queen Story Hour', I'd have thought it a preposterous fiction.

Likewise, I could never imagine that teaching primary school children about pronouns wouldn't necessarily refer to grammar lessons, but instead to gendered language and that refusing to use the singular 'they/them' in a classroom could be called a hate crime

And yet here we are, with schools having now taken centre stage in the Culture Wars – something that's seemingly happened inadvertently, under the auspices of making the curriculum conform to diversity norms. And the trend is unhelpfully pitting teachers against parents.

Ill-prepared

Maybe we should have seen the writing on the wall. Over recent years, schools have increasingly been viewed instrumentally, as vehicles to address an ever-expanding array of social, economic, and cultural problems.

This has placed demands on teachers to solve non-educational social problems – often at the expense of focusing on their subject expertise, and knowledge for its own sake. On the one hand, this mission creep can strain the division of labour between schools and families, making parents feel that teachers are encroaching into values-based areas, such as sex and relationship education, in ways that are at odds with their own beliefs.

At the same time, many teachers have found themselves in a quandary, dragged into teaching sensitive personal and political matters for which they're ill-prepared. They may be qualified to teach English, maths, history or music, but these new, contentious subjects have often proved to be hot potatoes that many either wish to avoid, or at the very least, outsource.

Challenging privilege

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd in 2020, headteachers and SLTs I know told me of the demands they received to 'decolonise the curriculum' and 'challenge white privilege' in their schools.

Unsure of where to start, they were delighted when sent materials to use in their classrooms and recommended specialist anti-racist trainers by local councils.

Few, however, studied the content of these interventions, and, perhaps naively, seemed unaware that these teaching aids were often heavily influenced by groups with distinct political agendas.

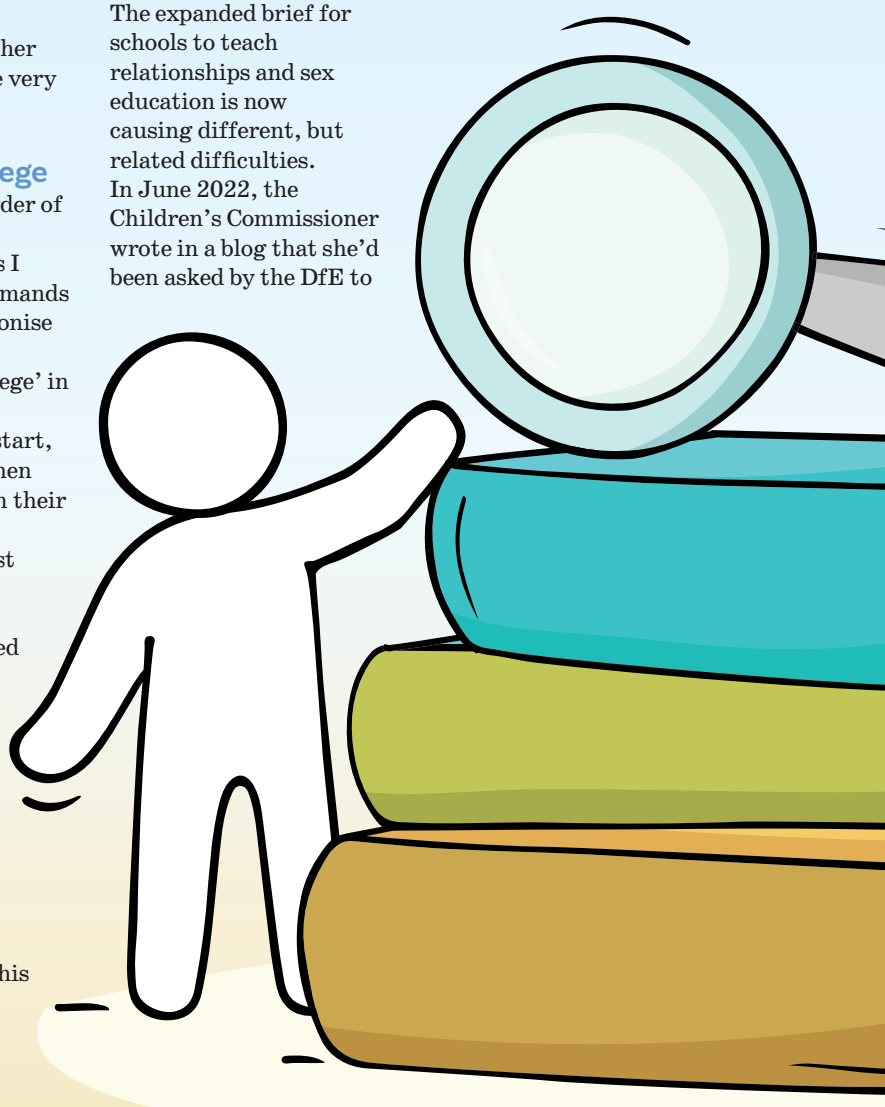
One politics teacher contacted me to share his shock at discovering that his pupils were using handouts that rejected aspiring towards colour blindness as 'covert white supremacy' – seemingly counter to a position advocated by generations of civil rights and anti-racist activists.

When he queried this with the consultants – who were also providing anti-racism training to the school's staff – it was suggested that his qualms were themselves indicative of 'white privilege'.

Expanded brief

The expanded brief for schools to teach relationships and sex education is now causing different, but related difficulties. In June 2022, the Children's Commissioner wrote in a blog that she'd been asked by the DfE to review the content of RSE, specifically looking at how to "Support schools to teach high quality RSE effectively and with confidence".

Good. Because many headteachers have felt their staff are ill-equipped to deal with this form of RSE, which now spans a number of complex and sensitive areas such as consent, sexuality and – perhaps somewhat inevitably – gender identity.



Falling short

Most teachers, if left to their own devices, would struggle with untangling the 'LGBTQ-inclusive vocabulary' now required in teaching. How to explain the terms 'cisgender', 'transgender', 'bisexual', 'pansexual', 'asexual', 'intersex', 'non-binary', 'gender-fluid', 'transition', 'gender dysphoria' and 'queer' to 10-year-olds? How comfortable are teachers likely to feel discussing concepts such as the existence of an innate, immutable gendered essence, chest-binding or puberty blockers with their Y10s?

Here again, a number of schools have turned to external third party experts and NGOs for help in variously training staff, delivering lessons and supplying ready-made classroom materials.

However, against the backdrop of well-documented toxic rows surrounding the definition of the word 'woman', it's become apparent that some of those third parties are partisan, skewing the RSE content they provide to fit a specific agenda which, at the very least, falls short of the statutory requirements for classroom impartiality.

Research provided by Transgender Trend and the Safe Schools Alliance, as well as recent media exposés such as that by the journalist Milli Hill (see bit.ly/ts116-tp1) have revealed that a number of such organisations are encouraging children in schools to think about gender as something quite distinct from biology.

An increasing number of parents understandably want to be reassured that their children aren't being subject to one-sided ideological interventions. Yet when parents have asked to see SRE curriculum handouts and lesson plans, some schools have refused.

'Commercial sensitivities'

This goes against previous DfE guidance, as recently brought to light by a group of cross-party peers led by former Education Secretary, Estelle Morris.

As Baroness Morris has explained, the excuse given in such cases is that the third party organisations in question are commercial providers, whose materials are copyrighted and therefore exempt from the Freedom of Information Act.

During a Lords debate in June 2022 on the Schools Bill, Baroness Morris referred to "A letter that a parent made available to me after she had gone to her child's school to ask to see some of the curriculum papers that were being used in RSE…

"The head had written to the parent to say that he could not make the curriculum materials available to her because the organisation that was delivering that part of the curriculum said that it was exempt under Section 43(2) and Section 42 of the Freedom of Information Act."

Baroness Morris has since obtained ministerial clarification that commercial sensitivities shouldn't be used to deny parents' rights to see what's being taught to their children, but this issue goes beyond technical matters of copyright.

My worry is that teachers are being encouraged to draw negative conclusions around parental queries, as though it's a school's role to 'protect' pupils from the alleged bigotry of grown-ups, including their own parents.

Since its formation in 2020, the campaign group Don't Divide Us has heard from a number of anxious parents who report that even asking to see the materials used to teach their offspring about racism has been treated as evidence of 'unconscious bias'. Further details of this can be found in the organisation's new report, 'Who's in Charge? – A Report on Councils' Anti-racist Policies for Schools', available via bit.ly/ts116-tp4.

> *"Over recent years, schools have increasingly been viewed instrumentally"*

Damaging trust

Whichever side one is on when it comes to issues like gender identity, we should be wary of any trend that damages trust between teachers and parents.

As the Director of the Academy of Ideas, I'm supportive of organisations that champion ideas. Inviting such groups into schools can help create an atmosphere of critical thinking, and should be welcomed. But if schools outsource teaching sensitive topics to third parties at the expense of parental rights, transparency, and classroom impartiality, let's at least press pause and debate how best to proceed.

We'll be debating this topic, and indeed many others, at the 2022 Battle of Ideas festival, taking place from October 15th to 16th. Readers are welcome to come along and help us untangle the mess that too many schools have got themselves into.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Claire Fox (@Fox_Claire), Baroness Fox of Buckley, is Director at the Academy of Ideas; for more information about the Battle of Ideas, visit battleofideas.org.uk

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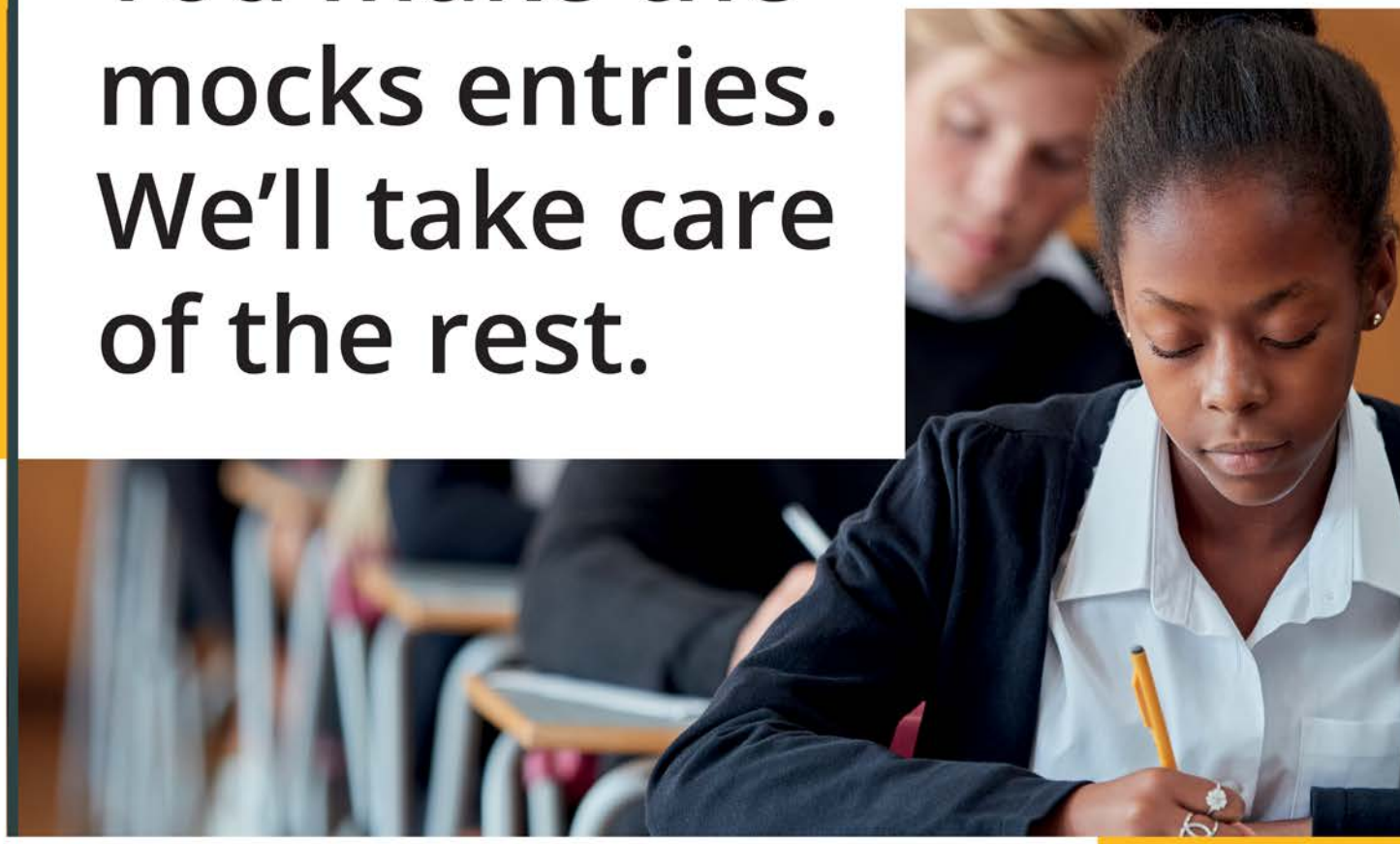

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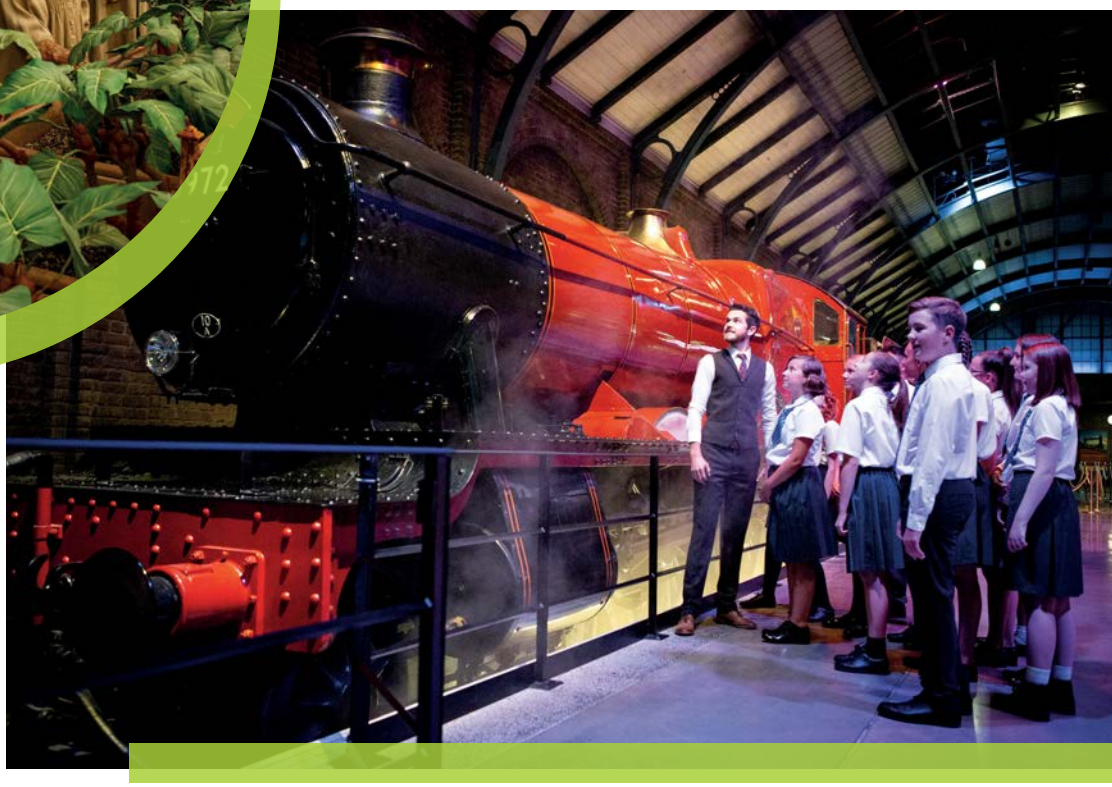

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In politics, as in education, a change in leadership is never undertaken lightly – but are secondaries doing enough to reassure parents and carers that a new face at the top won't jeopardise what they like about their school?

Vic Goddard

It would be hard to miss that the country was lately led by a PM in virtually name only, whilst their successor was found. It would also be hard to miss the data highlighted by Teacher Tapp and numerous media reports that we could be heading for a mass exodus of headteachers over the next few years.

What happens when the person at the top changes? There's plenty of research on this in the business world, but in education, it's hard to find much beyond anecdotes. This surprises me, since it's become quite clear in recent years just how co-dependent communities and schools really are.

Everything changes

The Conservative Party leadership 'battle' has vividly demonstrated how the need to be 'different' from the previous leader is a key part of this change. Having never experienced a change in headteacher at any school I've worked at, I can't speak to whether the same applies – so I asked some fellow educators what their reactions had been.

One common reaction I heard – from senior leaders, teachers and even non-teaching staff was 'Will I and/or my job still be needed?' That's not too dissimilar to behaviour we've recently seen from our politicians – though announcing how much you support the new headteacher is, of course, unlikely to land you the plum job of deputy head or whatever the equivalent of Home Secretary might be!

Another, very real concern I heard was that of people fearing 'not getting on with' their new headteacher, often echoing the worries of parents and carers. I can still remember one of the leaders on my NPQH course saying that when a new head is appointed, they'll want to change everything but the daffodils.

One of my go-to sources for insights into what the wider parent/carer community might be thinking is Mumsnet. If you've not yet allowed yourself the pleasure of taking 20 minutes to wander through its various threads then you're missing out, though a note of caution – not all views will be positive, and some may well make you a bit sweary…

The Mumsnet take

According to Mumsnet users, schools should inform their community if the head is even thinking about leaving. The following quote isn't that unusual: "I can't help feel like they should have told us when we were being shown around that this was on the cards, so we could have taken this into consideration during our decision making. Should I be worried that the school may change a lot without the current head in place? What would you do?"

The worry itself didn't surprise me, but the extent of it did. You can find similar concerns around changes in form tutor, English teachers, etc. This is something primary schools know plenty about, due to their annual changes in class teacher, but not something I'd often considered at secondary level. I've since come to realise how we can and should consider how we reassure parents/carers in the event of staff changes – particularly individuals they'll have built up a relationship with, such as form tutors.

Most secondary schools have some form of parent/carer representation on their governing bodies or trust boards, and I can see how powerful their voices could be in reassuring others about any changes in staff, but especially the head. It's fair to say that a notable issue around the recent change in PM was that the people doing the choosing weren't representative of the country, and therefore not factoring in who might be the better candidate for people who look and live differently to them.

Our school communities can express similar sentiments when a headteacher changes. Parents/carers want to know that what they think is taken into account. I know how unfair I think it is that my PM gets to be chosen by people with very dissimilar priorities to mine – so while I'm not sure if they'll thank me for it, our parent/carer governors will be front and centre when it's time to appoint a new leader within our family of schools, since their reassurance is vital.

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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If our new PM wants to usher in a fresh start and make their mark with some high profile policymaking, there's a document charting what's gone wrong in education that may well come in useful...

Melissa Benn

With a new Prime Minister now in place, can we expect to see a fresh bout of educational reform? It seems unlikely, given that the government's Education Bill ran aground on a number of key clauses earlier this year, while the summer Tory leadership campaign yielded merely a re-run of some stale ideas, such as expanding the number of grammar schools.

The sad truth is that professional politicians and those on the ground have never been further apart when it comes to their ideas for reform. Over the past few years, a well-mannered rebellion against the prevailing direction (and consistent underfunding) of state education has been gathering force, as shown in the Times Education Commission report published earlier this year.

Our new Prime Minister would therefore do well to spend a bit of this autumn term absorbing the findings of the Commission, which met for a year and gathered evidence from a wide range of sources. As well as hearing from education practitioners, its report also quoted at length prominent figures from the business and cultural sectors, bemoaning how ill-prepared most pupils currently are for the working world.

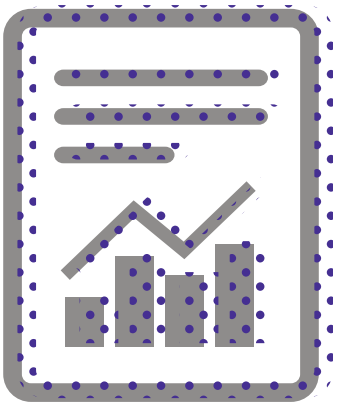
Rigid and unimaginative

Prominent space is additionally given to showing how other countries have tackled similar challenges in different ways. There are engaging sections on education in Estonia, early years provision in Finland, teaching in Singapore and digital experiments underway in California. Yes, there are some examples of home-grown educational creativity too, but the ideas and approaches adopted in other cultures and countries show just how far we in England have fallen behind.

The report is largely spot-on in terms of its analysis and recommendations. Early years provision remains a fragmented, market-driven mess staffed by frequently low-paid and low-skilled staff, yet still unaffordable to those needing it most. Working parents are eligible for 30 hours of government-funded childcare, even with a household income of up to £200,000, while unemployed parents are entitled to 15 hours – hardly a shining example of 'levelling up.'

Other recommendations include radically overhauling the curriculum and exam system, and once again placing creative subjects at the centre of students' learning. As the Commission points out, a relentless emphasis on drama, sport, music and D&T – often aided by luxurious facilities – has been a major contributor to successful outcomes in private education. Conversely, state school pupils have seen their access to such subjects significantly diminished, in favour of a so-called 'knowledge rich' approach to learning that seems to have badly failed over a third of our children.

There's a telling anecdote in the report about the writer Ian McEwan's son failing an essay question on his father's novel *Enduring Love*, despite having discussed its meaning and structure with the author himself. As McEwan explained to the Commission, it wasn't the teacher at fault, but rather the rigid and unimaginative marking system they were having to work with.



Behind the times

Few of the Commission's proposals are new, but having them amplified by mainstream centre-right newspapers might make politicians finally sit up and listen.

That said, there is the occasional blind spot. While noting the massive and growing gap in resources between private and state schools, the Commission warns against descending into 'class war', instead favouring the tired old call for private schools to do more to earn their 'charitable status'.

Here, I think the Commissioners are behind the times. In Scotland, private schools have been stripped of their business rate rebates. In England, the Private School Policy Forum – of which I'm a co-founder – recently produced a report of its own, highlighting the money that would be released to the hard-pressed state sector if we did the same here. Adding VAT to school fees, as proposed by former Labour Minister Andrew Adonis, would produce a further financial benefit for state education, and start bringing the two sectors more into balance.

A final quibble. Throughout the report, the educational reforms of the last 12 years are regularly praised – despite its condemnation of everything from the current curriculum to excessive centralisation, plus the mass demoralisation of our teaching force. There's little in its findings to warrant those words of approval, leaving one to ponder what exactly Gove and co. actually got right over this past decade...

Melissa Benn is a writer and campaigner, and visiting professor of education at York St John University

Back on the road to recovery

What does it take for ailing schools to turn things around? Simon Cox knows more about that than most, and has some advice to offer...

In November 2021, The Parliamentary Education Committee published a report titled 'The Forgotten', which examined the academic outcomes and long-term prospects of white working-class pupils (see bit.ly/ts116-CL1).

Observing that this was a group that had been badly let down by decades of neglect, the report noted that, "White British pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) persistently underperform compared with peers in other ethnic groups – from early years, through to higher education."

Simon Cox has spent a number of years turning around schools situated in white working-class communities. Regional Education Director at Crest and across the E-ACT trust, he has, to date, successfully transformed the fortunes of four schools, attracting considerable media attention in the process.

Here, Simon describes his journey and the advice he would give to other leaders wanting to make similarly substantial and sustainable improvements in their own settings.

Underperforming to oversubscribed

My leadership journey began in 2014, when I was appointed headteacher at Woodlands in Basildon. In the first month, 58 staff left. At the time, 89% of the school's pupils were white British, 45% were in receipt of Pupil Premium and it was in the lowest 10% of schools in the country. It also had a PFI (Private Finance Initiative)-funded building, which brought with it its own costing restraints.

After being at Woodlands for four years, we had a monitoring visit from Ofsted, followed by another in 2015 and then a full section 5 in 2018. By then, the school had been turned around from being rated Requires Improvement, to Good with Outstanding behaviours and leadership.

Given the context of the school, its size and location, we chose to embark on an elite sports programme and eventually managed to place fourth in the country, against the likes of Eton and Harrow. By the time I left in 2019, the school was oversubscribed by 65%, with 496 first choice applications for its 300 spaces.

The next stop on my journey was an E-ACT school in Daventry, which had always been in either Requires Improvement or Special Measures. Before I joined, they'd had 286 days of exclusion in just one term, but saw no fixed term or permanent exclusions at all thereafter. In eight years of being a head, I've actually never had to do one fixed term or permanent exclusion!

That school now has 210 first-choice applications for its 210 spaces, and that's taking into consideration the two years of COVID we went through. Following a full inspection, it was rated Good overall, again with Outstanding leadership and behaviours.

In 2021 I was then asked to assume executive headship of Danetre And Southbrook Learning Village (DSLV), an E-ACT all-through school in Daventry that was also in a bit of a pickle!

The school had previously had an inspection that resulted in a Good rating, but only just. In March 2022, we had a section 5 that resulted in a solid Good rating right the way through from reception to sixth form.

This April, I switched to working four days a week at Crest Academy Neasden, the population of which is 92% EAL, 4% white British and over 50% PP. We're currently in the process of rapidly turning the school around, and have so far made some great progress in manoeuvring it into a stronger position.

The work that I've done at these schools is what the children deserve. They deserve the best from their school and teachers.

Delivering to the standard

Turning any school around involves constantly learning and improving yourself whilst drawing on your experiences, because every school is different. I use an 'ABCDE' approach (see panel) which helps me identify what needs to be done

As a leader, if you present the journey you're embarking on positively, your teachers will use what you're doing to their advantage and for the good of their pupils. Since around 2012 I've used the ProgressTeaching platform at

all the schools I've been at, because I know the results it helps schools to achieve. One thing I like about it is its openness – parents can see their child's reports and progress, and we can communicate with them regularly without adding to teachers' existing workloads.

Another benefit is that teachers can easily see their strengths and areas for improvement, view everything their manager has documented in an observation and gain a really good understanding of what they need to do to improve their practice.

If you're a teacher that is delivering to the standard I expect, then rather than me sitting with you and listing all the things that you've done well – which could take half an hour of your time – I'll instead send you my feedback, which you'll receive instantly with a tick to confirm you're delivering to standards.

In some cases, all that needs to be said is *'You know what – that was really good! Well done, and thank you very much.'* As part of the CPD package, that teacher will then get to develop their practice in those other areas that really matter to them.

When you observe a teacher who isn't performing as well as they should be, you need to discuss this with them in a constructive way. What are our next steps? What extra support can we put in place?

This isn't a judgement. You just want to help your teachers teach better, but you need to back that up by not using it as a stick to beat your teachers with. If this message can be communicated clearly, you can then get your teachers that recognise the benefits of working in this new way and be your champions at the school, and at any others in future.

The three R's

Whenever I've worked with other headteachers, I've always shared with them my three R's of good headship:

Recruitment – of both staff and students. The recruitment of staff is key if you want sufficient bodies in your classrooms, but also for ensuring the right people are in place and prepared to buy into your vision.

The more students you get, the more opportunities will emerge, eventually leading to more in the way of budget. It's like a restaurant being full – word of mouth spreads, and everyone wants to go there once they see that it's always full.

Results – There's no escaping the need to deliver those all-important outcomes at Y6, GCSE and A Levels, since tests and exam results are key indicators of how well you're doing as a school.

Relationships – All this ultimately links back to your relationships with staff, pupils and your local community. If you want people to support you and join you on your journey of improvement, the importance of these can't be overstated.

For more information about ProgressTeaching and how it can help your school, visit progressteaching.com or email info@progressteaching.com to arrange a free demonstration

THE 'ABCDE' APPROACH

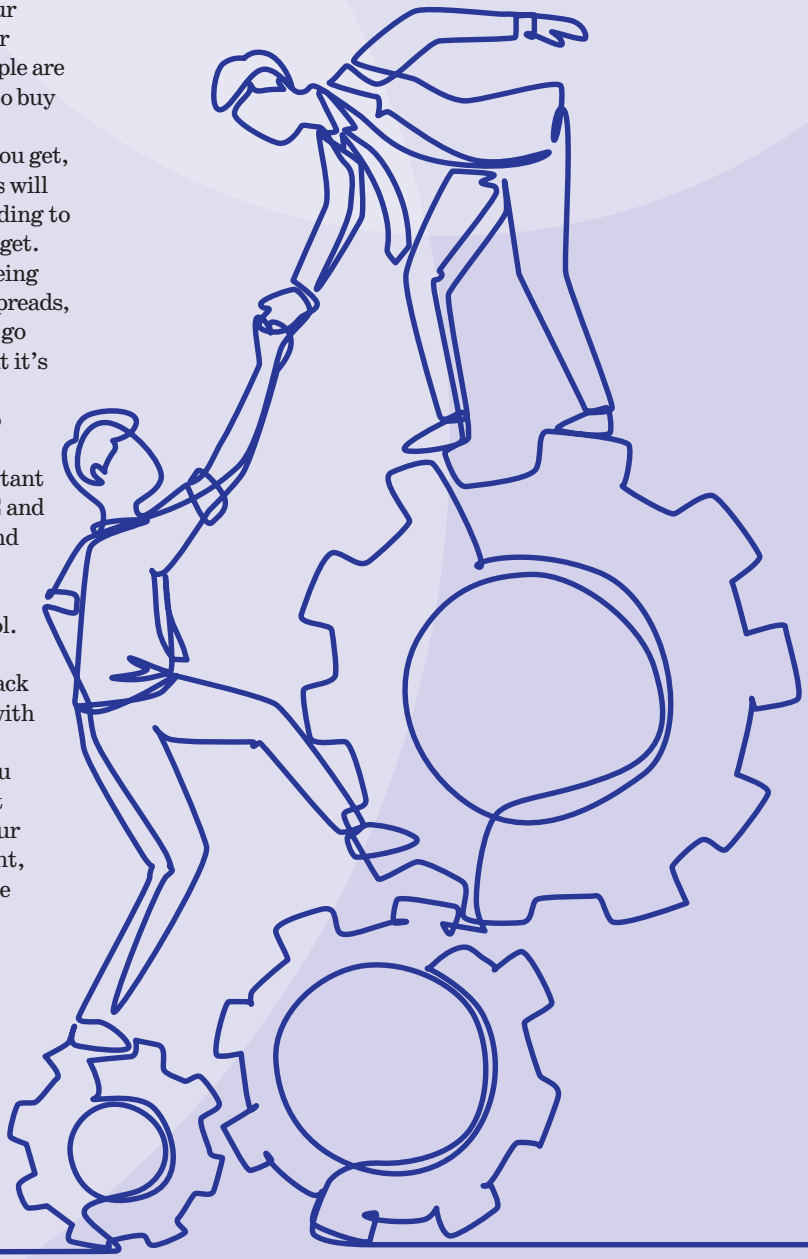
Assess: What worked at a previous school won't necessarily work at your current school. You need to understand the unique challenges that your particular school is facing and what needs to change.

Behaviour: At every school I've been to behaviour has been an issue at the start, though for different reasons. In one school, it was because the children were naughty, with no systems in place to help them move forwards. At another, it was down to the teaching not being up to scratch, so the children messed about.

CPD: This is crucial for staff buy-in. Teachers need to be appreciated and have their career goals supported. Give them the opportunity to develop, visit other schools, get on an NPQ programme and secure that promotion they deserve when they're being the teacher their pupils need them to be!

Direction: This is about the culture. At Crest, the culture was quite oppressive. This needed to change so that staff could know the importance of being kind and supportive to each other, as well as their pupils. Having taken other schools on similar journeys, I can recognise where a school is and set landmarks to track how we're improving. It's important to involve families too. One of the first things I do is hold a parent forum so I can listen to their frustrations and work with them moving forwards.

Energy: bring positive energy and your team will feed off it! As leaders, we're also trying to create the next generation of leaders. We need to share our insights with the teaching community so that our work can be continued after we've left, and our schools can remain in a state of constant improvement.



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3 things we've learnt about... THE END OF TERM

What were teachers' thoughts at the end of the last school year – and how might they inform your preparations when the summer term next rolls round...?

1 Do behaviour standards really get worse?

Every few months, we at Teacher Tapp ask teachers if they feel poor behaviour stopped their most recent lesson. When asked this late in the 2022 summer term, 29% replied in the affirmative. However, compared to earlier points in the school year, there seemed to be little difference in the proportion of those agreeing. In fact, it actually marked a 4 percentage point drop compared to teachers' responses in March 2022. We observed a similar difference in 2021, too.

Poor behaviour still rears its head now and then, of course. Lateness to lessons is one of the behavioural issues teachers can expect to encounter most frequently, but what are the most commonly heard excuses?

The most oft-used excuse seems to be students claiming they were held back by another teacher, as heard by 58% of our teacher respondents. 48% meanwhile cited students often claiming that they needed to visit the medical room.

2 How are new timetables distributed?

One hotly anticipated aspect of the summer term – for some, at least – is the release of timetables for the next academic year. 80% of secondary teachers will apparently get an idea of what theirs will look like by the end of the term, though interestingly, it's schools with the most affluent intakes that appear to get theirs the earliest.

English teachers are the most ruthless when it comes to what they do with their old timetables. 38% of them throw it away over the summer break, more than any other subject. Conversely, arts teachers are the opposite, with just 23% disposing of theirs and impressive 47% opting to hang onto them.

Finally, when it comes to your year planner, what's your favoured approach – running days along the top and periods down the side? It's a question that divides the teaching community. 56% of secondary teachers go with that approach, but in primary schools it's the complete opposite, with periods of the day along the top being much more popular...

3 End-of-year gifts

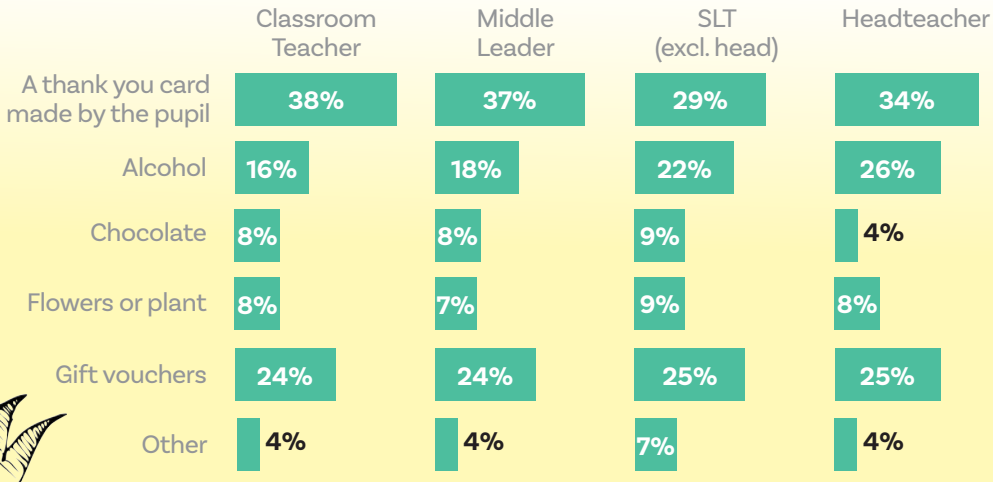
Gifts received from students and their families can be thoughtful tokens of appreciation for the hard work teachers have done over the past year – but what's actually the most preferred gift among teachers?

A handmade 'thank you' card wins out among secondary teachers, with 45% of teachers saying they would recommend that this is what be given to them. Alcohol comes a distant second, though it's notably more popular among headteachers than classroom teachers...

Just one in five teachers report buying 'end of year' presents for their classes, with those mostly confined to Y11 groups. English teachers are the most willing gift-givers, with one in four demonstrating their generosity.

It turns out exchanges of gifts are also made between trainee teachers and their mentors. More than half of teacher mentors report buying their trainees an 'end of placement' present, but there's be a caveat to that – 15% of secondary mentors only buy gifts if their trainee has 'done well'...

WHAT WOULD YOU RECOMMEND A FRIEND BUY FOR THEIR CHILD'S TEACHER AS AN END-OF-YEAR GIFT?



Question answered by 6,959 teachers on 25/06/22 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

For more snappy insights like this, and to be part of the panel, please join in via the free Teacher Tapp app available to download for iOS and Android. You will learn something new every day.

‘Us’ and ‘them’

Adrian Lyons posits that the sense of alienation many feel towards Ofsted may have something to do with its current focus on serving the will of the Chief Inspector

Have you ever used the terms ‘they’ or ‘them’ in relation to Ofsted?

I was directly employed by Ofsted for over 16 years. Before that, as a teacher, I’d often refer to Ofsted as either ‘them’ or ‘they’. Afterwards, as a teacher trainer leading a PGCE course that was among the first ITT providers to be inspected by the regulator back in 2017, I again referred to Ofsted as ‘they’ or ‘them’.

Later, I was given contracts by a small company carrying out inspections on behalf of Ofsted, in which the directors of the company referred to Ofsted as ‘they’ or ‘them’. One of said directors used to confuse us by referring to the then HMCI, David Bell, as ‘Whitechapel Man’ (there having once been a famous foundry in Whitechapel that manufactured bells).

Hazy knowledge

After becoming one of Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Education in 2005, I found myself directly employed by Ofsted itself. Yet after a few years, I came to realise how even then, my colleagues and I would routinely refer to the organisation *we worked for* as ‘they’ or ‘them’.

It’s interesting to think about this in relation to the huge impact Ofsted has on schools and teachers, and the often hazy knowledge and understanding that parents, teachers and even politicians have of the regulator.

Ofsted is formally a ‘non-ministerial government department’. What that means is that its employees are civil servants. Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector (HMCI) is ultimately in charge, with all employees of the department required to either implement the policies and desires of the HMCI of the day, or leave.

Ofsted isn’t a collective of professional experts. It’s an organisation that exists to implement the policies set by HMCI.

Specific inspections

There are two types of Ofsted school inspectors. Most are Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) – individuals who have qualified teacher status and are contracted to perform specific inspections. Within this group are ‘serving practitioners’ and ‘non-serving practitioners’.

Serving practitioners are employed in leadership roles at schools, and therefore enjoy the advantage of possessing very up-to-date knowledge and expertise. However, since they’re regularly needed in schools, they will tend to gain limited experience of inspection, and can sometimes run the risk of comparing policies and practices at other schools with their own.

Non-serving practitioners are typically self-employed former school leaders – a number of whom will often be carrying out inspection work primarily to maintain their Ofsted inspector badge, which in turn lends credibility to their consultancy work (which usually pays better than working for Ofsted).

Directly employed

Ofsted’s directly employed inspectors, on the other hand, are HMIs. When I became an HMI, my fellow recruits and I thought we’d reached the pinnacle of our careers, as the role was seen as one of great privilege. Part of the job involved leading the inspection of schools, but there was also a wide range of other activities. These might include monitoring LAs and working with other agencies, supporting schools judged as Inadequate to help them to improve, reviewing subjects, working alongside subject associations and more besides.

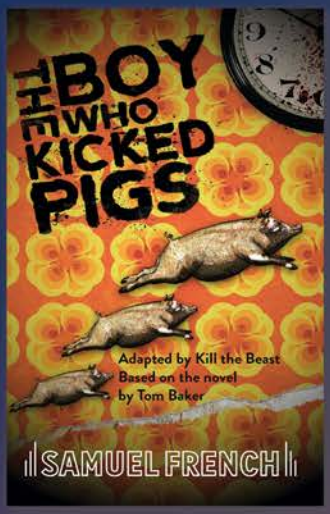
The mentoring for new HMI at the time was genuinely first class. Most of your first year would be spent training and learning about different aspects of the organisation’s work.

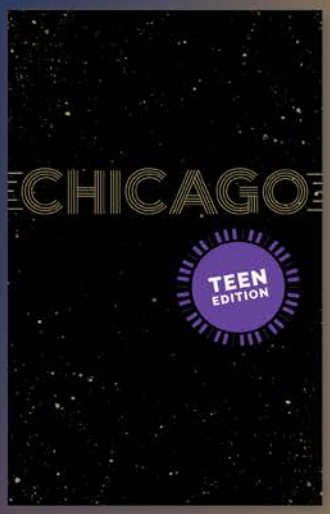
Sadly, however, the role since then has become very different. Now, the focus is mainly on delivering large volumes of inspections and quality assuring the reports of OIs. Consequently, the nature of the HMI workforce has changed. HMIs still receive plenty of inspection experience, but with the role carrying a salary of £75,000 a year, many now treat it as more of a stepping stone to the much more lucrative appointments available within MATs.

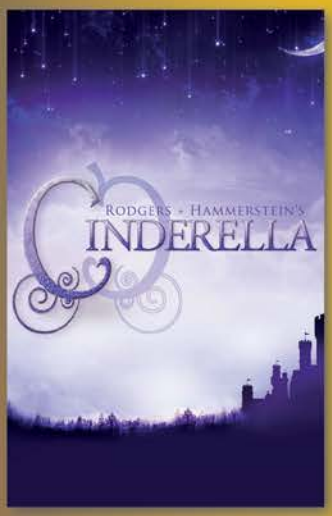
Ofsted was originally created to give parents dispassionate information about the quality of education in different schools. Yet the manner in which it was originally set up has since forced the regulator into serving a different purpose – that of enabling a series of different HMCIs to reimagine the purposes of school inspection based on what *they* personally define as ‘quality of education’.

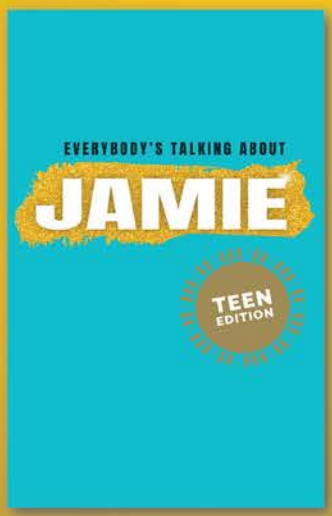
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

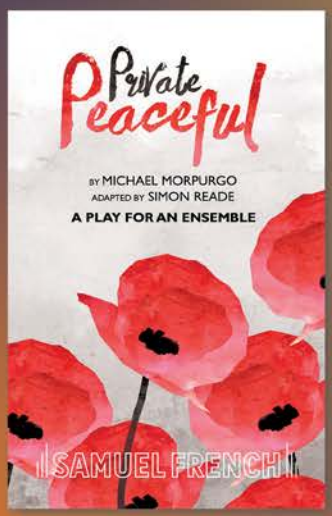
Adrian Lyons was one of Her Majesty’s Inspectors between 2005 and 2021. and now works with MATs, teacher training providers and LAs to support education; find out more at adrianlyonsconsulting.com

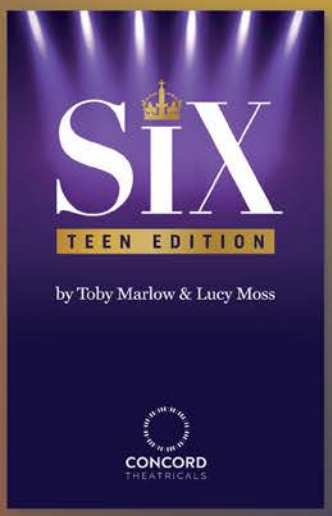


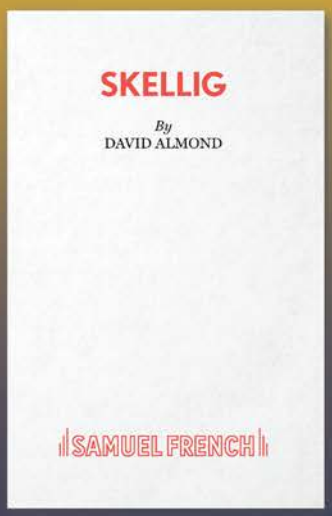


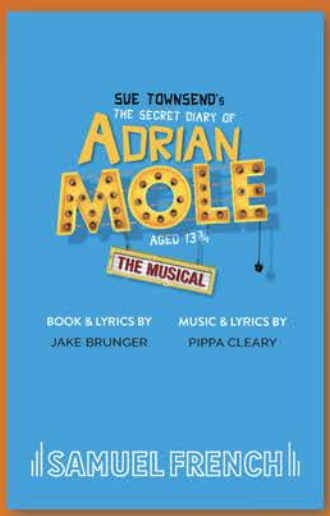


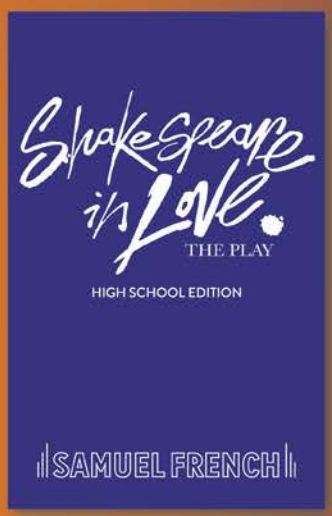












Not fit for PURPOSE?

With the number of students experiencing mental health difficulties continuing to grow, let's try adopting the habits and practices of some of the world's healthiest regions, suggests **Dr Nick Smith**...

A recurring belief of older generations is that '*growing up nowadays is far easier than in the past.*'

After a particularly fractious half-term holiday earlier this year, when both of my children displayed a complete lack of appreciation for their fantastic, sparkling lives, I briefly became a paid-up member of this school of thought.

Upon my return to school, I gave an assembly entitled *'When I was your age, things were very different'*, which saw me outline the many ways in which I viewed my childhood as having been tougher than theirs.

I pointed out how, unlike them, I hadn't received constant technological stimulation, and had therefore learnt to amuse myself for hours on end with something as simple as a stick, a piece of string, or – a particular favourite – the humble paperclip. Nor had there been any 'fancy' food when I was growing up. In place of kale and quinoa, I'd been fed beef dripping instead. I had no idea what an avocado was.

Greater mental strain

And yet, while I continue to believe that growing up in the past was perhaps more physically demanding than today, it's also become clear to me that the younger generation are under far greater mental strain than we ever were.

They feel increasing pressure from a world full of rampant consumerism and celebrity culture. It's a world in which they must strive for physical perfection and stunning success on all fronts. When they fail to meet these lofty expectations, many aren't equipped to cope and can become ill as a result.

According to DfE figures, in 2017 more than one in three teenage girls suffered from anxiety or depression – a rise of 10% over the previous decade. Our students are the first generation to have lived their lives fully in the digital age. For them, there is no escape from an unceasing and addictive 24-hour online culture that constantly reminds them of the unobtainable expectations society has set for them, and a relentless stream of peer judgement via social media.

Many lack the direction and stability that faith and family might have previously provided – and if that wasn't enough, the climate of the world outdoors is changing at a precipitous rate. Physically, things are scarcely any better for them either, given a stark increase in childhood obesity and associated diabetes that's been described as a modern-day epidemic.

> **"Previous generations have created a world where staying healthy has become surprisingly difficult"**

Blue zone thinking

The problem for our students is that previous generations have created a world where staying healthy has become surprisingly difficult, and hence increasingly unusual. When I was growing up, we ate plenty of vegetables, and walked or cycled almost everywhere. In the post-internet era the lives of our teenagers look very different indeed, faced as they are with daily challenges to their physical and mental wellbeing.

Our initial attempts to counter these trends resulted in an explosion in the quantity and range of support personnel employed within schools. Over time, we've utilised a whole host of pastoral heads, counsellors, nurses, safeguarding officers, SEND personnel, mental health practitioners, student mentors, catch-up coordinators and Pupil Premium champions, alongside help from a wide range of external agencies.

Remarkably, however, it never seemed to matter how much we increased our capacity – it was never enough. The demand always seemed to grow to the point where it would swamp our supply. Eventually, I came to realise that this was because our army of pastoral operatives were only really treating the *symptoms* of these issues rather than their *causes*. If we wanted to staunch this flow of ill health, we would need to head upstream.

Thus, it seemed to me that the principal challenge for schools was to rebalance academic learning with emotional wellbeing. Having resolved to do this in our setting, I opted to implement a whole school health curriculum based on the work of geographer Dan Buettner at National Geographic.

Buettner had led a study into the five places in the world where people live the longest and exhibit the lowest levels of chronic disease. It turned out that these places were to be found in Japan, Italy, Greece, Costa Rica and California, and came to be known as 'Blue Zones'.

Buettner and his research colleagues were surprised to discover that despite these long-lived Blue Zone communities being many miles apart from each other,

they all shared a number of similar habits.

For example, their populations all had a strong sense of purpose and belonging. Family was the priority around which they built their lives. They would set aside time in the day for escaping the commotion of daily life, and had adopted routines that helped them shed stress.

People in these areas would also eat moderate amounts of fresh, unprocessed local produce made mainly of plants. Instead of going to the gym or training for marathons, the exercise these people did stemmed mainly from movements that simply arose in the course of their daily lives. They would walk to most places. They consistently used the stairs. They would perform household chores by hand, and regularly dug, hoed, weeded and harvested their gardens.

Focus on health

Since moving our students to a Blue Zone was impractical, our response was to instead develop a modified version of those Blue Zone habits, and codify these via our school's own '10 Healthy Habits' (see panel). My hope was that this would not only make our students healthier, but happier as well.

To realise this ambition, we focused our curriculum as much as possible on health. We created a quarter-mile circuit through our grounds, and set our students the task of walking around it a certain number of times each half-term.

10 HEALTHY HABITS

The full list of 'Blue Zone' healthy habits adopted by Torquay Girls' Grammar School...

1. **CREATING** – A healthy planet
2. **LIVING** – Have a sense of purpose
3. **CHILLING** – Relax and de-stress
4. **LOVING** – Put family first
5. **BELONGING** – Take part in a community
6. **CHOOSING** – Choose healthy friends
7. **FEEDING** – Eat fresh food in moderation
8. **PLANTING** – Eat more plant-based food
9. **MOVING** – Move naturally
10. **SNOOZING** – Get sufficient sleep

We also asked students to choose four friends to form social support groups, based on the lifelong friendship groups in Okinawa, Japan known as *moai*. We provided tai chi and yoga sessions. We introduced a no cake/biscuits policy in lessons, and laid on food choices typical of Blue Zone regions in our canteen.

We introduced dozens of new extracurricular activities, including a gardening club, organised lunchtime student games and mid-lesson movement sessions. We set aside a designated quiet/meditation area and even created a Blue Zone recipe book.

By offering these different curricular experiences, we hoped to encourage our students to make small, but persistent changes that would gently nudge them towards lifelong healthy habits.

For all the progress we've made, however, our ability to adopt wholesale the kind of curriculum outlined here remains problematic, since it requires two major changes in governmental policy – the freedom to escape the straitjacket of an exam-orientated curriculum, and the funding necessary to staff a major cross-curricular programme of physical and mental wellbeing.

If both were to be implemented, it would not only help schools counter the rising tide of childhood illness, but effectively amount to the single most important investment any government could make.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Nick Smith is a retired headteacher, having previously led Torquay Girls' Grammar School, and taught at four comprehensives, one FE college and a grammar school prior to that.

This article is an adapted extract from his book *Head Trauma - The Bruising Diary of a Headteacher*, available now (£16.99, Michael O'Mara Books)

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CLASSROOM VOICE

A crucial way out

The decision of one London borough to prevent virtually all forms of permanent exclusion risks leaving schools with fewer options and a drain on staff capacity, argues Dr Stephen Curran...

Once again, the education system's progressives are putting untested theory over years of experience – this time, by preventing schools from excluding pupils.

I refer here to the London Borough of Southwark's recent response to high rates of exclusion among its schools. Rather than try to reduce the number of those excluded – through interventions, say – it's instead attempted to try and ban the practice entirely, proposing that students will only be removed from schools if they're actively threatening the safety of their peers.

Teachers, it seems, will be encouraged to understand the reasons behind bad behaviour using a 'trauma-informed response,' and not take incidents at 'face value.'

Let's be clear – mandating no exclusions at all is just as extreme as resorting to exclusions continually. While it's true that many children's lives are affected by a rage of complex issues, and that schools should be compassionate in how they engage with these, it's also unfair to tell 29 other children that their classroom experience must be sacrificed for the sake of one child with serious problems. It's important to recognise the rights of the majority, not just the minority.

Over 30 years of teaching I came to learn that sometimes, there was simply no choice but to have a child removed from class so that the rest could learn freely and be treated fairly. A 'no exclusion' policy might seem well-meaning at first, but it's one founded on idealism, and an erroneous belief that all problems children present with are ultimately solvable with kindness and understanding.

'SOCIAL EDUCATION'

I remember once dealing with two highly disruptive children who dominated the time and attention of the school's hugely compassionate teachers. They went on to commit a serious rape, and are currently serving prison time. The reality is that schools can't solve all the problems children have. Sometimes, proceeding with exclusion and teaching them in a specialised unit is the only viable option.

Yet there can be a tendency among some progressive educationalists to view schools as centres of 'social education' – places where teachers assume additional carer roles, and are expected to sort out the social, behavioural and psychological problems affecting very difficult children. But this should be left to the experts – particularly psychologists and psychiatrists – rather than teachers.

I always believed that my role in school was to teach my subject, and that by doing this well, children would benefit from receiving an excellent education in said subject. It wasn't about resolving social issues and making up for bad parenting.

MODERN VALUES

When faced with a determinedly disruptive child, a teacher prevented from excluding any child from lessons can be genuinely powerless to do anything. Discussion, counselling, sanctions, and other techniques don't always work, sometimes resulting in teachers spending endless hours outside classrooms, dealing with problems stemming from just one individual. A policy of 'no exclusion' denies schools a crucial way out of situations where there's a risk of them becoming overwhelmed.

The influence of wider society on children's behaviour also doesn't help. Observe how some highly viewed 'influencers' have championed the rule-breaking of Extinction Rebellion and other protest movements. Many children will have seen this and taken it to mean that they themselves can do as they please.

We need to think more broadly about the values our society espouses, but that's a process in which our schools can only play a limited part. Banning exclusions on the basis of ill-informed idealism serves to deny the wider harms that some societal values are causing – including the bad behaviour we see in schools.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Stephen Curran (@DrStephenCurran) is a former teacher and the founder of AE Tuition (aetuition.co.uk)

HOME TRUTHS

Colin Foster suggests that being a genuinely supportive colleague may involve more than simply being agreeable and making the right noises...

A colleague walks into the staffroom at breaktime. *'Those Y10s are a nightmare – they won't do a single thing I say!'* How would you react? How might your colleagues react?

Surely only the most socially inept and insensitive colleague would respond with the classic, *'Well, they're fine with me!'* – because what could that possibly achieve, other than make your colleague feel small?

Teachers want to be supportive colleagues, and will frequently recognise that 'we've all been there'. This colleague has obviously had a very stressful lesson, is feeling low and needs some affirmation and support. It follows that we'd want to build them up, not knock them down – but what would you actually *say*? And how can you prevent your 'supportive' response from simply making them feel even more hopeless?

Blaming students

I find that supportive colleagues will tend to say things like, *'Oh, that group! They're exactly the same with me – they take no notice of anything.'* This seems like a nice thing to say. Perhaps the colleague no longer feels quite so much like a failure. It isn't just them, because others have evidently experienced similar issues.

But of course, the natural implication of *'It's not you'* is *'It's the students.'* And so the conversation will often descend from there into demonisation of 'these students'. *'What is it with kids like that? They have no respect for school, or for any authority whatsoever. Their parents are just as bad – they take no interest,'* and so on.

Is this OK? What if the colleague had entered the staffroom saying something more extreme, like *'Those Y9s are vile!'* Would you challenge that way of talking about students? Or would doing so make you 'unsupportive', as if you don't understand how hard teaching can be?

These kinds of 'supportive' remarks (*'Oh, I know! Tell me about it!'*) can quickly gain momentum in a friendly staffroom. Everyone's keen to show their wounds and how agreeable they are. That may make the colleague feel a little better in the short term, but fundamentally, I think it ends up being disempowering.

> **"With our supposedly kind remarks, are we enabling people towards defeatism, inaction and hopelessness?"**

The message *'It's not about you'* is hard to separate from *'There's nothing you can do about it'*. If those students are 'just like that', and it has nothing to do with your teaching, then what hope is there? You may as well find another school – or another career.

A safe space

People will often defend 'letting off steam' in the staffroom, and say that conversations around what I've called 'demonising' students are somehow therapeutic. The argument goes that the staffroom should be a 'safe space', and that so long as such conversations take place out of earshot of students or visitors, it shouldn't be policed with regard to what's said.

I'm not so sure. I'm no professional counsellor, but when I completed a short counselling course many years ago, it challenged my presuppositions. Previously, my assumption around counselling was that it was about being nice and patient, and accepting whatever the client said. It involved saying 'Poor you', and giving the person time to talk about their feelings so that they felt 'listened to' and affirmed.

While I've no doubt that at least some of those things can be important for a good counselling relationship, I also discovered that experienced counsellors are actually often quite 'tough' with their clients – even in ways that could seem cringeworthy to outside observers.

Mentors learn to be highly skilful at challenging people to make changes and take responsibility for their actions. This isn't about blaming anyone – the point is that even when something is in no way your fault, that doesn't mean you're completely powerless to do anything about what happens next. Yet holding those two things together isn't easy.

Rethinking 'supportiveness'

I'm not saying we should all start acting like amateur counsellors, as that could do more harm than good. I do, however, wonder if the prevailing sense of what it means to be 'supportive' needs a rethink.

Many years ago, I was in a staffroom when a colleague entered saying something along the lines of *'Those Y8s won't do a single thing I say'*. The collective reaction was to nod along sadly – but then one teacher glanced up from her marking, and shocked the room by looking straight at the colleague and saying, "You have to make them".

What an awful thing to say! The atmosphere of the room instantly changed, and the colleague who had entered walked off, clearly annoyed, saying "Well, how am I supposed to do *that*?" It seemed at the time like a textbook example of a highly inappropriate response.

Many years later, when the *'Won't do a single thing I say'* teacher was retiring, he cited the other colleague by name – though not in relation to the incident I'd observed – as being the best and most supportive colleague he'd met in his career.

Perhaps the comment was therefore made within the context of a trusting relationship, the marking colleague with the 'inappropriate' response having, in a sense, 'earned' the right to say what she did? Or maybe it was a blip in an otherwise more 'supportive' set of encounters? In any case, it made me wonder whether we're often more concerned with saying something that will signal us as being 'supportive' and make us look good, rather than saying something that may actually be helpful to the other person in the long run.

Time and tone

To be clear, I'm not advocating saying deliberately tough things to your colleagues in the staffroom. Indeed, the most useful conversations usually need to be held in private, rather than in front of everyone, and are perhaps best had later on, once the 'heat' of the moment has died away.

Yet even then, do we teachers *ever* share those tough messages? Or are we more minded to simply stick to nice, safe things that make us seem virtuous, but are ultimately unhelpful – even counterproductive? With our supposedly kind remarks, are we sometimes just enabling people towards defeatism, inaction and hopelessness?

Taking responsibility for dealing with things that aren't your fault seems like an important aspect of being a professional. We must find ways of talking about strategies for handling challenging situations and learn from one another – while accepting that none of us are perfect, and that we all have struggles. Often quite similar ones.

Pointing out that there might be something we can do to address a particular challenge doesn't amount to blaming us for causing it. Indeed, it might even be what ultimately sets us on the path to improving the situation.

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

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Gaynor Clipsham, director of science at the Benjamin Britten Music Academy, discusses her experiences of *Oxford Smart* Activate's impact on outcomes

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How has it supported your students?
It's helped students check their understanding and regulate their own learning, so they've become more confident learners. It's given students more opportunity to reflect on what they are doing, especially by using responsive feedback. We're making feedback more of an active discussion, and being very responsive to the changes we need to make.

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How has it supported your teachers?
It's so supportive, particularly for those teaching out of subject. The teaching resources are fantastic, but also the background research – it's all there. When you go into Kerboodle you can follow all the research, including videos.
The data is great, and enables teachers to identify progression. This has given them a real boost, just to see how well their students are doing. I've never known staff to come up and tell me, '*My class all got over x%!*' in over 20 years of teaching.

What has been the outcome for your school?
A key difference we're noticing is that the students are loving science. I've been at this school for two years and I'm seeing the excitement building in them. There are more practicals built in which, together with seeing how to learn and think for themselves, and knowing where they are with their knowledge, seems to have made their understanding so much better. I'm really excited for when these students sit their GCSEs, because I believe we'll see a massive difference.

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Fewer rules, more 'terms and conditions'

Let's replace the edicts that students are constantly reminded of with formal agreements, suggests **Ed Carlin**

Our students arrive at school each day very excited. These are young people at a time in their lives when they're surrounded by hundreds of their peers, given relentless schedules and little say as to whether they have to be there or not.

However, this initial excitement and energy can quickly turn into mischief, persistent disruption and antisocial behaviour.

The adults in the room

Staff's natural response will be to correct students, reprimand and outline the 'consequences' that the young person's behaviour will have. And yet, the child knows that said consequences are often unrealistic. The adult knows that the child knows this, and everyone moves forward with a little less respect for each other and the system itself.

I'm not suggesting that we don't challenge negative behaviour in our schools – we should – but where else in society are we confronted with 'rules' in such a blunt way? Outside of sport and games, young people will rarely enter spaces and be immediately told, *'In this place, the rules are as follows...'*

It feels so dated and irrelevant compared to most of the situations and places young people typically experience in their lives outside school. Yet when they're in spaces where certain rules very much apply – a leisure centre, say or a train station – they'll typically not exhibit the same negative behaviours their teachers see. Why is that?

I believe it's because they're intrinsically aware of how to behave, based on the context of the space they happen to be in. We must therefore aspire to a culture of purpose in our schools, where we regularly emphasise why they're there – to learn, develop skills and gain qualifications with guidance and support from trained professionals.

Playing it safe

Behaviour issues can often arise when school leaders become so fixated on specific policies, rules and regulations that young people start failing to see their relevance.

Countless times throughout my teaching career I've heard young people express frustration and raise what I've always felt to be fair questions: *'Why do we have to wear a uniform but staff don't?'* *'Why do teachers shout at us when we do something wrong, but nobody's allowed to shout at them?'*

I'll tend to play it safe and offer the usual excuses – *'It's different for staff'* or *'They're older and able to make better judgements'* – even though I know there are times when those reasons don't apply. I think we need to challenge the rules we impose upon our students, and rethink those so-called 'consequences' we use as justifications for our actions.

Mutual agreements

Of course, we should continue teaching our students how to be respectful and make the most of the learning experiences we're providing for them – but it's time to give up the disproportionate consequences they'll often face for failing to wear a school tie, or walking the wrong way down a one-way corridor.

If we want students to properly understand the purpose of school, and reassure them that what they're being taught is both relevant and worthwhile, what are we missing? Not rules, but terms and conditions.

'T&Cs' are used by manufacturers, publishers, venue operators and countless other organisations to set out what they see as a reasonable agreement between them and their buyers or service users. Let's apply that model to a school, and imagine what would happen if all incoming students were invited to sign a contract clearly outlining certain T&Cs, with responsible adults present.

Having entered into an agreement, there would be less room for confusion, inconsistency and complaints between staff and students when behavioural issues arise. A school's teaching and support staff will have all agreed to a set of negotiated, fair and relevant T&Cs when appointed to their roles, so why not require the same of students?

It's becoming impossible to ignore the huge impact that negative student behaviour is having on our teachers. It's a nationwide issue, and one that appears to be only getting worse. I can't help wondering if what we're seeing is the direct result of an unrealistic, dated and intractable system of rules that must be obeyed, which causes confusion and conflict for all involved, right from the outset.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Ed Carlin is a deputy headteacher at a Scottish secondary school, having worked in education for 15 years and held teaching roles at schools in Northern Ireland and England

Is it insolence – or could IT BE AUSTISM?

Debby Elley examines the challenges that can arise when stressors provoke students with autism into exhibiting seemingly 'bad' behaviour...

When people advised him on his schoolwork, my son used to sometimes snap, '*I know, I know, I KNOW!*'

On the surface, this might seem like a classic teenage variant of, '*Don't tell me what to do!*' But it wasn't. My son, now 18, is autistic. When he was 13, he sometimes appeared discourteous, when usually – perplexingly – he was polite and respectful.

A sudden 'snap'

When it comes to educating autistic teens, it pays to be mindful that apparent non co-operation, obstinacy or rudeness aren't simply down to disobedience. If you think I'm being an apologist for 'bad' behaviour, then you're absolutely right – I am. Your behaviour policies should make an exception for autistic reactions in the face of distress, otherwise you'll be dishing out punishment unjustly.

Sometimes, autistic youngsters genuinely can't help their responses – and here's why.

In autism, there are two key factors underpinning a sudden 'snap'. The first is the experience of overload. This has many causes, which vary between individuals. We all have a breaking point; the difference with autistic people, simply put, is that their brain's alarm system is quite sensitive, leading to an easily triggered survival response of fight, flight or freeze.

The second factor underpinning that 'snap' is that autistic people have difficulty with self-regulation. So there's a double whammy at play – they're more likely to get overload in the first place, and be less able to modulate their responses when it happens.

> **"Smaller stressors can accumulate over the school day – hence outbursts over something seemingly insignificant"**

Fear of overload

Overload can happen suddenly, as a result of an overwhelming environment, sudden change or pressure. (To witness overload in an instant, spring a 'surprise' test).

Smaller stressors can also accumulate over the school day to create overload – hence outbursts over something seemingly insignificant. How prone you are to overload also varies according to levels of sleep, diet, health and all the other things that affect our mental resilience.

What teachers may witness therefore won't be insolence, but the result of an autistic youngster operating in survival mode. Unfortunately, when it comes to their 'fight or flight' response, the latter is typically limited within school settings, leaving them with a 'fight' response that often translates into physical or verbal outbursts.

A lack of awareness of these factors is damaging our mainstream autistic population, who are often inappropriately punished, or try to suppress their panic responses rather than show 'unacceptable' behaviour. Fear of overload is enough to prevent pupils from performing at their best – or indeed at all, in some instances.

Identifying stressors

So, that's the bad news. The good news is that we can all help to prevent overload, even if we're not autism 'experts'. Find out what a pupil's stressors are, and then share them with staff they're in daily contact with. Not just teachers, but also support, admin and canteen teams, too.

When identifying a person's stressors, collaboration with families is essential. That's partly why I joined forces with education advisor Gareth D. Morewood to produce the book *Championing Your Autistic Teen at Secondary School*, so that teachers might benefit from parents' experience.

Once those stressors are identified, divert the pupil's daily path away from them. Adaptations can be as small as a pupil's seating position in the classroom. Maintaining a calm and predictable environment, with plenty of warnings and preparation when it comes to change, will always be helpful for your autistic pupils.

A stress support plan

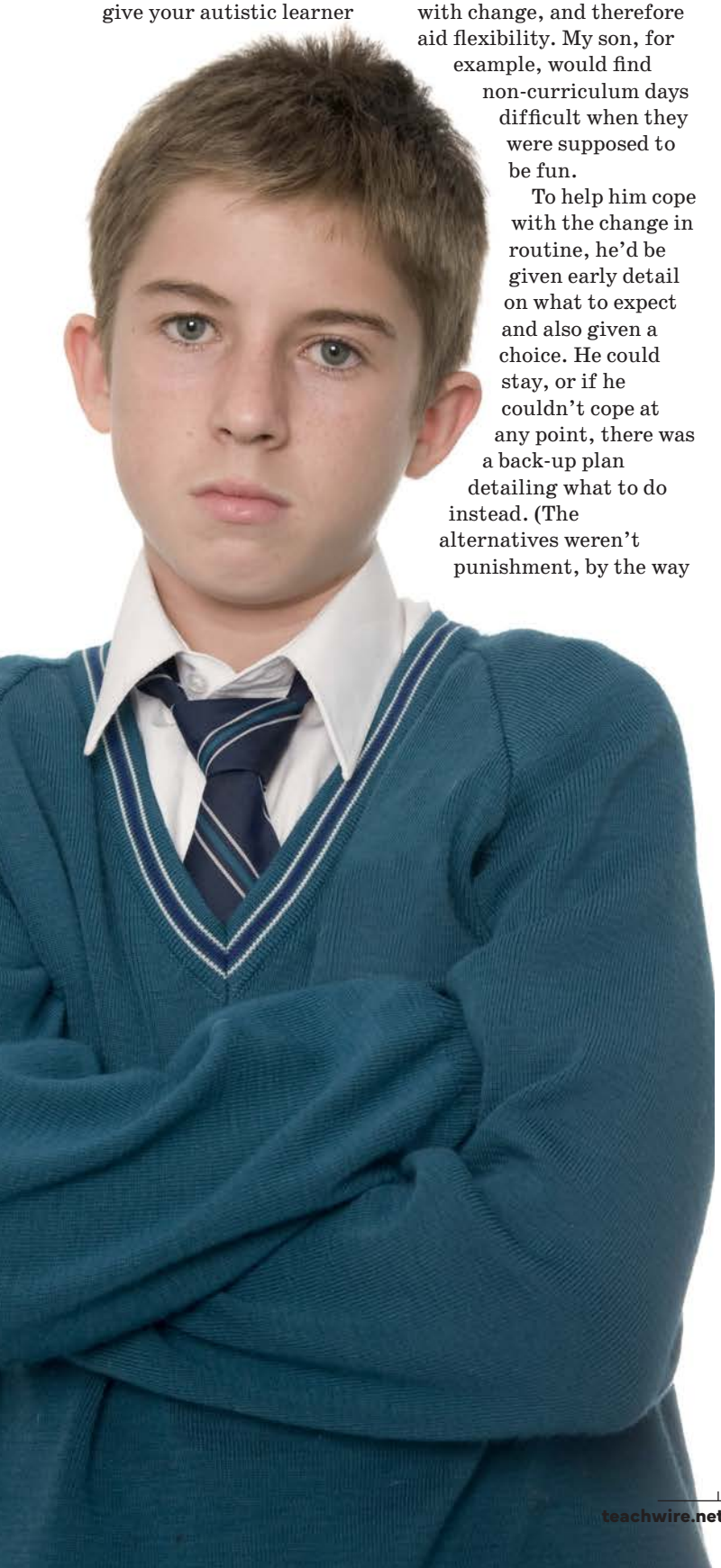
Gareth Morewood was a SENCo at my son's school, where he devised a 'Stress Support Plan' alongside carers and pupils to identify potential obstacles and devise tailored strategies to suit each autistic student. That might sound involved, but it saved considerable time in the long-term.

Consider the social and environmental stressors (excess noise, warmth and crowds are particularly common), but don't forget that teaching styles can also have some impact. Staff who make quite forceful demands on pupils without leaving room

for negotiation, for instance, can cause particular distress.

Why? Beacuse rigid thinking is part of autism. Teachers who meet this rigidity with a brick wall of non-negotiation can be subject to outbursts. It's far preferable to instead to give your autistic learner warnings and choices, rather than battling rigidity head-on.

This is particularly important when it comes to facing sudden change – one of autism's biggest enemies. Handing back some control can reduce the fear and anxiety connected with change, and therefore aid flexibility. My son, for example, would find non-curriculum days difficult when they were supposed to be fun.



To help him cope with the change in routine, he'd be given early detail on what to expect and also given a choice. He could stay, or if he couldn't cope at any point, there was a back-up plan detailing what to do instead. (The alternatives weren't punishment, by the way – that's not the idea.) This made Bobby far more likely to give things a go. He could see an escape route, and having that choice made all the difference.

THE TRANSITION FACTOR

There's an additional factor that can make outbursts more likely among your Y7s. Having recently moved out of a nurturing primary school environment and into entirely new school surroundings, there's a good chance that:

- They haven't yet noticed that their stress response is different from others, as it hasn't been fully tested
- They haven't learned how to recognise and communicate when things are getting a bit much
- They may need support to develop self-calming strategies

The 'flight' option

When presented with 'fight' responses, the logical answer is to try and prevent a student's stressors. If you can accept that there may be some you haven't predicted, make a 'flight' option available. Can autistic pupils go somewhere for peace, quiet and calm when things get too much, without the rigmarole of asking for permission each time?

Processing auditory information at speed is often overloading for autistic pupils, who tend to be more visual learners. The solution here is to have alternative, more visual options for reinforcing lessons at a person's own pace.

I have a theory that mainstream autistic pupils can have quite a jagged academic profile. When some skills come swiftly and naturally whilst others don't, the temptation can be to assume that you're either good or bad at something, with no in-betweens.

It therefore helps to explain the concept of *practice*, showing autistic pupils examples of where it's led to improvement among the most successful people. The field of metacognition, or 'thinking about thinking', is really important for autistic learners, for whom the *why* is often as important as the *how*.

Presentation of feedback is also important. Asking for a person's thoughts and reflections as a problem-solving collaborator, rather than simply issuing them instructions, will give them valuable processing time. It also allows pupils to 'hook' new ideas onto existing ones, rather than try and digest brand new information. For this reason, tying a youngster's own interests into learning can make information a lot easier to absorb.

The good news is that with maturity and insight, autistic teens can learn to predict and avoid their own stressors. But in order to do that, they need a supportive setting where staff understand the challenges they face, and can adapt and help them to manage their own environment.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Debby Elley is the co-founder of AuKids magazine (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 Publishers)

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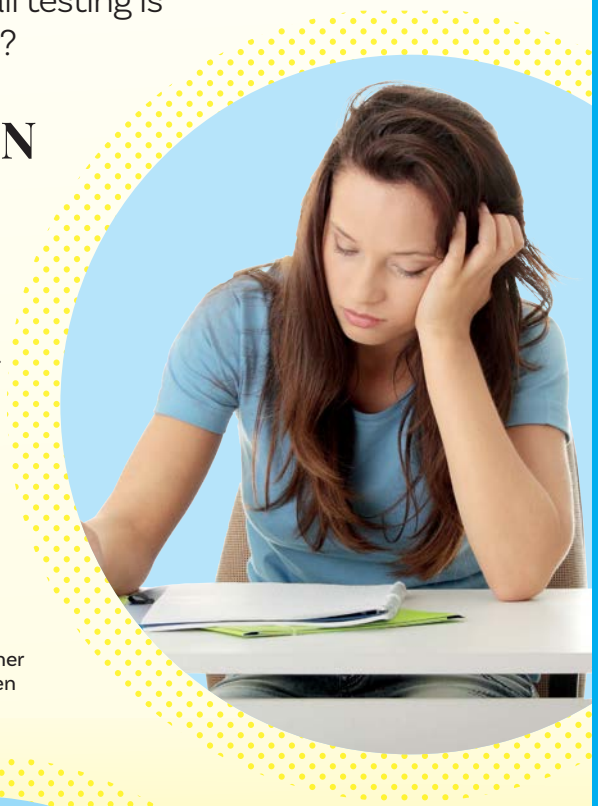
THE TS GUIDE TO... ASSESSMENT

Are current methods of assessment working as intended, could they be approached differently, and how close are we to the day when all testing is conducted electronically?

IN THIS SECTION



IN FIGURES:

HOW MUCH TRUST DO TEACHERS AND THE WIDER POPULATION HAVE IN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EXISTING EXAMS SYSTEM?

35%
of teachers felt the mitigation measures in place for the 2022 exams season didn't go far enough to make up for COVID-related disruptions

21%
of this year's A Level students missed more than 20 days of school or college due to the pandemic

72%
of teachers predict that the attainment gap between the most and least affluent students at their school will have further widened once this year's are published

Source: Sutton Trust polling of 4,089 GCSE and A Level teachers, and 434 students published 04/08/22

3 TEACHWIRE ARTICLES FROM THE ARCHIVES

THE TRICK TO MAKING PEER ASSESSMENT WORK
Michael McGarvey turns the spotlight on peer assessment in the classroom
bit.ly/115special1

CAN ASSESSMENT BE USED TO MOTIVATE?
Harry Fletcher-Wood discusses how behavioural science has the potential to help students get more out of the assessment process
bit.ly/116special2

WHAT SCHOOLS GAIN FROM 'MEASURING THE UNMEASURABLE'
The drive to capture teaching and learning in statistics is causing us to miss hugely important, though harder to gauge measures of students' success, says Dr Gary Keogh...
bit.ly/116special3

A better alternative to exams

We can have years of education hinge on a handful of exams that employers barely even register any more – or we can test what our students know in a fairer, richer way, suggests Steve Kenning...

A few years ago, I met with representatives of McKinsey – a global management consultancy company that was running a boot camp for university graduates who had secured jobs.

The purpose of the sessions was to get them work-ready by helping them develop non-formally assessed 'power skills', such as teamwork, critical thinking and problem-solving. Seeing the sessions in action was a pivotal moment, prompting me to question what at that point had been my 37 years in education as a teacher and school leader.

I've observed thousands of lessons throughout my career. While I'd class most as 'good teaching', they consisted largely of teachers imparting knowledge that will help students pass exams. And on many such occasions, I could see how passively disengaged the students were.

My meeting with McKinsey took place five years after I co-founded the Aspirations Academies Trust, and planted the seed for what would eventually become our unique 'No Limits Curriculum'. This combines traditional learning with project-based learning, in order to help students develop attributes that are important to employers.

Exams aren't working

A common thread amongst employers I've spoken to over the years is that the workplaces of today are worlds apart from those of a generation ago, and places where exam results no longer hold the same value they once did.

This year, thousands of young people across the country returned to sitting GCSE and A-level exams for the first time in two years, post-COVID. However, it marked the return of an assessment model that's over a hundred years old, and which labels as many as a third of young people, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, as failures.

> **"The ideal replacement for exams already exists in academia"**

The young people sitting those exams will have been in education for up to 13 years. During that time, they will have handed in countless assignments and contributed to a multitude of different activities, yet almost the entirety of their education will be judged solely on their performance in written, high-stakes exams or tests.

Globally, we're seeing a trend towards more effective forms of assessment that not only measure what students know or can recall, but also *how* they're able to use the skills they've learned and apply their knowledge.

Real-world learning

The real world isn't confined to one single subject, so why would we ever teach it that way?

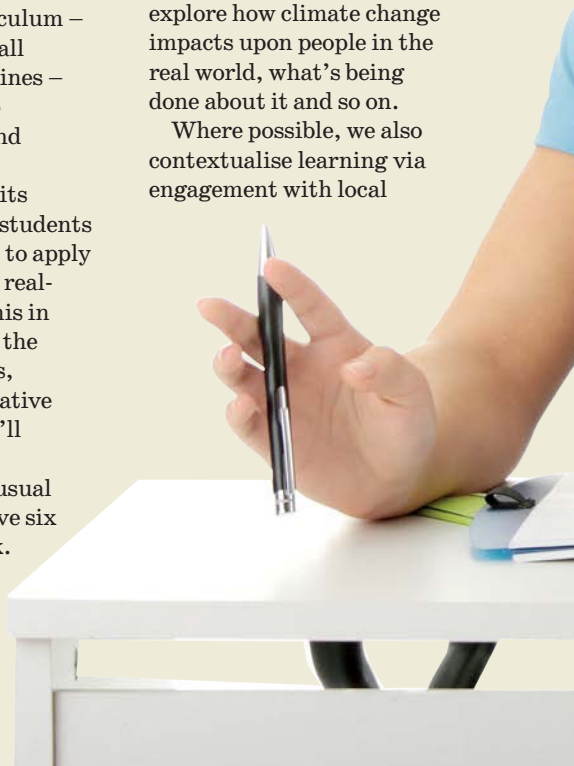
Our KS2/KS3 No Limits Curriculum – which uses applied transdisciplinary learning (ATL) – and our Y12 Aspirations Employability Diploma (AED) both focus on project-based learning. Project-based learning itself isn't a new idea, but what distinguishes the Trust's approach is that we run ATL assignments in government-funded schools. Instead of overturning our conventional curriculum – which still follows all government guidelines – we've adapted it to incorporate ATL and the AED.

ATL and No Limits provide our young students with opportunities to apply subject learning to real-world problems. This in turn helps to build the interpersonal skills, collaboration, initiative and resilience they'll need to succeed.

Alongside their usual subjects, pupils have six ATL lessons a week. Through a 'driving question', students may, for instance, explore the theme of climate change. These driving questions provide students and teachers with a learning purpose, and are designed to be engaging, provocative and open-ended, with several possible solutions. Through answering them, pupils are taught key workplace traits, including interpersonal and communication skills.

In this instance, the driving question might be, *'How can we, as global citizens, understand climate change in order to initiate eco-friendly practices at our academy?'* Pupils will first learn about the geographical and scientific aspects of climate change in their individual subjects. Then, during their ATL lessons, they'll come together and take on assignments that explore how climate change impacts upon people in the real world, what's being done about it and so on.

Where possible, we also contextualise learning via engagement with local



businesses and employers. One of our recent projects, for example, focused on public health with the driving question, *'How can we, as local public health directors, prepare a response plan to the spread of the next infectious disease?'*

Pupils were tasked with devising a social media awareness campaign for the local community about a disease of their choosing. Our local public health director came in to share the work she'd done with members of her team, which was fantastic, as it gave pupils the chance to ask relevant questions and receive invaluable insights from an expert.

Enter the viva

The AED is compulsory, aimed at years 12 and 13, and requires four hours of weekly study, alongside traditional A-level subjects.

Built on real world activities, the diploma sees students undertake four employer projects – three of which will always relate to the sectors of engineering, health and medicine, and education and training.

Our employer partners are vital to the success of the AED, to the extent that assessments are carried out by an external Employer Advisory Board, rather than teachers. Students submit a portfolio of their work, and must then defend this in a viva-style interview with two employers who will decide if they have demonstrated the basic professional skills needed for an entry-level role.

Some years ago, one of our students failed her A Levels but still managed to scrape through to a university interview. Based on the strengths and competencies she'd developed through the AED – including her ability to communicate – she was ultimately accepted. She subsequently graduated with first class honours and is now chair of our Alumni Advisory Board.

Active problem solvers

So what would an exam-free school system look like, and what implications might there be for employers and FE providers? Well, the ideal replacement for exams already exists in academia, in that anyone studying for a PhD has to present evidence of their work and then experience a detailed viva or interview.

Students at the end of Y13 could similarly present a portfolio of work – either drawn from a range of subjects or related to a particular area, such as medicine – showing their research, understanding and application of knowledge. Such an interview, if presented to a mixed group of educationalists and business/industry leaders, would test the validity of a student's work, while also allowing them to demonstrate many of the 'future skills' required in today's workplaces.

In recent months we've begun working with the Edge Foundation as a learning partner. Like us, the organisation is committed to making learning for young people relevant to the 21st century. It supports schools and colleges in embedding project-based and real world learning into the curriculum, and developing relationships with employers and local communities.

The world today needs active problem solvers. Schools need to model this by rethinking and redesigning the education they provide.

TRY IT YOURSELF

For other trusts or schools interested in creating something similar to our No Limits Curriculum by introducing applied transdisciplinary learning, I'd stress the importance of vision and recommend the following steps:

- Set up a working party to drive forward your vision. Ours was to challenge and engage students more by making their learning relevant, and having them develop skills for greater employability.
- Support from the principals is essential – you need people on board who are prepared to take a risk and buy in to the concept. ATL centres on teachers who are disciplined in many different subjects, so we were also changing a mindset.
- It's a case of 'trial and development', remembering to review steps as you take them and crucially, taking your time.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Steve Kenning is co-founder and CEO of Aspirations Academies Trust

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F4S

Do less, deliver more

Changing your classroom testing habits could help you assess more effectively while dialling down the intensive effort, says **Matt Findlay...**

As teachers, we need to know what our students already know so that we can plan lessons that build from this starting point. After engaging with students, we then need to check in with them again to see how much of what was taught has actually been understood and retained.

Thus, assessment blesses twice. It opens the door to teaching, but also gives us very powerful feedback with regards to how effective our teaching has been.

So with a shiny new year stretching out ahead of us, I offer you a challenge – **to make assessment 10 times more useful than it has tended to be previously, *and* one tenth as onerous.**

Through keeping a tighter handle on what students currently know and can do, you'll be better prepared to engage them by meeting them where they are. More importantly, regular assessment will provide you with powerful feedback as to how effective your teaching has been, which could be the driver of an exciting new phase of growth and development for you as a teacher, and have positive downstream consequences for the hundreds or perhaps thousands of pupils yet to pass through your classroom.

That's the lens through which I want you to view and take on this challenge. So here are some things you could try...

1 Test routinely

Instead of end of topic tests, test your students about once every six lessons on a mix of things you've taught since the start of Y7. This will highlight how effectively you've embedded previous learning through mixed review and sequencing of topics.

2 Keep the tests short

Tests should be viewed as information gathering exercises, but why collect more data than you can act on? I've found that I can obtain enough information from a single 20 to 30-minute 'learning check' to inform my teaching for the next six lessons or so. Longer tests will be more onerous and time consuming, but rarely more useful.

3 Don't record scores!

Focus instead on what you'll do in light of what the tests show. You might reflect on how you taught a particular topic – how well has your teaching landed with students? If there's scope for improvement, devote more time to planning explanations and questioning, rather than writing scores in your mark book, entering numbers into Excel or preparing lessons in which students RAG rate their test performance.

4 Respond to learners' needs

A strong performance from all students signals that we can proceed to the next stage of the learning journey. Conversely, the tests might show that some material needs to be revisited with the whole class, or that you need to provide some individualised support before moving on.

5 Identify your 'priority learners'

Note who the bottom three students are in each learning check. I personally write their initials on a piece of paper taped to my desk expressly for this purpose, and go to them first in subsequent lessons. The best differentiation is giving more of your time to those who need it most.

6 Control the test environment

Make sure your learning checks and tests are completed under strict test conditions. You need to know what each students can actually do, not what the person next to them can do!

7 Mark the tests yourself

It won't take long to mark a set of 20-minute class tests (try it!). Offloading this task on to students for peer marking denies you the chance to come fully face-to-face with how effective your own teaching has been.

Ultimately, if you can keep one eye on assessment as 'feedback on the quality of my teaching' and reflect accordingly, this will be a tremendously powerful factor not just in improving outcomes for students, but also for driving your mastery of the art of teaching. That means more enjoyment and more satisfaction from every single lesson you teach.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Matt Findlay is the head of Maths and a senior leader at a state secondary school in Dorset. He also co-hosts the 'Beyond Good' podcast with Femi Adeniran

Screen tests

It's just a matter of time until formal assessments are carried out digitally, rather than on paper, observes **Monir El Moudden** – but there remain a few challenges to overcome first...

Teachers and students have emerged from the pandemic having learnt a huge amount about online learning, and how it can be best delivered. We all saw the need for resilience in the tech-enabled systems used by schools across the world, and witnessed the ability of teachers to adapt to change at a moment's notice.

Yet while some schools and teachers have continued to use digital assessments wherever possible, many others have opted to return to traditional paper-based exams.

So, as the pandemic was dramatically changing the landscape of education, I embarked on a school-based practitioner inquiry with the aim of evaluating the impact digital assessments were having on teaching and learning processes, as well as student outcomes.

Frame of reference

Assessments are an essential part of the teaching and learning process, particularly when evaluating students' work and performance. Educators' motivations for transitioning away from paper-based assessment models often include the desire to implement assessment approaches more in line with our increasingly digital society, opportunities to enhance the validity of assessments and the potential for improvements to teaching and learning.

My research sample consisted of six teachers – three computer science teachers and three non-computer science teachers – and 43 students spread across Y10 to Y12 due to sit their GCSE and A Level exams in 2023. Half the teachers reported having some experience of using digital assessments, whilst the other half described their experience as limited.

The students from my sample sat five online/onscreen tests using Microsoft Assignments and two traditional paper-based exams. I also compared the results of students who took the digital exams with a group that sat the same test on paper, to measure any improved learning outcomes.

> ***"A key concern was that digital assessments made malpractice harder to detect and challenge"***

Compelling benefits

There is evidence that online/onscreen assessments, when employed in this way, offer clear benefits for teachers and schools. These include the prospect of auto-marking (whereby student answers can be automatically compared to a set of accepted responses), ease of providing feedback and record-keeping, a reduced possibility of marking errors and bypassing of physical distribution issues (papers going missing, transport of heavy volumes of paper and so forth). Exams can also be repeated multiple times without having to mass produce additional paper scripts, and there's the potential to carry out question-by-question analysis with reference to an overview of all responses. The marking and feedback stages of the assessment process are certainly much quicker and easier to complete than with paper-based exams.

Half of those teachers interviewed observed that the process as a whole was quicker to implement, saving them at least 30 minutes of time. Those teachers possessing more experience in implementing online/onscreen assessments indicated that they could save as much as 100 minutes on each assessment cycle per class. It seemed the more teachers used online/onscreen assessments, the quicker the process became to implement.

Students got to benefit too. On a difficulty scale of 1 to 10 (10 being very easy, 1 being very difficult) the score averaged out at 7.98, with 39 out of 43 students selecting 7 or better. 44% of my sample found online/onscreen assessments easier and quicker to implement, removing some of the anxieties caused by ineligible handwritten responses. Answers were easier to check, and it was easier to navigate between both questions and pages.

More compelling still was the impact that online/onscreen assessments had on students' learning outcomes. In almost all cases, taken from five separate assessments over the course of the year, classes that sat online/onscreen exams outperformed those that sat a paper-based equivalent by an average of 5%.

What are the roadblocks?

When asked to identify the challenges involved in using onscreen/online assessments, teachers cited access to

computer equipment, unreliable internet connections and the need for staff and students to receive training before using digital assessment solutions.

Half the teachers pointed to the limited tools available in Microsoft Assignments for letting students draw diagrams and show working without the use of a stylus (an option typically not available on desktop machines).

The most challenging factor was variable IT provision across different departments, which could restrict the ability of some departments to prepare themselves at pace, potentially leading to unfair outcomes for students. This was compounded by different departments often using a variety of desktop machines, laptops and tablets, all with different operating systems and web browsers. This could give rise to software compatibility issues and inconsistent hardware specifications across whole cohorts, affecting the likelihood of all students being able to sit their exams at the same time.

It was clear that teachers and students would require robust internet connections to ensure reliable access to assessment and lesson resources, and comprehensive technical support so that any issues could be resolved promptly. For their part, schools would need to be given adequate training and time to practice administering digital assessments, thus giving teachers more confidence and the capacity to provide their students with appropriate support.

Another key concern raised by the group was that digital assessments made malpractice harder to detect and challenge, As such, there would need to be careful consideration over how best to monitor this and maintain the accuracy of assessments, so that no student would ever be unfairly disadvantaged.

Net positives

A comprehensive introduction of digital assessments would require schools to overcome numerous digital challenges – something the DfE itself recognises, having published guidance for schools on meeting IT service and digital equipment standards in March 2022 (see bit.ly/ts116-osa1).

The DfE is known to be considering making more extensive use of digital exams within formal assessment, and is keen to explore its potential applications over the next three years.

Via my practitioner inquiry, I've seen first-hand how digital assessment can deliver net positives when it comes to workload, workflows and assessment processes. The evidence of student performance improving through the use of digital assessments seems positive, though it's still too early for conclusions – at least until more data is gathered from multiple departments across different schools.

I would therefore encourage school leaders across the country to begin collecting data from within their school settings, and commence the process of preparing their staff and students for the very likely prospect of formal paper-based assessments giving way to online/onscreen equivalents.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Monir El Moudden (@monirelmoudden) has taught computer science for over 13 years and is currently based at an independent school in London; his full report into onscreen/online assessments is due for publication in autumn 2022

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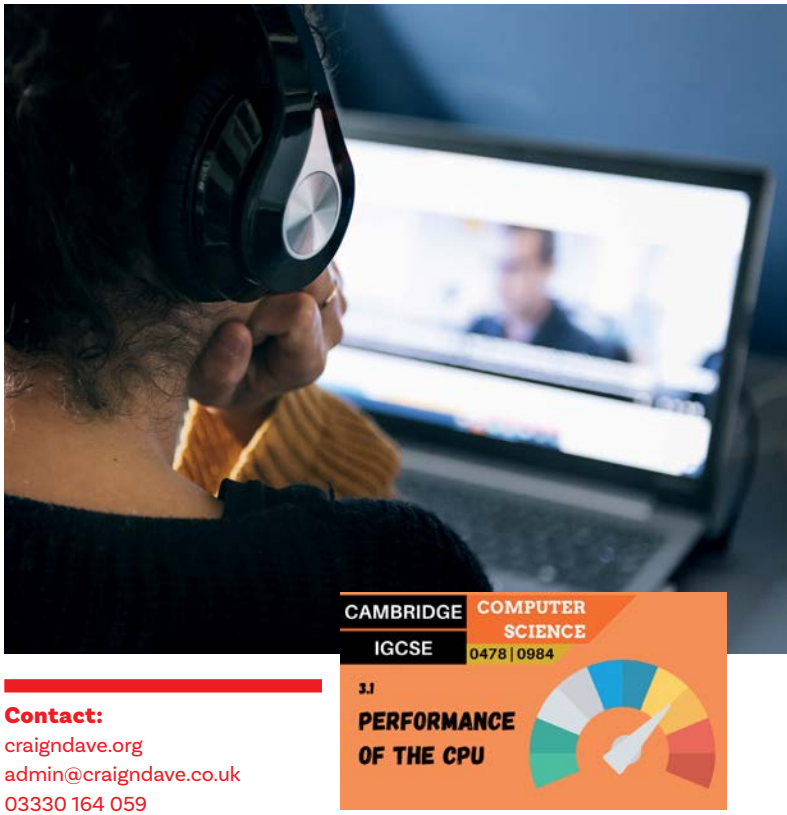
One of the great benefits of video is that students can watch in their own time, pause, rewind and watch again. Not only is this fantastic for revision, it also solves two major classroom problems – students only having one opportunity to hear their teacher explain a new concept, and ensuring absent students don't get left behind.

Online streaming services like YouTube have long supported the inclusion of chapters, subtitles and even translations in video content, thus giving teachers a useful way of augmenting their lesson content to suit the needs of individual learners.

There's nothing preventing students from watching the videos for homework purposes – whether it's to assist them with out-of-class activities, or prepare them for the next lesson. Indeed, this practice – known as flipped learning, whereby students watch a related video ahead of a lesson – works to establish a solid foundation of knowledge. This can accelerate the learning process considerably, since it eliminates the need for lessons to incorporate a so-called 'chalk-and-talk' aspect.



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Take note

We strongly recommend employing the Cornell note-taking approach when using our videos. Students should pause the video and capture key points each time they see the 'Take notes' icon appear on screen. This may also include drawing simple diagrams. Students should also aim to identify up to eight key terms introduced in the video. By the end of the course, students will have a concise set of notes that they can also use as a knowledge organiser.

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Our new Cambridge IGCSE videos follow the same trusted formula as our other series. They contain simple, illustrated presentations with a voiceover – so nothing too fancy – with a pin-sharp focus on essential knowledge and careful consideration of the subtle nuances between qualifications.

Simplicity in action

A perfect example is our video on input and output devices. Under previous specifications, students required a detailed knowledge of how such devices work, but this no longer applies, hence the area isn't covered. Unfortunately, however, many other IGCSE resources have yet to reflect these changes.

Taking it further

Students can expect to see summary slides included within our videos, where we'll condense the relevant topic into a series of simple bullet points. Teachers with a Craig 'n' Dave membership can download these summaries as accompanying PowerPoint presentations, to use in their classrooms as they wish.

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CLASSROOM VOICE

"Weekend CPD? But ... why?"

No one's denying that weekends can be precious indeed – but every now and then, they can also be used to sharpen up your practice, notes **Rachel Cliffe**

"What are your plans for this weekend?" asked a colleague in the staffroom, one sunny Friday lunchtime – a standard conversation starter.

"Attending a Saturday History Teaching conference," I replied.

"But … why?" they asked.

My garbled response centred on my enjoyment of the day, but the exchange prompted me to reflect on, and consider my participation in weekend CPD. Is it acceptable to give up a Saturday? Why do I find it so appealing?

To be clear, my reflections are from the perspective of a head of department, with a non-teaching husband, who doesn't have to consider childcare or other conferences in my decisions. These are just my own ponderings.

BUZZING WITH IDEAS

Firstly, I'm very fortunate to be part of the history teaching community, which organises several high quality conferences that take place at weekends. One recent conference in July of 2022 led to me to starting a KS2 history curriculum conversation with our feeder primary schools – both to support the development of our curriculum intent, and to re-evaluate the lessons within our GCSE 'Making of America' unit.

After eight years in teaching, I'd left the conference feeling refreshed and buzzing with new ideas, new perspectives and knowledge of new techniques I wanted to try in my classroom practice.

And yet, these conferences could easily take place on a weekday. So why hold them at weekends? Factor in how the pandemic prompted a boom in online CPD opportunities across many subjects, why even visit a CPD event in person? Well, here are some reasons…

1. There's no cover to set

I don't have to plan how I'm going to get a non-specialist to teach a complex key concept, or find a documentary that can cover the right topic within an hour. It removes that extra workload of writing and setting cover.

2. No emails

With weekend workshops, there's the reassurance of knowing there aren't any emails or urgent issues that you need to be staying on top of. Once, while on a first aid course held during the week, I checked my inbox at lunchtime and saw I had 56 new emails. 56! I dealt with the most pressing ones in the break, but then found myself thinking about those remaining emails for the rest of the afternoon. Weekend conferences make it much easier to fully concentrate on the content of workshops and your practice.

3. Conversations with fellow teachers

Even when attending conferences on your own, there will always be someone to talk to and share anecdotes, ideas or resources with. Everyone's there to learn and develop. The honest chats you'll have with people from other parts of the country can be reassuring and supportive.

4. Making a trip of it!

Myself and my teaching best friend (shout-out to Shona!) once attended a Saturday conference, followed by dinner and drinks afterwards, and had a great day. Many weekend conferences will include an extra social element so that everyone can feel included. There's often also the added bonus of getting to enjoy the sights of a new city, or re-connect with friends in places you've not visited for a while.

A TEACHER'S CHOICE

I'm privileged in that my school and trust are very supportive of staff wanting to attend professional development events, and will fund admission to weekend conferences. However, there's never any pressure to attend, or feel as though you should go in order to 'be a better teacher'.

That's usually when weekend CPD stops being impactful or effective. It should always be a teacher's choice as to whether to attend, and the decision as to which workshops or sessions to join should rest with them too.

On reflection, if I could have paused time to think of a better response in that staffroom exchange, I'd have said, "Because I'm excited about the sessions I'll be attending, the history teachers I'll meet and the new ideas I'll get for my classroom practice."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rachel Cliffe (@MrsRCliffe) is leader of history at The Morley Academy, Leeds

Lies and CONSPIRACIES

Kamal Hanif reflects on his experiences as a school leader on the front lines at the time of the Trojan horse affair

In the autumn of 2003, I started my new role as deputy headteacher at Park View School – the school that became the centre of the Trojan Horse affair.

On the day of my interview, a member of staff came up to the candidates and handed us all a letter. I didn't read it, but some did, and they rescinded their applications. As I understand, the letter was offensive about the community and staff from ethnic minorities – and about Muslims in particular – stating that they were going to 'take over the school'.

This resulted in a number of court hearings against the school. I could see the terrible toll it took on the headteacher, Lindsey Clark, who stood against racist behaviour.

Rising tensions

As deputy headteacher of the school, I saw tensions starting to rise in the Birmingham suburb of Alum Rock against the Somali community. You would hear comments such as, 'They are taking over our businesses and shops' – a repeat of the old rhetoric that the local British Pakistani community had faced in the 1970s. Developing community cohesion became a priority at the school.

Lindsey had done her utmost to support the students, recognising their religion and culture and giving them a broad and rounded education. Having come from a senior role in a girls' school, she was a very strong advocate for girls' education.

We developed a culturally inclusive curriculum which recognised excellence from all cultures. Lindsey was passionate about having a broad curriculum. She had appointed a new music teacher to work with the LA music service to develop a programme that was more inclusive of wider musical and cultural influences. This initiative became extremely popular with the students; you could still see evidence of its impact in 2014, when I was asked to go in and help with the Trojan Horse issues.

It was difficult to maintain a balance between conventional approaches to curriculum development in the arts, and broadening them out to reflect Islamic musical and cultural traditions, but most importantly, it was about bridging the gap between home and school.

Healthy to aspire

Some Park View staff clearly held racist and bigoted views. I recall a member of staff talking within earshot of me about a social event for 'White colleagues', and how she 'enjoyed being racist'. Later, the same individual brought a grievance through her union, claiming that it was 'threatening for White women to have a Muslim deputy headteacher because of 9/11'.

She also questioned how I could be leading on literacy – despite having written several publications – because I had English as an additional language. She did not know that I grew up in a household with my brother and his English wife, and that Urdu was not my strongest language.

Tensions were evident amongst staff across the school. For example, colleagues in the English department would try to aggravate their co-workers in the maths department around the thorny issues of religion and racism. A White male teacher in the maths department was seen as a 'traitor' for supporting his Muslim colleagues.

As Muslim staff at the school were experiencing racism, they felt they had to do more to have their religion, identity and culture respected by developing a stronger emphasis on cultural inclusion. The LA was also doing work to address

the underachievement of minority ethnic groups, and with input from the national strategies, reduce racial tensions and barriers.

As a school, we were sharing our successes and good practice with the LA's Asian Heritage Achievement Group, and the school even presented ideas at a conference looking at the underachievement of Pakistani boys. But despite all of this great work, it was clear that there was not a broad understanding across the city on how to develop inclusive pedagogy in our schools.

The fruits of our success were slowly coming together, as the students began to become more aspirational and develop a sense of belonging.

They understood that religion was more about guiding how they would live their lives, and that they could therefore be both British and Muslim as British Muslims. They became more resilient. They respected others' cultures, ways of life and clothing. Friendship groups recognised that not everyone will wear the hijab or the thobe. We saw excellent results as girls started to perform better than boys in subjects and exams. We worked with young boys who were often under pressure to conform to 'street culture', or who would be bullied if they were performing well at school. We reaffirmed with them that it is healthy to aspire and to move into careers their parents would not have dreamed about.

Aftermath and recovery

What is not often talked about is the damage the Trojan Horse affair did to the local community. Lies and conspiracies set schools in the area back at least 10 years, because the destabilisation led to difficulties in recruiting staff and governors.

Around this time I faced considerable racist behaviour from some teaching union reps because of my submissions, and I did not receive responses to my letters of complaint to their executive officers. A systematic campaign to incite my staff to rebel and remove me from my job took off, simply because I was Muslim and therefore must be part of a clandestine conspiracy to turn my school into a Muslim enclave.

Local representation in the years preceding the Trojan Horse affair was an issue for school governors. As governing bodies changed, and local community members fought for the rights of their students, there were often challenging debates about how poorly the predominantly British Pakistani students were doing at school. During my time at Park View, governance was fair, free, liberal and inclusive.

> ***"Some Park View staff clearly held racist and bigoted views"***

Yet still to this day, in other schools I often hear comments from school leaders on how, if a BAME individual raises a valid point, they are perceived as an 'extremist' or 'troublemaker'. School leaders need to engage with the communities they serve – walk the streets around the school and engage in events with other local stakeholders, rather than just commute between school and home. This could make a huge difference.

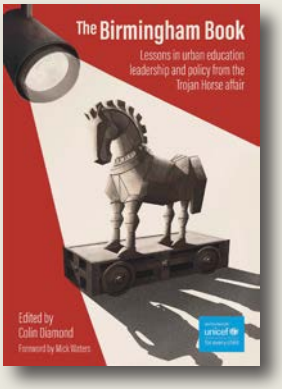
Unforeseen damage

The majority of governors in the Trojan Horse schools and in the east end of the city worked to secure changes which led to big improvements in student outcomes up to 2014. They networked and learnt from each other, shared best practice and wanted the voice of parents to be heard.

Trojan Horse – by which I mean the actions of a small number of governors and the way things were inflamed by Michael Gove – had the opposite effect, and caused unforeseen damage to the local schools and communities, which are still recovering.

A key focus of Ofsted's Inspection Framework (2019) was the curriculum and curriculum intent. This provided the opportunity to look once again at race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, age, equality and excellence from the perspective of all communities, and re-examine our own biases and prejudices. I am told constantly by students that the curriculum is not relevant to them, because it doesn't include their stories and experiences.

The teaching of fundamental British values has often been misconstrued and corrupted into teaching exclusively about Britain. As long as that continues, being of Birmingham, as opposed to being in Birmingham, will remain a problem.

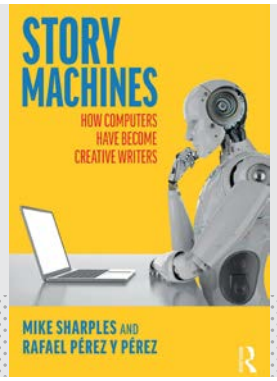


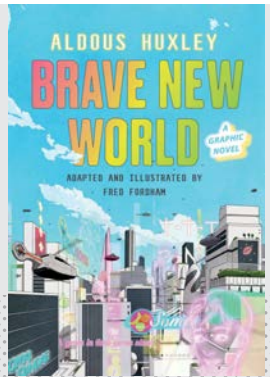
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Kamal Hanif has held various roles in education since 1992 and is a former CEO of the Waverley Education Foundation Trust; he is currently a national leader of education, a trustee of the charity SINCE 9/11 and sits on the DfE's Due Diligence and Countering Extremism Group

This article is based on an extract from the essay 'Growing up in Birmingham: place and identity', which appears in *The Birmingham Book: Lessons in urban education leadership and policy from the Trojan Horse affair*, edited by Colin Diamond (Crown House Publishing, £18.99)

Off the Shelves

Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore





Story Machines: How Computers Have Become Creative Writers

(Mike Sharples and Rafael Pérez y Pérez, Routledge, £11.99)

If you're a writer, should the growing sophistication of artificial intelligence worry you? Or is AI more likely to actually enhance your writing? This fascinating book charts the recent history of AI-driven 'story machines', probing their strengths and weaknesses, and what they can tell us about the creative writing process. Yet while the book is both detailed and enjoyable, it's not entirely convincing. It seems to me that AI applications typically tell us more about how computers emulate the creative process than the creative process itself. At one point, the authors suggest that AI could be put to use as a handy assistant for writers, which may possibly come to pass. In any case, to paraphrase Arthur C. Clarke, '*If a writer can be replaced by a computer, perhaps he should be...*'

Reviewed by Terry Freedman

Engineering in Plain Sight

(Grady Hillhouse, No Starch Press, £33.99)

Many of us will often fail to notice the most visible examples of the engineering and infrastructure that surrounds us, let alone ponder its inner workings. This book sets out to give assorted planners, architects, engineers and technicians their due, with its examinations of electricity distribution, communication platforms, roads, bridges and more besides. It does so not by merely describing what goes on behind the scenes, but why the systems in question were designed as they were. What challenges were involved, and how did various designs address them? It's highly readable and illustrated with plenty of diagrams, making the material accessible to non-engineers, and would seem to meet part of the KS3 D&T programme of study. Some portions of text are more applicable to the US than the UK, and the price is rather steep, but it would serve very well as a reference book for classrooms and the school library.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman

Brave New World: A Graphic Novel

(Fred Fordham, Vintage, £14.36)

The hard-edged dystopia of Orwell's *1984* tends to be invoked more often nowadays than Huxley's vision of a contentedly numbed populace, but in some respects, *Brave New World* seems closer to our lived reality. Social media as the modern Soma, anyone? This is a good, highly engaging adaptation of the famous novel for English students, but could also prompt some interesting discussions around safety and privacy in other contexts. Fordham utilises the graphic novel format to the full, with exciting, near-cinematic renderings of the action (complete with imagined aerial shots, dramatic close-ups and the like) that bring the narrative to life, giving Huxley's seminal work a sense of urgency and visual appeal that makes it more readily accessible for a whole new audience, while for the most part staying faithful to the original text.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman

ON THE RADAR

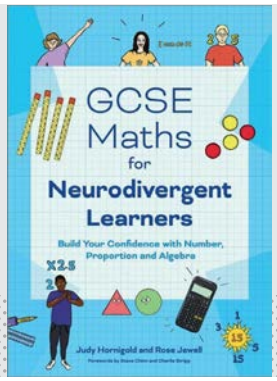
A look back at education's previous false dawns, in order to try and formulate a more sustainable future

So What Now?

(Malcolm Groves and John West-Burnham, John Catt, £15)

It's often pointed out that many years will have passed before the impact of governments' education policy decisions can be truly known. *So What Now?* touches on this in places, but its authors are more concerned with the unprecedentedly challenging national and global context – climate catastrophe, economic inequalities, deadly pandemics – against which those decisions are destined to play out. A pointed question posed near the start helps to frame much of the discussion and commentary that follows – what went so wrong with our past and current approaches to education that such an increasingly chaotic, unstable and unaffordable future was allowed to take shape?

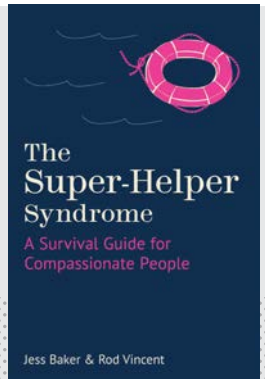
The book's steely dissections of government failures and school blunders over the years will likely resonate with many, but *So What Now?* isn't content to merely wallow in regret and present readers with a cathartic anger valve. Instead, it attempts to do something arguably much more radical – persuade school leaders and teachers of the value to be had from conceiving of a richer, more sustainable and all-round better future for education, in place of policymakers who barely seem able to acknowledge the future at all.



GCSE Maths for Neurodivergent Learners

(Judy Hornigold and Rose Jewell, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, £22.99)

This GCSE maths study guide is nothing if not comprehensive. Packed with pointers and helpful advice for learners affected by Specific Learning Difference, it shows how they can engage with the study of maths differently to their peers, but in ways that will still enable them to learn the required curriculum content. Despite the scope and volume of material, the book doesn't overwhelm. It's sensibly structured in three parts – discussion of particular SpLD and general strategies; close-ups on GCSE areas that SpLD learners often find especially difficult; and general exam advice/exercise answers. The visual presentation might appear somewhat stark and utilitarian in the eyes of some, but it's as clearly laid out, easy to navigate and distraction-free as it needs to be, alongside a written tone that's friendly and supportive throughout.



The Super-Helper Syndrome

(Jess Baker and Rod Vincent, Flint, £18.99)

Spend any time around most teachers, and it probably won't be long before you start seeing some visible signs of what co-authors Baker and Vincent, both chartered psychologists, identify as Super-Helper Syndrome – a willingness to go the extra mile that's so all-encompassing, it threatens to harm the wellbeing of the individual concerned. Composed mainly of interviews with people working in a range of different sectors, interspersed with personal commentary and reflections, the book sets out to show precisely why Super-Helper Syndrome should be considered a problem (and distinct from a condition or personality type), the issues it can cause and various ways in which those affected can try to minimise and contain its effects. Aside from brief references to interviews with teachers regarding their work pressures, there's little material on education *per se*, but plenty of considered discussion that teachers everywhere can most likely relate to.

Meet the author

JESS BAKER

Image courtesy of Yolande De Vaal

How would you define Super-Helper Syndrome?

It's a state where you're helping other people to the detriment of your own wellbeing – having the motivation and compulsion to help others, while neglecting your own essential needs.

There are four main signs and symptoms that might suggest yourself or a colleague are experiencing SHS. Exhaustion is the most obvious, but there's also resentment, which builds up when you don't receive the gratitude or recognition you want and need. Additionally, there can be an element of exploitation, where individuals are being taken advantage of by others. The fourth is self-criticism – both for not helping 'enough' and for experiencing any of those previous three symptoms – for example, thinking '*I shouldn't feel so tired.*'

What prompted you to explore the topic at length?

The background for the book came from my own personal experience. Over the course of my career, I've worked alongside many people who could be described as 'natural givers' or 'natural helpers'. Later, my academic research frequently brought me into contact with people across the country who were devoted to helping and thought nothing of it, while failing to address their own needs – as could be seen by them becoming exhausted, burning out and developing compassion fatigue.

Is SHS something an individual develops over time, or something more innate?

It's possible that people are 'conditioned' to be helpers in childhood – '*Are you going to help your sister? Good girl...*' and so on. This won't apply in all cases, but it can eventually culminate in people acting on an irrational belief of '*I must always try to help everyone*'.

What does a 'happy medium' look like, and how might someone get there?

Try to recognise when you may be experiencing any of the main four adverse impacts of exhaustion, resentment, exploitation, and self-criticism. It's possible to challenge your way of thinking with the aid of cognitive behavioural techniques – there are many detailed in the book – or practical, playful activities. You need to see that setting aside for yourself some of the compassion you naturally give to others isn't selfish, and that the more you give to yourself, the more you can ultimately help those around you – only this time in a healthier way, by actively choosing where your energies should go.

For more information, visit jessbaker.co.uk/shsbookclub

Taking BACK TIME

Faced with too much course material and pushed for time in lessons, Dave Hillyard adopted a flipped classroom approach to his practice and never looked back...

Back in 2014, I'd been teaching for around 17 years and had became aware of three major issues relating to my practice.

The first was a series of incoming changes to the A Level specifications for my subject, computer science. This can often be a catalyst for prompting teachers to change their practice, where it might have previously not seemed necessary – but in this case, the new specifications covered too much content for the lesson time available to me.

The second problem I had was that my students were simply too passive. I'd allowed myself to become a 'PowerPoint teacher', reliant on slides and other display content that I'd go through while the students made notes of varying quality. In fairness, that's how I'd been taught to teach, but I could tell that my students were bored.

And yet, because my results were consistently good, I hadn't had much reason to consider what I'd been doing too deeply. I'd convinced myself that the most enjoyable part of the course for students was programming; that it was a case of 'getting through' the theory before advancing to the 'fun' stuff, but therein lay the third problem – I would plan different lessons for when I knew I was going to be observed.

We'd do the 'boring' stuff when nobody was watching. If somebody from senior leadership was intending to observe my lesson, I'd want to show to them the great teacher I could be and thus deliver a completely different style of lesson in order to demonstrate what I thought they'd be looking for.

After a certain point, I concluded '*This can't be right...*' When the school eventually moved from a system of giving four or five days' notice before observations to one of unannounced drop-ins, and this 'different planning' approach became no longer viable, I knew things had to change.

> ***"If anything, the approach can almost leave you with too much time in class..."***

'Contemporary pedagogy'

At the time, however, there seemed to be few teachers working in a comparable curriculum space but teaching in what one might describe as a 'non-traditional' way. Having identified those three core issues, I simply Googled the words 'contemporary pedagogy'. I was looking for ideas and inspiration from anywhere.

Scanning that first page of results, the term 'flipped classroom' caught my eye. What could that mean? Probing further, it turned out to be an approach that was catching on in America. From reading further articles and watching YouTube videos on the topic, I was amazed at the potential it seemed to have.

I was fortunate in that my school was happy to adopt a 'risk taking' approach to developing innovative practice. Trying things out was highly valued, to the extent that it was considered better to experiment and have something not quite work than to have not tried at all. So, after securing permission from the school's headteacher, I was clear to give flipped learning a go. The question then became – how would this new approach help me address my problems?

Needless waffle

Lacking the time to teach the entirety of the course specification, one of my goals was to gain time in lessons. I needed a way of removing that time-consuming process of me imparting the knowledge. The students were learning something new with me stood at the front, but I wanted a way of taking that out of the lesson and instead using the time for richer activities.

From my research into flipped classroom pedagogy, I discovered that the way to do this was to have the students watch videos outside of lessons that covered the relevant material. The consensus seemed to be that these videos should be around 12 minutes in length. 15 minutes was pushing it, while any longer risked losing their attention.

This caused me to question my prior practice. What was stopping me from delivering tight, 12-minute 'learning episodes' from the front of the class? Why was it taking me as long as 20, sometimes even 30 minutes to simply explain and go through something on the board? I came to realise that it was down to something many of us do – drifting off in different directions. Sometimes it might be prompted by students' questions and comments, and I'm not saying it's always a bad thing, but it can certainly lead to lots of needless waffle in your delivery.

The key to producing the videos successfully was to remove the material that was less important, so that's what I did. After closely studying the specification, picking out the most essential areas, analysing some sample exam questions and reappraising the textbooks, I was eventually able to boil the material down to the most important details, and

capture the substance of these in a pretty snappy way while still retaining the wider context.

Beautiful notes

Interestingly, I found that the process of producing the videos wasn't actually all that difficult. I'd anticipated it being extremely hard, but when it's just you alone talking into a microphone, you end up saying a lot less than when you're stood in front of a class of students.

Once the students started using the videos, I immediately observed how they now remembered those important details and struggled to recall less crucial material, which felt very gratifying. Having previously tried to create a positive atmosphere in class via the occasional bit of fun and banter between myself and the students, I'd find they often remembered the funnier parts of lesson instead of the core knowledge.

Well, it turns out that when you present that core knowledge via videos they're tasked with watching at home, it's more likely to be retained. Though, as I quickly learned, just solely watching the videos wasn't quite enough. Apart from anything else, I had no way of confirming whether they were actually watching the videos or not. I simply assumed they were, which, on reflection, was perhaps naive.

The answer to that problem came from another school that liked what we were doing and had opted to pursue a flipped classroom approach of their own. They recommended teaching the students how to use the Cornell note taking approach, and taking appropriate notes in their exercise books while watching the videos. The final touch for me was to add visual cues within the videos themselves for students to pause the playback and take notes before resuming. That way, the students could return to class with beautifully written notes that demonstrated a consistent level of baseline knowledge.

This not only gave me a way of monitoring whether the students had watched the videos – they either had notes to show me or they didn't – but also fostered a deeper level of engagement with the material.

Accelerated lessons

Looking back, I'm conscious now of how alien this approach would have initially seemed to the students. Up to then, they were used to homework that served to consolidate what they'd learned in their most recent lesson, or encourage deeper exploration of a particular topic. They hadn't previously completed homework by way of preparation for a lesson they were yet to have. It took some time at first for them to take the approach seriously.

I'd advise any teachers interested in implementing something similar to anticipate a bumpy ride for the first few months. Once past that, however, you'll be able to dispense with lengthy recalls of knowledge at the start of the lesson, thanks to the established baseline knowledge students will arrive with. At a stroke, you'll have accelerated your lesson and levelled the knowledge playing field, while giving yourself time and space to focus on students' questions regarding the material they've watched and address any misconceptions.

If anything, the approach can almost leave you with *too much* time in class, affording opportunities for engaging activities you might have previously had to cram into 20 minutes during the latter half of a lesson. You'll have time to spend with individual students that you didn't have before.

A common misconception of the flipped classroom approach is that having students learn core knowledge at home means that teachers barely have to do anything in class. In actual fact, I'm considerably *more* active now as a teacher than I ever was before. I'm reviewing students' work, examining what they're doing, overseeing class conversations that explore topics at a deeper level – all because I'm no longer battling the time constraints of my lessons.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Hillyard is a computer science teacher; the flipped videos discussed in this article and many others can be accessed through Craig 'n' Dave For Students (student.craigndave.org) – a service co-founded by Hillyard and Craig Sargent. For more information about Craig 'n' Dave's resources for teachers and Smart Revise online revision tool, visit craigndave.org

"Vital support for those who may be struggling"

Ayrtam Ryall of Green Cross Global talks us through the company's Health & Safety compliance platform

30 SECOND BRIEFING

GCG delivers a complete compliance platform consisting of consultancy, software and training services, helping you to stay compliant at all times. Our experts are on hand to develop and implement best practice in Health & Safety, mental health and wellbeing.

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+ We provide a complete compliance platform comprising consultancy, software and training
+ We have 20+ years' experience in the Health & Safety compliance industry
+ Our software platforms ensure total control over compliance and Health & Safety training requirements.'

"This is how we do things now..."

Tim Hassall looks at how school leaders can overcome staff reluctance and make a success of doing things slightly differently in the name of health and safety...

One of the biggest barriers when creating a strong health and safety culture is encouraging 'buy in'. Activating the 'health and safety switch' can be difficult, particularly in education. Last year alone there were over 150,000 work-related cases of ill health, around 54% of which were attributed to stress, depression or anxiety.

It is, however, eminently doable if you adopt the correct strategy...

Communicate and commit

Involving everyone as early as possible in any H&S decisions will help to nurture a sense of collaboration and teamwork in relation to your wider H&S efforts. Make use of others' experience and insights, and hold regular safety talks concerning any notable new trends.

Teams need someone they can trust to lead the change, as this will spur buy-in to the new culture. Show that you care about the health and wellbeing of your colleagues. Show commitment to your colleagues, and in return you'll find them firmly committing to your health and safety priorities.

When overseeing a necessary culture change, approach colleagues and management with relevant statistics that highlight the potential consequences of not following health and safety protocols. Last year, the HSE reported over £72,000 in fines across the education sector for H&S breaches. Try not to just be the school principal giving everyone a 'serious talk', but do aim to be informative and reassuring.

Lead by example

Lead from the front, and show that you're both willing and committed to following all safety policies. Introduce a clear accountability process, and put in place people who are capable of both managing health and safety crises and learning from their experiences.

Organisations with a strong health and safety culture understand that accidents can happen at any time. As well as having well thought-out systems that are ready to go in the event of an incident, such workplaces will also utilise highly effective internal communication protocols, and be acutely aware of the importance of identifying and investigating sources of risk.

Leading from the front also involves assuming responsibility, identifying the root causes of specific incidents and accidents, and working to prevent any such causes in future.

Involve everyone

The fostering of a strong health and safety culture can be aided by speaking with everyone in the workplace. Everyone will have their own view on what they see as the biggest risks to health and safety, so talk to as many colleagues as you can. This will ensure all bases are covered when creating robust health and safety policies.

Consider forming a health and safety committee that includes members of different departments within the school and holding regular meetings. Take notes, record actionable tasks and devote time to letting everyone have their say.

Provide training

Investing time and effort into ensuring people possess the correct tools and knowledge to deal with any incident is key. Similarly, instilling in others the confidence to deal with incidents as they arise is essential for achieving the buy-in you'll need to maintain a sustainable health and safety culture. Training individuals in basic hazard detection, for example, will cause them to immediately become more sensitive to potential risks, though this should always be accompanied by regular refreshers and updates.

Report thoroughly

Finally, implement a reliable and positive reporting structure for potential hazards or incidents. Bringing attention to a health and safety issue – albeit in a positive and informative way – may help others avoid running into similar problems. Rewarding colleagues for reporting hazards or incidents can be the elixir that's needed to keep everyone engaged, and help maintain a strong health and safety culture in the years to come.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Tim Hassall is Learning and Development Manager (Risk & Compliance) at Green Cross Global; for more information, visit greencrossglobal.co.uk or follow @GreenCrossTRN

"STAY TOGETHER, EVERYONE..."

Gordon Cairns examines that tricky task ahead of many a school trip – recruiting willing volunteer helpers...

As we slowly emerge from the long hangover of lockdown restrictions, the long-awaited reintroduction of out-of-school excursions has been one of the final elements of school life to restore our sense of 'business as usual'.

Yet it's not *quite* the same as before. Due to the length of time that trips have been off the agenda, many educational establishments have lost their cohort of reliable parent and carer volunteers, without whom it would be impossible to take students out of school.

Whatever the reason – be it parents having to work longer hours due to the current economic climate, a post-lockdown weakening of the bonds connecting school and home or simply relatives falling out of the habit of volunteering – one of the biggest tasks for school trip organisers this year will have been sourcing a sufficient number of helpers. But it's a problem that can be resolved with a little creative thinking.

Outside help

The first step towards finding a new source of volunteer support has to be rejecting the assumption that the only people willing to volunteer will be the parents, grandparents or carers of children attending the trip. It shouldn't come as a shock that many adults actively want to volunteer in order back good causes – and supporting teenagers on an academic trip certainly fits the bill.

What's more, these additional pairs of hands can be helped by their employers in doing so, since many companies recognise the improvement to staff morale that comes from contributing to wider society – not to mention the benefits to the business itself of being seen to support its local community.

Schools can find out if any local businesses offer their staff Employer Supported Volunteering – a scheme whereby employees are able take paid leave to participate in a volunteering initiative of their choosing. The obvious advantage for schools is that this occurs during the working day, when school trips are typically run.

While school trips might sometimes be considered a 'jolly' by the pupils and a welcome break from the classroom for staff, it's important to stress to any potential volunteers – parental or otherwise – the excursion's importance to the academic life of the students. It might offer the chance to bring to life the confusing text of a Shakespearean drama in its proper theatrical surroundings, or the opportunity to visit a blockbuster art exhibition and view the actual works of artistic masters, rather than reproductions in books. And let's not forget the important socialisation opportunities that trips out of school can provide for young people.

The 'cringe' factor

Creating a pool of volunteers not actually related to the charges also removes the 'cringe' factor of exposing parents to their children's friendship groups, sometimes spelling doom for poor teenagers' street cred. One of the biggest barriers to recruiting parental volunteers is children begging their parents not to cause them any further embarrassment by helping out on a school excursion!

While many parents will nobly ignore their offspring's demands and volunteer out of a sense of duty, it would be wise for schools not to nag them into helping – even if the recruitment process seems to be slow going at first.

Rather than seeing parents as a group who should feel obliged to help, schools ought to view potential recruits as socially minded people who are willing to give of their time for free to aid others.

While researching this article, I came across a letter addressed to potential volunteer parents from a school, the condescending tone of which included an exhaustive list of things parents 'must' do on the trip – including not using their own mobile phone, with the warning that if they didn't 'behave appropriately', they wouldn't be considered to work as a free helper when the next trip took place.

I can't help but wonder how successful this approach of treating adults like recalcitrant children is going to be when trying encourage helpers. People need to be treated with a degree of respect for them to be happy volunteering (again, and again, and again).

Clear expectations

It's also important that schools put themselves in the shoes of first-time volunteers, and be clear and honest about what's expected of them. In spring 2022, I volunteered to be a race marshal at a mountain bike racing event round a local forest track for my

"Reject the assumption that the only people willing to volunteer will be parents, grandparents or carers of children attending the trip"

VOLUNTEER ESSENTIALS

Some key advice to pass on to your volunteers before your next trip...

1 WEAR COMFORTABLE SHOES
Many parents on their first school trip are amazed at the amount of walking expected of them on a school trip, whether it's trailing round local museums or following crowds of excited teenagers across the expanse of Alton Towers.

2 BE PREPARED TO COUNT HEADS, REPEATEDLY
Having been the lead teacher taking a group of students out of school, I can't adequately describe the sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach when you return to the bus at the appointed time and realise one of your students is missing. It's made me an habitual 'head counter', but also conscious that if other adult helpers are there doing head counts of smaller groups themselves, it can take away some of the pressure.

3 CARRY YOUR OWN PROVISIONS
The likelihood of a parent or carer helper being able to slip away and get themselves a coffee or sandwich on a school trip is pretty low. Everything is ultimately geared around the young people, with the needs of the adults tending to come second. Tell your volunteers to come prepared for this eventuality.

4 READ THE RISK ASSESSMENT
Passing on the risk assessment for the trip to the other adults will give them both a sense of being valued for their contribution and a sense of responsibility for the young people, while also making them more aware of (and hopefully better prepared for) issues and challenges that might transpire in the course of the trip.

children's cycling club. When I turned up not wearing wellies for the mud, or dressed for the middle of winter, it was only then that the race organisers realised I hadn't done this before.

Nor had I been told that I wouldn't be able to leave my spot in the woods until all the races had been completed some two hours later.

Event organisers can sometimes assume that just because *they're* aware of how things will unfold, everyone else will be too, so it's good to let everyone know as much detail as possible in advance. People who are informed are more likely to be thoroughly engaged, and in turn more likely to be alert to the safety of their charges.

I have to admit I'm not myself much of a volunteer by nature, and have utmost respect for those who are – especially in any scenarios where we, the teachers, are getting paid to be on the trip while the volunteers are contributing for free. That's something I'll certainly have at the forefront of my mind come our next excursion out of school...

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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BEST FOOT FORWARD

Every teacher knows that in September, new cohorts need to settle in and swiftly learn your expectations – but it's a process that can easily go awry, notes **Bhamika Bhudia**...

There's little argument when it comes to the importance of putting your best foot forward and establishing routines and relationships during those first few lessons in September.

There is, however, continued debate over what this should actually involve. Given the variety of approaches and options available to us, how can we make best use of the time we have?

Breaking the ice

Getting things right from the outset involves quickly establishing routines and expectations, and minimising any behavioural disruption as students and staff adjust to being back in school after six weeks out of schedule.

Some argue that a standalone lesson on rules, expectations, class contracts and getting-to-know-you icebreaker activities is ideal for this. The irony of that, however, is that delivering such a lesson will contradict the consistency you're trying to establish in the first place.

Yes, rules and expectations must be set, whether in relation to seating, health and safety, behaviour or general admin – but spending an entire lesson on doing this conveys the opposite message.

Lead through your curriculum

If the aim is to set high expectations of your students, then rather than simply *talking about* these expectations, try to *demonstrate* them.

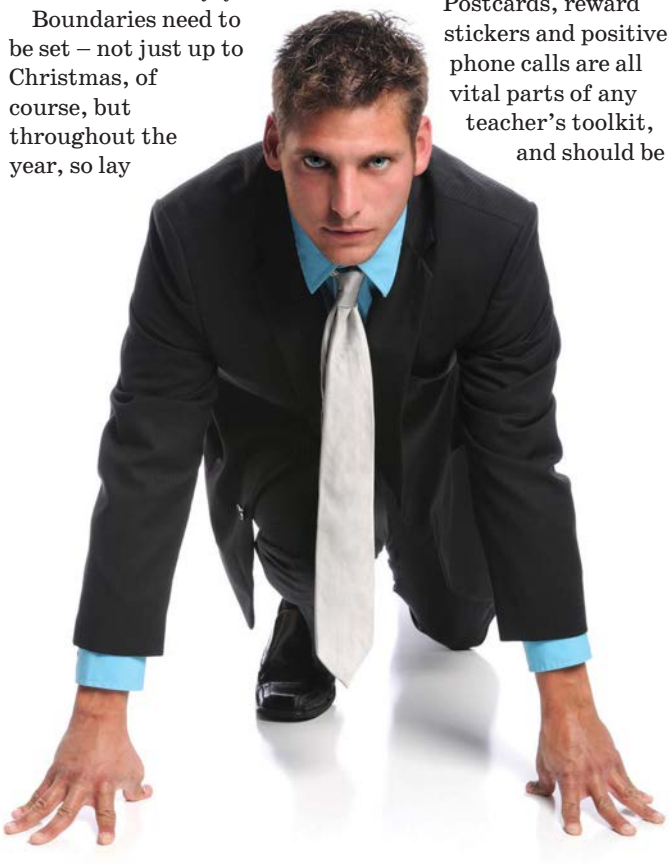
With so much curriculum content to get through, why waste time talking about your expectations, instead of actually showing them? Also, those 'fun' icebreaker lessons will not only give a false impression of what your lessons and you as a teacher are like, but will actively undermine your subject.

The curriculum and content itself should be engaging and interesting, so lead with this and focus on imparting a love of learning within your subject.

Consistency is key

That old cliché, *'Don't smile before Christmas!'* is a fallacy. Good relationships are hugely important, particularly in subjects where debate and personal responses will be required. Deliberately withholding expression or warmth is counterproductive to what you're trying to achieve, and will, frankly, make your lessons far less enjoyable.

Boundaries need to be set – not just up to Christmas, of course, but throughout the year, so lay the groundwork from the start. Be consistent with the behaviour policy, pull up students when they don't get it right, chase homework and detentions. and make the phone calls where necessary, but *build those relationships as well*. What students really need is fairness and consistency.



Celebrate the positive

It's important to sweat the small stuff when students are veering off course, but it's equally important to celebrate those little wins as well.

Praise students for getting things right. Remember that readjusting to regimented school routines after being away from them for a month and a half is tough for everyone involved, so when things are going well, acknowledge it.

Postcards, reward stickers and positive phone calls are all vital parts of any teacher's toolkit, and should be used effectively. Again, consistency is key here – don't just do it for a month and then let everything fall by the wayside. Start as you mean to go on. Your students will only meet the expectations you continue to set, and if you slack, so will they.

Watch the pressure

It's easy to forget that our new Y7s, Y10s and Y12s are simply Y6s, Y9s and Y11s plus an extra six weeks, so don't expect any magical transformations.

Moving school or up a Key Stage can be an overwhelming transition for many students. While the stakes are much higher on the other side of summer, remember that yours isn't their only 'first' lesson of the week. The coming year will doubtless be one that's important and consequential for them, but experiencing that same messaging from teachers over the course of 10 lessons within the same week can be overwhelming for many.

Once again, setting high expectations through your teaching is far more effective than hammering this point through words alone. Give your Y7s reminders *before* they get things wrong; don't expect your Y10s to have matured overnight; and don't throw your Y12s in at the deep end.

High challenge and high expectations are necessary, but be ready to guide them to where they need to be through your teaching.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Bhamika Bhudia (@MissMika_Eng) is head of English at a mixed comprehensive secondary school in London

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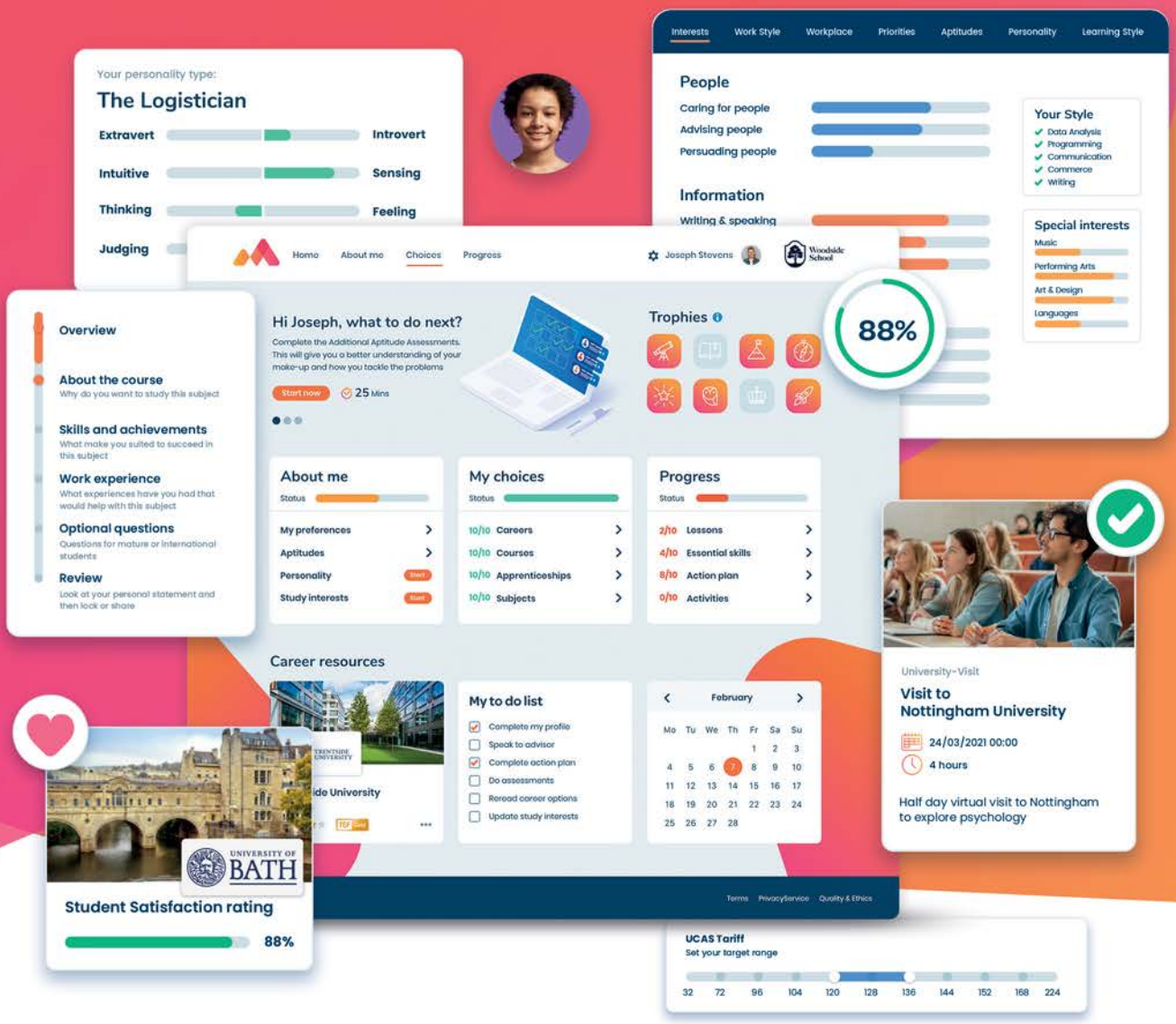

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Careers, confidence and communities

Jenifer Cameron outlines why traditional thinking around careers guidance ought to give way to a different, more far-reaching approach...

It's long been common practice in schools for students to complete work experience placements as a complement to their education, but these programmes usually provide only a brief glimpse of a specific work environment.

Additionally, the careers advice students receive is typically designed to help them with their immediate next steps after school, rather than widening their aspirations and arming them with the broader skills and knowledge they'll need to succeed in the world of employment.

As a result, we've seen a growing gap between between the preparation for work that employers expect to see, and the preparation that school leavers have actually received. However, there are several measures schools can adopt to ensure students possess the skills they'll need to thrive in future.

Confidence building

Developing confidence in students is a vital step towards helping them lead happy and successful lives. Confident people are more likely to believe in the skills they possess, the goals they have and their ability to succeed, and thus become motivated and proactive workers.

Schools should pursue learning opportunities that encourage students to build up their levels of competence, improve their problem-solving skills and develop their readiness to work independently. Efforts should also be made to foster students' curiosity, and encourage them to see mistakes as building blocks for learning.

Schools need to open doors to new experiences, which could mean thinking outside the box. Traditional careers education will often involve presentations from experts in particular fields, but schools can also look into more novel approaches – such as visits to art galleries or live performances, for example.

These type of experiences will help students better understand the place of art and creativity within wider society and the job opportunities within the creative industries, but also allow them to explore their own means of self-expression – which can, in itself, help boost an individual's confidence.

Community spirit

Helping students develop more in the way of real-world skills is obviously important for ensuring that school leavers and graduates can successfully negotiate the transition from education to employment.

It's notable that several years ago, Ofsted determined that careers education was an important area for it to assess, following feedback from employers and a review of its own inspection framework.

To deliver a well-rounded careers education, schools should look beyond how careers advice and guidance has traditionally been defined, and do more to demonstrate direct links between core subjects and the real world. Community links are an incredibly valuable resource for this; they can demonstrate to students the sheer breadth of opportunities available to them, while also providing practical and meaningful experiences that students can get involved with.

Hands-on experience

Your local police station, for example, might host a 'go and see' day, where students can learn powerful lessons around the importance of clear and rapid communication. Partnering with a local charity to set up a volunteer programme can help raise awareness and perform a social good, while also instilling different aspirations among students considering a more altruistic career path.

Alternatively, why not try setting up a workshop on business development that includes a 'pitch to investors' activity? This can help to vividly illustrate how important critical thinking, communication and creativity skills are for business development and growth.

I'd urge all teachers and schools to reflect on their existing practice and consider whether it's enabling students to truly flourish after school. If there's room for improvement, now is the time to develop a new approach – one that will genuinely address those knowledge and skills gaps identified in school leavers.

We need an approach to careers provision that leverages the power of community resources, in a way that will set today's students on course to really thrive in the years to come.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Jenifer Cameron is the CEO of Action4Youth; for more information, visit action4youth.org/enrichment.

No gods, no masters – ONLY LEADERS

Far from being remote and infallible, your senior colleagues are merely occupying roles that you may well secure for yourself one day, says **Tracey Leese...**

When I qualified as a teacher 16 years ago, I thought I'd attained the very pinnacle of success. Armed with QTS and a work wardrobe from Primark, I started my career in teaching – but like a dog chasing a car, I didn't have a plan for what do to next.

Looking back now with the benefit of hindsight, I was probably always going to end up in a leadership role. I'd already worked in the private sector, during which time I'd secured a qualification in leadership. And despite feeling during that first year of teaching that I was drowning in workload, I was desperate for someone to notice my potential.

A secret club

At that point in my career, I saw leadership in education almost as a form of hereditary peerage, with SLT roles awarded to the next in line once the previous incumbent retired.

From the outside looking in, leadership felt to me like a secret club with deliberately obtuse entry requirements. I knew I wanted to be in this club, but that I didn't possess the social capital or work wardrobe needed to pass the initiation test, much less join it properly.

Some years later, finding myself in a different school and actually in the lower echelons of middle leadership, I was shocked to find that the senior leaders I had so revered and admired were neither omniscient demigods, nor superheroes. They were simply dedicated practitioners driven by the desire to make a difference to students' life chances, just like me.

I would liken my early experiences of leadership meetings to the fable of the Emperor's New Clothes. The content of the meetings themselves was sometimes so stultifyingly straightforward that I'd convince myself there must be some extra layer of meaning or subtext to the discussion that my lowly mindset was unable to comprehend. Yet ultimately there wasn't.

I've sometimes wondered to what extent these kinds of myths serve the interests of a certain type of leader. In the early phase of my career, I'd never have presumed to think I was as brilliant or capable as those leading me. But once the curtain is pulled back and you see the Wizard of Oz for what he is, it can't be closed again.

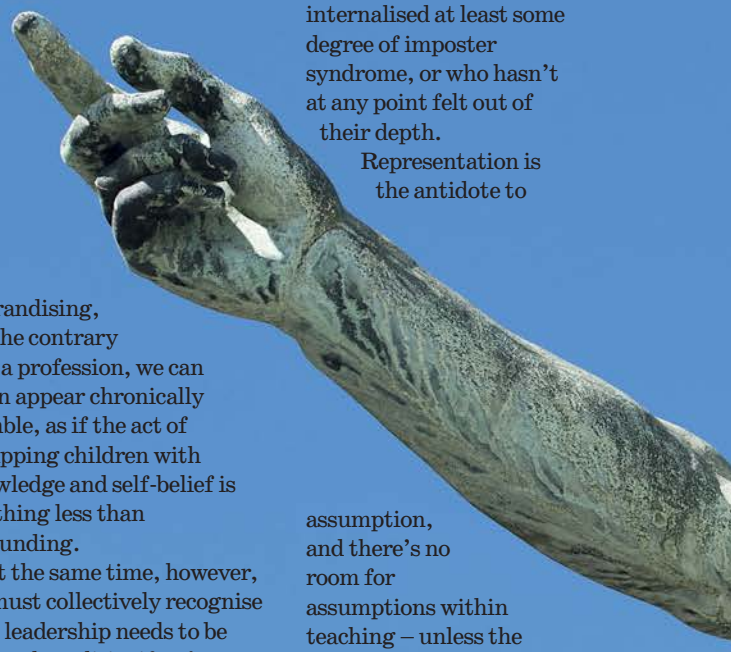
Demystifying leadership

The process of demystifying leadership is important and necessary work, though that's not to say that leadership is easy – far from it. It can be frustrating, high-pressured, thankless and often endless.

There are days when I can't believe my luck that I've got to where I am. At other times, I'll convince myself that someone's about to enter the school and unmask me as a fraud, because deep in my soul, I'm still that poor kid with the head brace and crap trainers.

Leadership is a privilege that I've made a conscious effort to wear lightly, because as intense and difficult as it can be, it's also joyful.

This shouldn't be read as if I'm suggesting school leaders are somehow mediocre or self-aggrandising, On the contrary – as a profession, we can often appear chronically humble, as if the act of equipping children with knowledge and self-belief is anything less than astounding.



At the same time, however, we must collectively recognise that leadership needs to be seen as less elitist if we're to bring about more diversity at the top, hence the reason why representation is key.

Imposter syndrome

As a senior leader now myself, I regularly urge all teachers to see themselves as potential leaders – especially women, who remain under-represented at all levels of educational leadership, despite the profession being one that's largely female-centric. A rich, well-rounded conception of leadership is one that prioritises vision, values ethics and allows others to shine – all things that teachers (and women, of course) do brilliantly.

It's easy to assume that senior staff possess more wisdom, insight and talent than you, but the reality is that they almost certainly don't. I've yet to work with a leader who hasn't internalised at least some degree of imposter syndrome, or who hasn't at any point felt out of their depth.

Representation is the antidote to assumption, and there's no room for assumptions within teaching – unless the assumption is that you're making an impact.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tracey Leese is an assistant headteacher at St Thomas More Catholic Academy in Stoke-on-Trent, and co-author, with Christopher Barker, of the book *Teach Like a Queen* (£16.99, Routledge)

KEEPING IT REAL

It can be difficult judging whether you're cut out for the responsibilities of senior leadership – but as Ms K found out, sometimes you'll never know unless you simply go for it...

Subject: Ms K – a secondary practitioner who has worked as a SENCo, head of year and subject leader, generally within challenging, inner-city contexts

Background: Whilst working as a SENCo before the pandemic, not long after having had children, Ms K reasoned that she would make more impact on students' lives by working in a specialist school. Despite being beset by intermittent crises of confidence, she was thrilled to eventually be appointed to the school's SLT as literacy leader.

To Ms K's surprise, she acclimatised perfectly to the unique challenges presented by the smaller SEMH setting she now worked in, often telling her mainstream colleagues, "It might not be for everyone, but it is for me!"

Lessons learned: Ms K grew in confidence working for a headteacher whose values aligned closely with hers, and who put students at the heart of decision making with zero delusions of grandeur. Two years into her post, the headteacher was appointed to a trust-wide role, thus leaving a vacancy.

Though aware that there was a strong field of both internal and external applicants, Ms K opted to apply for position – mainly at first for the useful interview experience she might be able to acquire. While preparing for the interview, however, it soon became clear to Ms K that she didn't just want to be in the race – she wanted the job.

At the end of the interview, Ms K told the panel she was well aware that after only two years of senior leadership, she wasn't the most experienced candidate for the post, but was enthusiastic, passionate, could already evidence impact and had proven herself to be a worthy and credible leader.

The outcome: To her shock, she was offered the post – and then shocked all over again to find that she was more than capable of doing the job well. It turned out that Ms K had overestimated the other candidates and initially underestimated herself. Ms K's advice to anyone considering a move that might seem professionally beyond them is to acknowledge that fear, and then go for it anyway – because you never know where leadership might lead you...

"Leadership needs to be seen as less elitist if we're to bring about more diversity at the top"

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FOCUS ON: ENGLISH

From new thinking around model sentences, to interrogating Shakespeare's use of archetypes, we check in on what's happening in the study of writing and literature...

What can English departments do to encourage better engagement with reading and more imaginative writing?

THE AGENDA:

MODEL PRACTICES

Model paragraphs and sentences aren't there to be copied; they're there to give your students agency and show them what's possible, writes **Elaine McNally**

The model paragraph had taken some time to plan. In the lesson, I wrote for attentive students – narrating my decisions, explaining my analysis. The lesson looked like it was going well. And then...

'Over to you,' I declared. *'Your turn to write. Use my model as an example.'* Yet, instead of eager industry, I got blank stares and the dismayed, wailing chorus of *'I don't know what to write!'*

Sound familiar? Just because we have modelled a piece of writing doesn't mean students can replicate that writing in another context.

Disciplinary thinking

What are we are trying to achieve with that model paragraph? When we write for students, we're not modelling a neat process that results in a consistent outcome. In English, answers are varied. Your paragraph will be different to mine.

When we model writing, we're really modelling *thought*. Writing is merely the vehicle that delivers thought. Communicating this, and showing students the disciplinary thinking that underpins our writing choices, will help them understand how to apply what they're shown in great writing of their own.

> **"When we model writing, we're really modelling thought"**

So how do we model *thinking* to students in the classroom? How do we train students in disciplinary thinking so that their outcomes in English improve and they move to a place of independence? Three strategies can help – questions, sentences and finding spaces.

Model asking questions

Academic writing is a response to questions, but for skilled writers, those questions have become automated to the point of invisibility. When you model the process of writing, show students how to approach a task by asking questions.

This way, they can learn that writing isn't a mystery they can't access, but just answers to questions they can learn to ask. Students think they have to learn the answers, which isn't true. In English, answers are subjective, personal, different. Students have to learn the trick of *asking questions*, and understand that they shape an answer with their own interrogations.

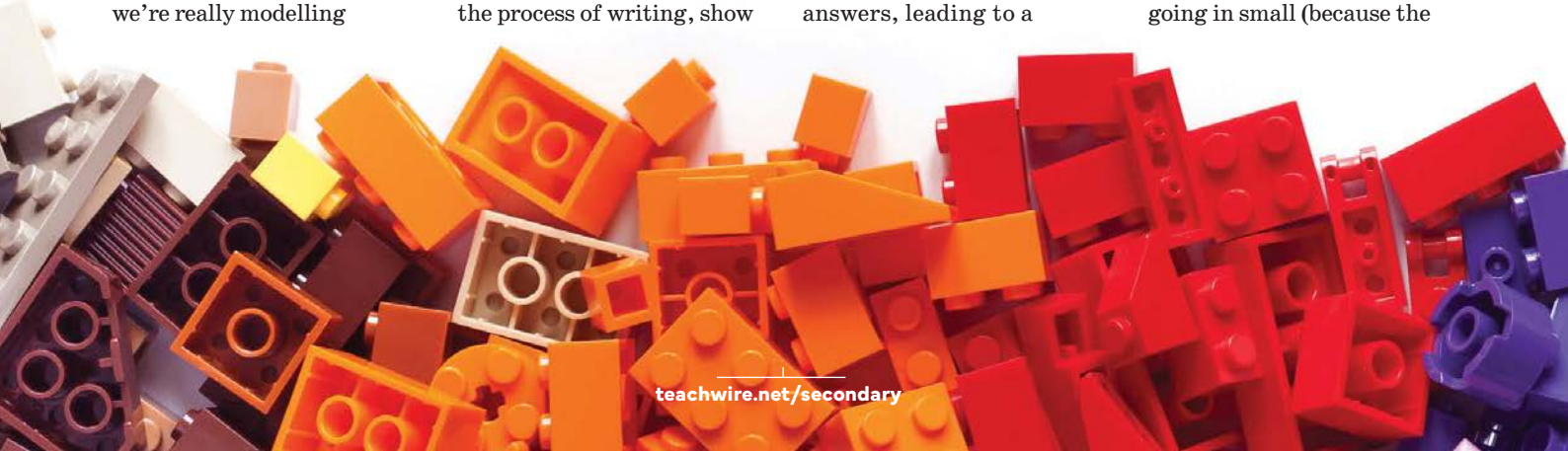
Questions that begin with *'What?' 'How?'* and *'Why?'* are crucial. *'So what?'* has huge utility. These questions open gates to ideas in the text, and replicate how a literary critic thinks. Model how to reframe an essay title as a series of questions. Students can then learn how to generate their own questions and answers, leading to a personalised argument that has a structure.

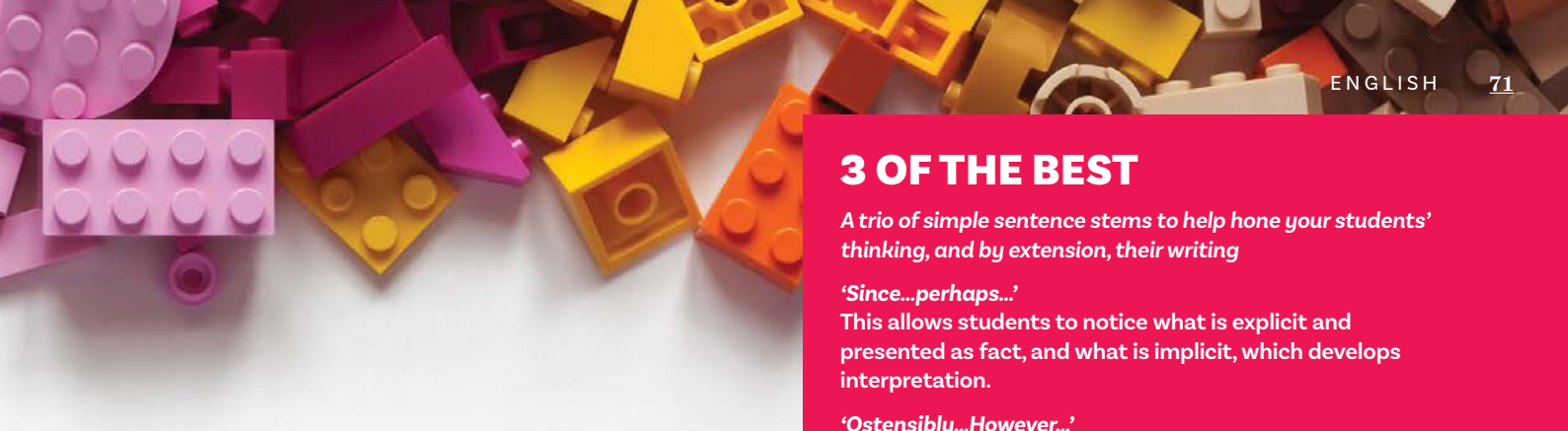
However, the best question to model for exposing the conceptual thinking behind writing, is *'If...then what?'*

Sometimes, we might ask questions that are text-dependent without signalling why we're asking those questions in the first place. Ultimately, I don't want them to latch onto points made about Mr Birling from asking *'What do we learn about Mr Birling in Act 1?'* I *do* want them to hear the question, *'If character is a vehicle for the text's themes, then what do we learn about Mr Birling in Act 1?'* or, *'If the motif of light is used to signify revelation throughout the novel, then what is the significance of light in this extract?'*

I want them to understand what shapes my question about an aspect of a text, and how that in turn shapes the response I write.

'If...then what' questions foreground the conceptual knowledge that hides behind local comprehension. You're going in small (because the





3 OF THE BEST

A trio of simple sentence stems to help hone your students' thinking, and by extension, their writing

'Since...perhaps...'
This allows students to notice what is explicit and presented as fact, and what is implicit, which develops interpretation.

'Ostensibly...However...'
This asks *'What's on the surface?'* and *'What's underneath?'*

'Not only...but also...'
This enables students to say more than one thing about one thing.

question is precise), but also large (since the 'if' part works broadly for any text).

Although you'll ask local, context-specific questions that generate content, when you're modelling writing, aim to explicitly foreground conceptual thinking. Modelling *'If...then what'* questions and the answers they generate shows students that knowledge is connected, and that writing comes from those interconnections.

Ultimately, we want students to understand that asking questions isn't just something a teacher does; it's something a *writer* does. The aim is to equip students with transferable strategies so they can see themselves as writers.

Model sentence stems

Before working on a paragraph or essay, model at sentence level to show students how writing can negotiate disciplinary thinking in crisp and efficient ways. Be sure to keep it small – deliberate practice of a limited number of sentence stems reduces cognitive load (see '3 of the best').

When modelling sentence stems, don't just focus on the content you attach – narrate the thinking that they permit. We want students to be able to handle more than one idea, balance opposing thoughts, and see both what's shown and what's implied. Tell students that writing is trained thought. Modelling these sentence stems is modelling a particular way of thinking that enables successful outcomes in English.

Model filling the spaces

When modelling writing, narrate how the spaces between words can be exploited. This is when it's helpful to teach the students some terminology. Understanding that the word 'modify' means to change, adjust or transform, and that premodifiers and postmodifiers add detail to nouns and verbs, can be revelatory.

When I ask 'Where's the space?', I'm asking students to spot places where they can include pre- or postmodifying words and phrases. I'm not modelling context-specific, local analysis here, but rather the way that good writing works, regardless of topic.

Being taught to find the *spaces* – those places where precise words, specific vocabulary and exact terminology can go – gives students agency when it comes to their own writing. They're not trying to replicate *content*, but a *process of thinking* which can be conveyed through stylish writing.

Consider this example:

'The crow makes sounds which would frighten Kingshaw. The sound of 'Caaw' adds to Kingshaw's dread of the crow.'

Asking questions, and foregrounding where the spaces are, means the writing could be improved to look like this:

*'The crow makes **disturbing** sounds which would frighten Kingshaw. **The unpleasant and ugly** sound of 'Caaw' adds to Kingshaw's dread of the **menacing** crow.'*

Importantly, this works with every type of writing:

'The light filtered through the vegetation, causing the insects to buzz in the sun.'

*'The **gauzy** light filtered **hazily** through the **dense** vegetation, causing **tiny** insects to buzz **idly** in the **early morning** sun.'*

'Find the space...fill the space' has become a mantra that I repeat every time we write. Students start to self-correct – though it seems to give them greater pleasure to cry, *'There's a space! They've got a space! They could write...'* Finding the spaces between words means noticing opportunities for nuanced interpretation, and becomes a way of thinking.

In conclusion

When we model writing, it's because we want students to have agency over their own writing. The less the modelling process is attached to local decisions about particular extracts or texts, the more likely it is that students will gain a deeper understanding of how excellent academic writing works.

We want to move students from a modelled paragraph they think they have to replicate, to a metacognitive understanding of the structures that underpin writing, and the realisation that writing enacts critical, but increasingly intuitive thought.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Elaine McNally (@mrsmacteach33) is an English head of department; for more information, visit her blog at mrsmacteach33.wordpress.com

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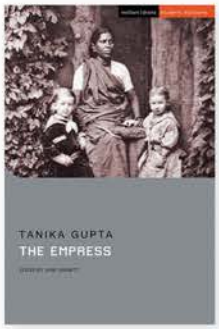

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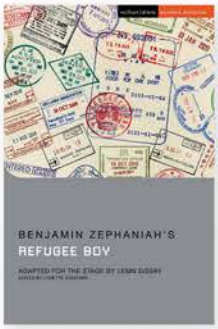

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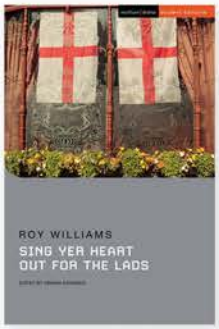

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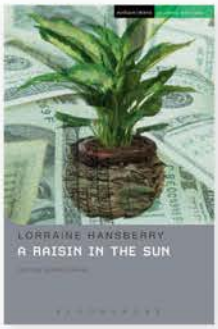

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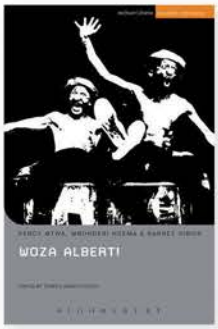

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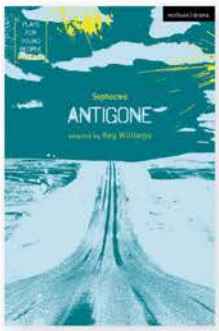

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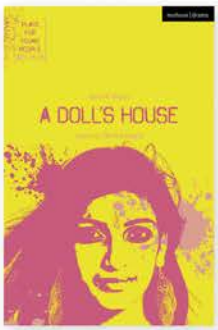

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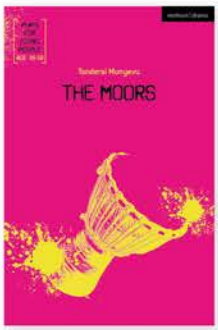

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"Reading saved my life"

Amanda Ellison considers whether Reciprocal Reading might be the perfect solution for the post-lockdown reading gap...

Leafing through publisher Mark Hodkinson's memoir, *No One Round Here Reads Tolstoy*, recently reminded me of something significant – namely, how reading saved my life. A touch dramatic, you might think, but that's how I remember it.

You see, my most profound childhood memory is of taking refuge in the idyllic world of the Famous Five *et al* whenever domestic discord reared its head. Even now, I can almost smell the musty pages of my beloved paperbacks, and recall vividly the sense of delicious escapism I enjoyed in Enid Blyton's fictional universe.

Like many of today's pupils, I didn't hail from a household of readers, but from my first visit to the local library I was hooked. Books became my best friends. This, then, is 'reading for pleasure' – and I was lucky to discover it.

Shared endeavours

That's why it pains me now that so many young people today are seemingly oblivious to the joys books can bring. The reasons for this are many and varied, as we all know. Book-deprived households, the appeal of more exciting – electronic! – pastimes, and, of course, poor reading skills.

To that last point, we as teachers are duty-bound to engage in the perennial challenge of improving reading standards. The task is exhausting, often frustrating – but how else will future generations get to experience the pleasures of reading, unless we help them acquire the wherewithal to confidently engage with texts now? So we keep trying.

The lockdowns wrought by the pandemic compounded what was already a burgeoning problem. It was with this in mind that a couple of colleagues and I came up with the idea of trialling 'Reciprocal Reading'. It's an approach that primary colleagues may be familiar with, but secondary teachers less so.

The strategy involves four learners assuming the discrete roles of *predicting*, *clarifying*, *questioning* and *summarising* a piece of text. All being well, these shared endeavours will then encourage them to embrace the text independently.

'It's boring'

Research by the Education Endowment Foundation has yielded some interesting findings. While utilising Reciprocal Reading on a universal basis level improves metacognition rather than improving reading age (still valuable in itself, I'd say), using the same strategy with focus groups – particularly FSM children – points to tangible improvements.

The latter was therefore the approach we opted to test. We identified 16 children whose reading ages were below their chronological ages and tested them using the New Group Reading Test, which was to be our starting point. From this initial group, we then selected two groups of four for targeted Reciprocal Reading sessions over a six-month period, with the remaining eight acting as a control group.

Before commencing, we issued the two focus groups with a questionnaire about their reading. Feedback confirmed what we already suspected – that struggling readers don't like reading. Their responses included comments like, '*It's boring*' and '*I struggle to concentrate*.' Only one said anything even slightly positive: '*It passes the time.*'

As the sessions got underway, problems soon materialised. Our designated timeslot was morning registration, hence children would habitually be absent or late – a sharp reminder for us to consider logistics next time, which highlighted the need for whole-school commitment. Some children also felt singled out, and were borderline hostile. This wasn't a great starting point.

Signs of promise

Over time, though, our four-pronged strategy did show some signs of promise. The focus groups improved their reading ages by an average of 1.2 years, while the control group's average advancement amounted to 0.8 years. Moreover, some of the children reported feeling more confident about reading.

Had we found the solution to the post-lockdown reading deficit? A project such as ours is probably too small-scale to warrant a definitive thumbs-up at this stage, but the indicators suggest that it could certainly form part of the solution – particularly when used alongside other strategies, such as re-reading.

In any case, the process certainly produced some valuable findings. It highlighted the potential that Reciprocal Reading has as a literacy strategy, but also the need for systemic approaches when raising standards in that most precious skill of reading. And so, we keep on trying.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Amanda Ellison (@AellisonWrites) is head of English at an 11 to 16 school in South Tyneside, as well as a freelance writer and prolific book reviewer; for more information, visit ellisonwrites.co.uk

CHARACTER STUDIES

Zoe Enser looks at several recurring archetypes in Shakespeare's works, and what they say about the Bard's contemporary surroundings and artistic intent...

The more you learn about the plays and characters of Shakespeare, the more you become aware of certain recurring ideas, and this is most certainly true of his characters. The king, the daughter, the wife, the soldier and the fool all appear across the body of his work and will have had certain resonance to his audience.

To be the king

The patriarchal figure is a powerful one, dominating many of Shakespeare's stories. From dead fathers in *Hamlet, Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, to elderly and misguided ones in *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, they often dominate the tales.

Kings, of course, provide a key focus for the history plays and often cross over in the role of the father too. Lady Macbeth, on preparing to kill King Duncan, claims she would have killed the old man himself 'had he not resembled my father' (*Macbeth, II, I, 14–15*). The kingship of Duncan, and indeed the concept of kingship more widely, is an interesting area to explore in *Macbeth*. Duncan is associated with an aged wisdom – kind, innocent and firmly linked to an understanding of divine right and The Great Chain of Being – an idea the then monarch, James, had been keen to promote in his 'Divinity of Kings' tome.

However, like Lear, Duncan also displays a naivety and lack of foresight that ultimately leads to his demise. Just as Lear is unable to see the danger before him in the form of his daughters – greedy for power and cruel in their methods – so is Duncan unable to see his own downfall in the guise of Macbeth. He trusts too quickly and fails to guard against the threats that surround him. He has already experienced the treachery of Cawdor and yet he continues to expose himself to peril, seemingly having learned nothing from these past experiences.

Other kings and leaders in the histories present perhaps a more positive view of leadership, with Henry's ascent to the throne seeing him throw off childish things, in the form of Falstaff, and adopting a more humble and inclusive leadership in which he says:

"I am not covetous for gold,
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
It yearns me not if men my garments wear;
Such outward things dwell not in my desires"
(*Hen. V*, IV, iii, 24–27)

> **"Shakespeare's father figures often perform the function of the 'blocker' – a familiar role in traditional narratives. They are there to be overcome"**

Fathers and blockers

Shakespeare's father figures, many of whom are leaders in society too, often perform the function of the 'blocker' – a familiar role in traditional narratives. They are there to be overcome; a barrier to true happiness. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest* and *Romeo and Juliet* all include fathers who are, depending on your viewpoint, protecting their daughters from the dangers of the world outside, but equally preventing their pursuit of true happiness.

They are figures of authority, often representing society – much as with family as a whole – and are often controlling and manipulative. They isolate their daughters from the rest of the world and would frequently rather see the death of their daughters rather than hear of their dishonour or disobedience. Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* and Cordelia in *King Lear* are all constrained by the whims of their fathers, indicative of ideas of property and gender.

Exploring the parent-child relationship with students can be a particularly useful way to begin examining the plays, as it is something which, even with the best relationships, students can very much identify with.

The mother, the queen, the hag

Mothers are notoriously absent in many of Shakespeare's plays, with Lear's daughters – Ophelia, Desdemona and Hero – all notably motherless. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the deficit of Juliet's mother (seemingly distant from her daughter and unsympathetic to her pleas not to marry) is emphasised by her relationship with the Nurse, filled with a closeness and care absent in the actual mother-daughter relationship.

Those who are there – older women and those with questionable maternal instincts – don't fare much better. In *Coriolanus*, Volumnia seeks to maintain her own power within Rome through her political ambitions for her son. She is proud of his status as a heroic soldier, referring to his wounds as if medals of honour and persuading him to play out her own ambitions:

let
Thy mother rather feel
thy pride than fear
Thy dangerous stoutness,
for I mock at death
With as big heart as thou.
Do as thou list,
Thou valiantness was mine,
thou suck'dst it from me
(*Coriolanus*, III, ii, 125–129)

Volumnia's techniques to persuade her son to her ends echo the words of Lady Macbeth, who 'Shame[s] to wear a heart so white.' Both women seek greater powers for their 'partner in greatness', but ultimately realise they are unable to control what it is they unleash.

Macbeth no longer needs his wife's counsel as his tyranny takes hold, leaving her wracked with guilt and her implied suicide. The 'fiend-like queen' we see in this play recurs in

the mother figures Shakespeare deploys, much like the wicked queens of fairy tales. In *Hamlet*, Gertrude is prepared to maintain her place on the throne by marrying her dead husband's brother. The question as to how much she was complicit in the murder is one which Hamlet and the audience must continue to puzzle.

The use of the older women in Shakespeare's plays to represent evil deeds and desires is perhaps indicative of societal attitudes towards older women during this period. No longer capable of childbearing, these women are either deleted from the plays, no longer serving the required function, or cast as villains full of unnatural desires, hungry for power and prepared to go to any lengths to achieve this.

The soldier

Returning soldiers are a recurrent concept in Shakespeare's plays, from *Much Ado About Nothing to Othello*. Coriolanus is perhaps the most extreme example – no longer regarding himself as a man, frequently referring to himself as a 'thing' throughout the play and more a weapon of war or machine than a man, scarred and moulded by his experiences on the battlefield.

As he attempts to become 'author of himself' – rewriting his position within his new world and, attempting, and failing, to resist the ambitions of his mother – he is renamed and redefined, but ultimately lost in this new world he needs to navigate.

Equally, Macbeth's tactics on the battlefield do not translate well into his position as king, and tyranny and bloodshed become the signature of all he does once he is no longer a soldier.

The fool

Fools often do not play by the same rules as their masters or those around them and are often outside of some of the usual bounds of social order, with Feste moving between the houses of the two different households in *Twelfth Night* with apparent ease. They bring elements of the carnivalesque to the plays, often capering and contorting alongside their songs and witticisms, provoking some much-needed comic relief.

They also seem to have a freedom to speak in ways which would not be accepted from characters of a different position. For example, the truth that the Fool in *King Lear* offers to the King is at times sharp and brutal, offering Lear his 'coxcomb' in exchange for the crown, calling him out for the fool he is.

The fool often speaks more truth than those characters around him, either wrapped up in riddles and songs (as with Feste and double plays), or in the words of the Porter in *Macbeth*, 'dark in their presence.' The idea of the 'fool that sees' again predates Shakespeare, as does the supposed wise man who is blind.

In *King Lear*, neither the King nor the supposedly wise Gloucester can see the truth and it is only when they are blinded, either by their madness or the vicious attack from Lear's daughter, Goneril, they can begin to see the truth of the world around them.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zoe Enser is a former classroom teacher and head of English; this article is based on an edited extract from her book, *Bringing Forth the Bard: A guide to teaching Shakespeare in the English classroom* (Crown House, £16.99)

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ASK THE EXPERT

"Technology can present distractions"

Lenovo's Coby Gurr explains how LanSchool can empower teachers when it comes to digital learning

What differences have you observed with schools' use of technology pre-and post-pandemic?

One obvious change is the widespread adoption of 1:1 devices. Many schools previously had 1:1 for certain grade levels, but the pandemic forced them to figure out how to get devices into more students' hands, which often required them to be resourceful. Lenovo is working with schools to help where we can. We're currently running an 'Equity Program', whereby every Lenovo device purchase results in a small donation towards helping underprivileged children gain better access to technology.

One interesting outcome of distance learning is that teachers and students have become much more comfortable and skilled with using technology. Another is the growth of more innovative lesson planning. Those speak to the fact that technology will remain a staple in the classroom going forward, and that people are generally more accepting of that now.

Where do you see LanSchool fitting into this new edtech landscape?

Introducing new technology into classrooms can present distractions and various other challenges for teachers. It can be hard for teachers to know exactly what students are working on, especially with remote learning. LanSchool gives teachers more oversight of this, so they can guide students' digital learning both in class and when they're at home. Teachers can glimpse what students are seeing on their screens and message any who seem to be losing focus, and there are some built-in safety features for limiting the websites students can visit.

How easy is LanSchool to roll out?

There are two versions of LanSchool. LanSchool Classic is a self-hosted software application schools can use on campus, while LanSchool Air is a cloud-based version that works both on campus and at home. 'Classic' has to be installed and hosted locally on school devices, but the process is straightforward and it's very easy to manage once installed. It also includes enterprise-level data collection, allowing IT teams to see how the software is being used and spot where teachers might need help. LanSchool Air can be implemented remotely by simply sending links to teachers and students and is fully maintained by LanSchool, so there's no IT infrastructure needed on the school's part before they can start using it. Our software integrates well with Google Classroom, Clever and Azure AD, making classroom rostering extremely easy, and it even supports the importing of CSV data.

EXPERT PROFILE

NAME:
Coby Gurr

JOB TITLE:
General Manager, Lenovo Software

AREA OF EXPERTISE:

How edtech innovation can improve learning outcomes

BEST PART OF MY JOB:
"Creating digital solutions for schools that have a direct impact on the lives of teachers and students."

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LanSchool allows teachers to see when students are off-task or performing tasks incorrectly. Teachers can discreetly reach out and correct students before they require additional supervision, and also save time when guiding students by pushing content to all devices or blanking screens as needed.

ASK ME ABOUT

CONNECTIVITY – and how LanSchool's classroom management software is an effective complement to digital learning in connected and virtual classrooms

SECURITY – in relation to us partnering with online safety specialists to provide LanSchool's safety features, making it easy for schools to adopt a multi-pronged approach to their digital security

CONVENIENCE – and how LanSchool includes support for the single sign-on integrations used by Google Classroom and Azure Active Directory

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A mixed bag

The government's SEND Green Paper is commendably honest about the problems we face, but has less to say about what resources will be forthcoming to help solve them, says **John Galloway**...

So, what are we to make of the government's SEND Green Paper (bit.ly/ts116-sgp1)? Is it a bold move aimed at addressing long-term flaws in the system? Or a cynical attempt at squeezing limited resources and deflecting responsibility?

It's certainly contradictory. As the Schools White Paper (bit.ly/ts116-sgp2) seeks to make every school an academy – further fragmenting the education system and removing LAs from the equation – it seems odd that the SEND Green Paper calls for the creation of a national SEND service, with those same LAs playing a key role in making it work.

There's a further anomaly going back to the 2014 SEND Code of Practice (bit.ly/ts116-sgp3), which made assessment context-driven. At the time, we heard that a school-aged child would be classed as having learning difficulties if they had, 'A significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age,' or 'a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others.'

The determination of students' learning needs was thereafter dependent on comparisons with their peers and available resources, with no fixed norms. This is what the Green Paper now seeks to address.

Placing labels

It's an ambitious ask to put in place standards for assessment, provision and review that are commonly held across England. In some cases, there are procedures already in place. The Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS), for instance, is carried out by medical practitioners and is the only route to a diagnosis of ASD.

However, since autism is a continuum, under the new proposals the funding made available to support a child's learning needs will presumably depend upon whereabouts on that continuum they are. Whether that scale exists, or needs to be created, arguments will develop regarding thresholds and 'spiky' profiles, where difficulties are exhibited to greater degrees in some areas than others.

Similarly, there are already recognised assessments for dyslexia. Will we see the development of a similar grading system there? What about global developmental delay?

National expectations

Don't get me wrong – I think the idea of creating national expectations for assessment and provision which are open to every learner is a good one. But it will require lots of work and investment, and it will take time.

Elsewhere, the Green Paper talks of wanting to clarify the threshold between default placement in a mainstream school and entry into a special school. Yet provision varies considerably across LAs, with some boroughs having almost no special schools, and many others needing to allocate additional resources to meet high needs in mainstream settings. Will national diktat determine local provision?

This is further complicated by plans to offer parents lists of suitable school placements, rather than allowing any school – with some caveats – to be named in EHCPs. This will hopefully facilitate placements in schools properly equipped to meet learner's needs, but there's also the potential for this to result in a less inclusive system overall, with some schools not featuring on any such lists.

The prospect of a national standard for interventions to meet learners' needs suggests that teachers will require a core skillset, which is great – but how will the required training be delivered?

Who's responsible?

There's much to commend the Green Paper. It provides clarity on what 'SEND' means and what amounts to effective provision. It acknowledges the need to raise skills and creates expectations for better partnership working.

Yet these standards will still be drawn up centrally, with responsibility for delivery resting with schools, LAs and other service providers. Will they have the resources they need to deliver effectively? Or is this being conceived as an exercise in deflection?

*'We told them what to do. Ask **them** why it's not happening...'*

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

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The Bristol Bus Boycott's lessons

Aneira Roose-McClew considers Roy Hackett's legacy in showing educators and students how to stand up for democracy

The recent passing of civil rights activist Roy Hackett has shone a spotlight on the Bristol Bus Boycott and its legacy. Hackett, one of the lead organisers, was driven to challenge the Bristol Bus Company's unofficial 'colour bar', which prevented Black and Asian people from working as conductors and drivers, when his wife Ena was denied a job with the company in 1962.

The 'colour bar' was a clear example of the discrimination faced by Black Bristolians – many of whom, like Hackett, had come from the West Indies after the British Nationality Act of 1948 naturalised all Commonwealth citizens, giving them the right to live and work in the UK.

Despite this legal right and the encouragement of the British government (which sought migration from British colonies to help the UK's post-WWII economic recovery), those opting to make the UK their home faced hostility and discrimination.

Ena Hackett's rejection from the Bristol Omnibus Company, despite her meeting the role's requirements and there being vacancies available, compelled Roy Hackett to act. In response to this specific injustice and the many more affecting the daily lives of Black Bristolians, he united with other young Black activists and formed the West Indian Development Council (WIDC) to fight for their civil rights.

By 1963, others had joined the WIDC and a plan had been hatched – to publicise the Bristol Bus Company's 'colour bar' and stage a boycott of Bristol's buses, following in the footsteps of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The Bristol Bus Boycott was incredibly successful, not only ending the 'colour bar', but also laying the foundations for the passing of Race Relations Act 1965 (and later acts superseding it).

Creative Commons attribution – Jack Whittaker (bit.ly/ts116-bbb)

The Boycott's organisers succeeded in their fight against racial injustice, despite being denied power on account of their race. Their story is one of hope that can galvanise students to challenge social problems themselves, and help shape a fairer, more just society.

Historical change-makers

In a survey we commissioned last year, we found that 93% of young people believe it's important to challenge prejudice or discrimination when they see it happening. Yet despite understanding this need, young people feel that they lack the tools to do so, with 69% of those surveyed believing they're not taught enough about *how* to stand up against, or deal with prejudice and discrimination in school.

Teaching students about the stories of historical change-makers can help address this deficit, giving them ideas on how they can assume individual and collective agency. Such examples act as models for hope, while countering apathy and defeatism in the face of daunting social ills. Hackett and his fellow organisers used simple strategies that remain available to us all.

In our lesson 'Protesting Discrimination in Bristol', we teach students about the history of the boycott, but also introduce those strategies. Students explore the 'levers of power' – organisations or people upon which change-makers can apply pressure to amplify their impact – that were used by the Boycott's organisers. They included both local and national government, the media and local industry, as well as schools and other education institutions.

Schools continue to shoulder the responsibility of preparing students to engage emotionally and ethically – not just intellectually – with the world around them. Platforming the stories of British activists like Roy Hackett who fought against injustice is vital, both for the health of society and for protecting the rights of all the individuals within it.

Civil liberties, and the right to live free from discrimination, are not a given. Many groups are still oppressed in the UK and around the world. History shows us that once-protected groups can lose rights they take for granted following the actions of draconian or authoritarian regimes.

Learning about strategies for standing up against oppression and ending social ills not only helps us create a fairer society – it also protects our democracy. As the Holocaust survivor Marian Turski once noted, '*Democracy hinges on the rights of minorities being protected*'.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Aneira Roose-McClew is a former secondary teacher, examiner and teacher trainer, now senior curriculum developer at Facing History & Ourselves UK; for more information, visit facinghistory.org/uk or follow @FacingHistoryUK

A WELCOME FAR FROM HOME

Planning around the needs of students from refugee families can be hard – but as Hannah Day explains, there are certain things teachers can do that will always prove helpful...

We've all watched the war in Ukraine unfold with horror, but thus far it's remained largely at what feels like a helpless distance. Yet that distance has now shortened for some of us, due to the arrival of new students from Ukraine in many classrooms – including my own.

Sadly, the presence of refugees in schools across England is nothing new. I recall welcoming new classmates from Serbia back when I was a pupil myself, and more recently we've seen children arrive from Iran, Iraq and Syria, as well as many other countries.

Whether you've become used to welcoming the children of displaced families, or are educating a refugee in your class for the first time, there are some key approaches that we can all take.

1 The practicalities

Firstly, we must make the practical elements of being in school as simple as possible. If we don't support refugees in managing their day-to-day lives at school we're contributing an extra layer of difficulty right from the start, so pay attention to the following:

Pronunciation of names

You may need to record some names phonetically, at first. I've found many students choose to simplify their names, but this should always be their choice. If in doubt, see if your English or MFL teachers can assist you with any pronunciation issues rather than the student themselves, as such enquiries may make them feel self-conscious.

Religion

Make sure you know not just which religion – if indeed any – they follow, but how they practice. We understand that the Catholic church and the CofE are different, so apply that same mindset to all other faiths. Ask the student to note down anything that might need to be facilitated for them for religious reasons, such as dietary requirements, adjustments to uniform or prayer spaces.

Orientation

Ensure that maps of your school are clearly presented, and easily available as digital versions that admin staff can use to add notes in the student's own language. There's no point labelling the toilets in English only if their English is poor.

Equipment

Many will have arrived in this country with nothing. Appoint a lead member of staff to be responsible for them, who can then provide them with the necessary stationary, uniform items and so forth.

Use picture labels

Is there any signage within your school that could use a picture label? This is fairly common in primary schools to help pupils with emerging English skills, and can be applied here. It can be especially useful in lessons where specialised equipment will be used, such as art and science.

Buddy system

Give the student a ready-made friend via a respected and acknowledged role to give it status. While there may be other refugees at your school, perhaps from the same country, it's generally best if a 'buddy' is an established student with a good set of friends, so that all students can mix freely.

2 Their emotional needs

Next, you'll need to consider their emotional needs. We know that relaxed and positive students achieve well, and refugees are no different.

Help them make links

Make space in the day for any refugees from the same country to meet. They may be in different year groups, but just having a chance to talk in your own language to someone else about experiences common to both of you can be an important source of relief.

Say 'hello' their way

Encourage a basic use of the student's first language across the group, such as the words for 'hello' and 'goodbye'. This should be embedded and said without fanfare. Don't draw attention to the fact, as it may embarrass the student or make them feel singled out. Just drop it in casually where you can.

Focus on strengths and achievements

Bear in mind that these students will be settling into a whole new way of learning. I've been interested in finding how out my subject, art and design, is typically delivered in Ukraine. Much of what we do isn't covered in their specifications, with the upshot that Ukrainian students can initially find themselves resistant or confused in lessons. What areas or skills do they excel in? Celebrate and acknowledge these.

Share common experiences

While very few of us will have been forced to leave our homes with little or no warning, we can all relate to the idea of experiencing change we haven't welcomed and what it's like to endure times of stress. Don't be afraid to talk about this. Simple opening statements, such as '*I don't know what you're experiencing or feeling, but I do remember when...*' are a good way of making an emotional connection without belittling their experiences or comparing them to yours.

Celebrate what they bring to the school

As you get to know them,

"Is there any signage within your school that could use a picture label?"

consider how you can incorporate their knowledge and experiences into your lessons. Our Ukrainian students have excellent technical skills, which is why we've asked them to help their fellow students with various tools via our digital editing programs.

Make the process of welcoming new people to your school part of its ethos and a core value. Explicitly communicate this to students, staff and parents, clarifying how refugees should be welcomed both in school and throughout the wider community. Make sure the school is setting the tone.

3 During lessons

Education is our game, but we should recognise that the two pastoral stages outlined above must come first. Now, you can start to teach them…

Pre-translate key vocabulary

Prepare a glossary of key words with translations, and ask them to work on a number of these each week. They may need support staff to assist them – don't expect them to be able to do it all alone.

Avoid idioms

Yes, they'll be 'in at the deep end' at first, but phrases like that won't translate. Keep it simple.

Communicate purpose and targets

Do this as simply and as clearly as possible, translating just a few key points. If the student knows why they're being asked to complete a particular lesson activity, it will help with buy-in – particularly when the educational approaches you're using may be vastly different to what they've experienced previously.

Web translator apps

Finally, there's no shame in getting some help from an app. Download one and use it whenever all else fails.

With these practical suggestions, refugee students should be able to manage the school day easily, and soon become as much a part of your school as any other student.

If you're struggling with communication issues, here are some strategies that may help…

PACE

Developed by Dr Dan Hughes, this approach is well-suited to children who have experienced stress. The name stands for Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy, and the aim is to build trust and relationships which will lead to better outcomes.
ddpnetwork.org

ZONES OF REGULATION

If you're finding that your new students are presenting disruptive emotions, this strategy can be used to help them categorise and understand how they're feeling, ultimately leading to scaffolding supportive measures.
zonesofregualtion.com

HARVARD UNIVERSITY – RELIANCE

Getting children to draw or list both the challenges they face and their ways of coping as two sides of a see-saw can help them see which is more heavily weighted. You can then help them manage each side one by one.
developingchild.harvard.edu

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Hannah Day is head of visual arts, media and film at Herefordshire and Ludlow Sixth Form College, where she has responsibility for overseeing the department's teaching and strategic development

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The same, but different

Rebecca Leek explains how students with EAL can be taught well by 'differentiating without differentiating'...

Have you ever been in another country, trying to function as a learner in another language? I experienced this in Italy in my early 20s, and found it both bewildering and exhilarating. You become someone slightly different – not the articulate, funny, or measured person you might be when speaking your home language, but a paler version of yourself.

I can only imagine how challenging this must be for students with English as an acquired language, who are trying to work out who they are, *and* learn in a language that's unknown to them, all at the same time. But there are steps we can all take to help them.

Keywords as footholds

First, model a fascination with language. Whether you're a science, art, PE or maths teacher, there will be all sorts of wonderful language passing through each of your lessons, be it by virtue of the subject matter or simply via interactions with your students. But how often do you stop to pay attention to an interesting phrase and break it open for the whole class?

For example, what does 'per cent' mean? This can open up discussion of currency, cricket and Latin prepositions all in one go, whilst also reinforcing an important mathematical concept. Linger on a keyword and your enthusiasm will rub off. Nurturing a culture of being exploratory with language will enable positive peer support to develop between English and non-English speakers.

As an early learner of a new language, one of the hardest things can be distinguishing between the start and end of words. Try to therefore slow down your delivery and clearly punctuate your speech, so that there's a little more space between your words – especially when highlighting keywords.

See any keywords as the footholds to your lesson. If you're teaching nutrition, for instance, then don't rattle off a string of sentences at the start. Instead, provide a toolbox of vocabulary, working through the words slowly – ideally teaching them multi-modally (with pictures, reading, speaking *and* writing) before proceeding.

You may well find that many of your English speakers haven't used the words 'protein', 'carbohydrate', 'amino', 'macro', *et al*. very often themselves, so it won't do any harm to pick these words out until everyone is confident in their meaning and use. Have them be the leitmotif of the lesson by making sure you hear them resonate around the room. By letting them ring out, you're providing your EAL learners with vital footholds, without which they may be completely lost.

Note the connections

If you teach a subject that lends itself to mind mapping, or if there are any opportunities for self-led exploratory work, let your students to take notes in their language of choice – hopefully they'll have access to a dictionary (traditional or electronic). Whilst the 'full immersion' approach of learning English is proven to be very effective, you won't be holding anyone back if, for 20 minutes or so, your learners get to stretch themselves in their own language.

In any case, this means there's valuable work to be done later, translating their notes into English. This will grant them access to a higher level of vocabulary, and help them make connections between their language and English. Have them then share some of the words or phrases with the rest of the class. Note any similarities, and show their peers how valuable their bilingualism can be.

Finally, technology can be a great resource for support outside of your lessons. By regularly setting Google quizzes, or using platforms like Show My Homework, you can set up rapid tasks for pre-teaching or reinforcing key language from previous lessons. This could also be done more discreetly, by setting individualised tasks and giving private feedback, away from the gaze of the whole cohort.

Remember that your EAL learners are going to be better linguists than many of us. Celebrate what they're doing and encourage their successes. Who knows – celebrating our polyglot students' achievements might even inspire some of our monoglot teenagers to take up another language...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
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

Too much information...?

Milly Evans highlights the sex education lessons your students are already giving each other, and why teaching staff should be paying attention...

I once overheard an 18-year-old classmate tell her friend, with utter conviction, "You don't get a vagina until you turn five."

I don't know whether she thought you had to buy one at the corner shop, were given one in some kind of secret 'vagina ceremony', or that it just spontaneously appeared upon hitting that age, but she certainly believed what she was saying.

When it comes to sex education, misinformation can spread like wildfire. From myths around condoms, pulling out and pregnancy, to deep misunderstandings about our bodies, consent and what healthy relationships look like, as a sex educator I'm constantly debunking information young people have heard from their friends, from parents or via the internet.

That's why it baffles me whenever I hear that common argument against sex education in schools – "They're too young to be learning about this stuff!"

It makes me wonder how much people really know about what teens and young people talk about, and the information they have access to. Being a young adult myself, I know all too well how we'll often learn our sex ed from peers, long before we get it from parents, teachers or other reliable sources.

Life lessons

I was one of very few at my school who received quality sex education, thanks to my parents teaching me at home. With no school-provided sex ed to speak of at the time, my classmates were generally left to their own devices.

Though the unofficial sex education my friends and I shared left much to be desired, chatting with them about breakups, our bodies, street harassment, gender and masturbation undeniably shaped our future experiences – sometimes in really positive ways.

Conversations that parents may be nervous about their child having in sex ed lessons are likely already taking place within their friendship groups – and that's not necessarily a bad thing. But they still need access to somewhere, or someone reliable from whom they can get accurate answers too.

Taking on misinformation

It can't be denied that young people are at risk of picking up some dangerous ideas about sex from their peers or online – some obvious, and others harder to spot. I can remember another overheard conversation at school, where a group of friends enthusiastically agreed that it was okay to get angry and upset if a partner said no to sex, because it was a surefire way to "Get them to change their mind."

Left unquestioned, throwaway comments and 'jokes' around consent, relationship abuse, stereotypes and power can sometimes end up being even more harmful than deliberate misinformation, later translating into hateful language, bullying and violence.

We often assume that the people around us will instinctively learn how to become respectful and kind over time – but without appropriate guidance and intervention, it's all too easy for hateful and harmful ideas passed on from friends and social media to take root and change people's behaviour for the worse.

Undoing the damage caused by misleading information around sex and relationships presents a much bigger challenge than simply providing young people with timely, accurate and supportive sex education to start with – ideally accompanied by reliable resources, and the teaching of life skills that can help with identifying and critiquing misinformation.

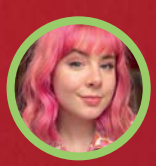
The takeaway

Young people now have more access to the adult world than ever before, so be aware that many conversations around sex and relationships will be starting earlier than you might expect.

I'd recommend doing some learning yourself – not just around sex ed practices, but the media young people are consuming, and the kind of areas sex educators like myself are being asked to cover on platforms like TikTok.

Above all, though, don't just dismiss the conversations young people are having around sex and relationships as 'gossip'. Instead, try to listen in and be responsive to what's happening in students' lives.

And where possible, let your students have a say in their sex education – because who knows better than a teenager what teenagers want to actually want to know?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Milly Evans is a sex educator, journalist and author; her non-fiction book for teens, *HONEST: Everything They Don't Tell You About Sex, Relationships and Bodies*, is available now (Hot Key Books, £7.99)

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Follow MY LEAD

Bob Pritchard explains how science teachers can use worked examples to more effectively manage pupils' cognitive load

It's a familiar scenario. Mr Davies is a biology teacher, but due to staffing issues he's having to teach GCSE physics.

The topic of the lesson is elastic potential energy. In order to teach this, Mr Davies will have to support pupils in tackling calculation problems that progressively ramp up in difficulty. He therefore shows them how to answer the first question, before the pupils get cracking on some calculation practice.

However, the pupils quickly get confused with what they're doing. In the end, the class only manages to complete around 20 minutes of practise before the bell goes.

Mr Davies would like to spend more time practising with these pupils – there is an assessment looming, after all – but they're already far behind where they should be, due to Mr Davies having had to self-isolate for 10 days back in October.

Two weeks later, the results of the calculation questions are made known, and they're a disaster.

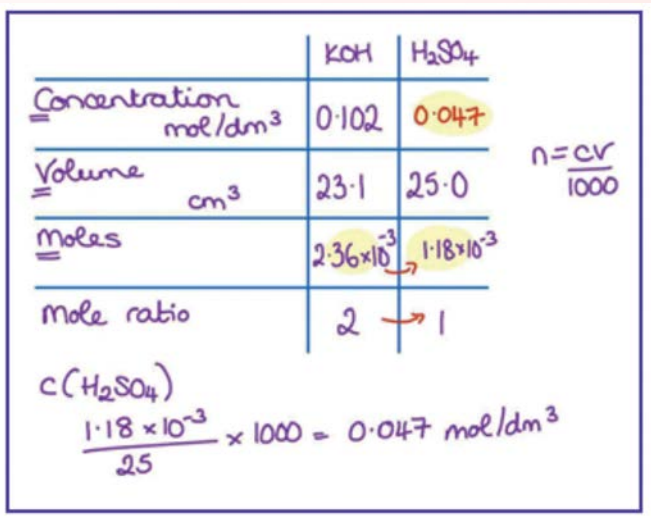


fig 1 – Worked example of a titration calculation

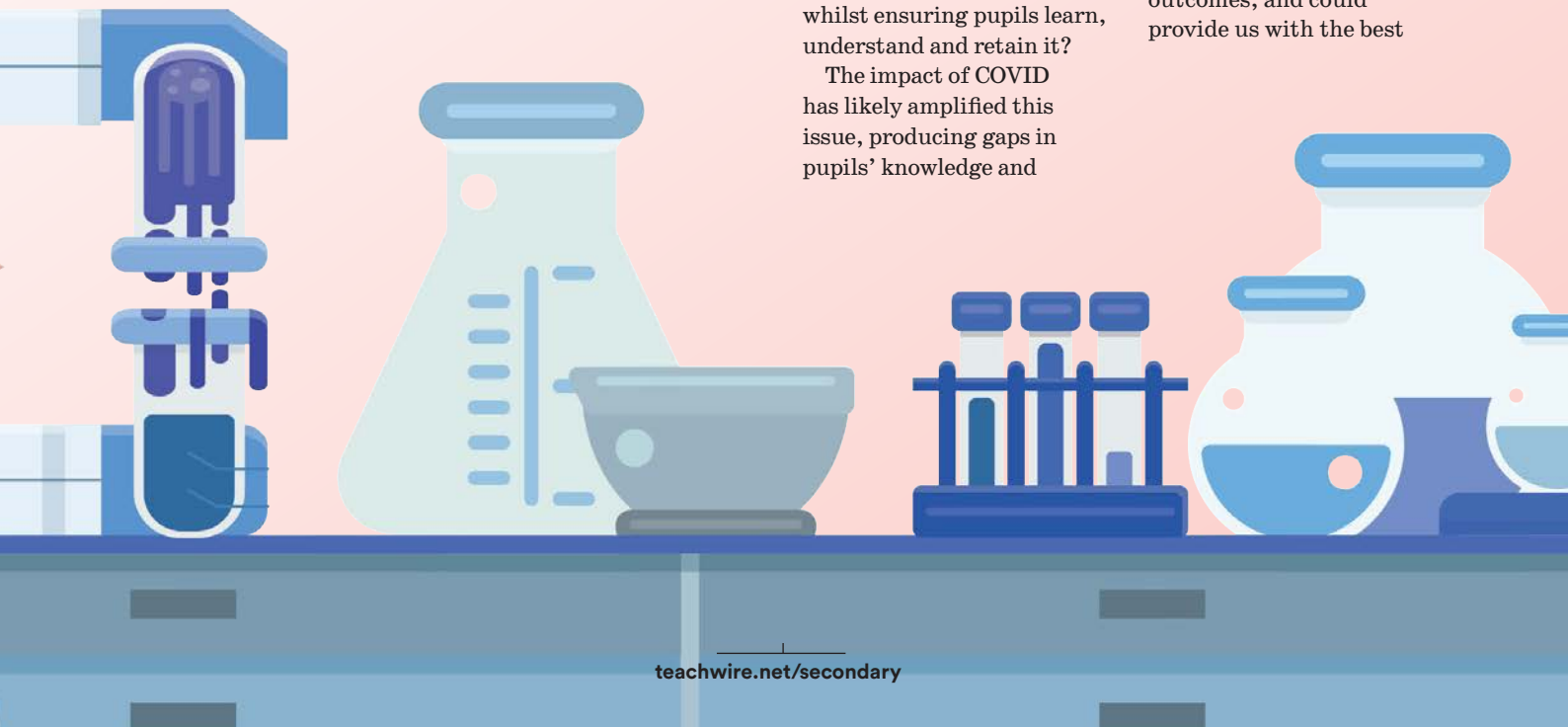
"How can we teach a densely packed, often very challenging curriculum whilst ensuring pupils learn, understand and retain it?"

Perennial challenge

The scenario faced by Mr Davies might be fictional, but it's one that will feel very familiar to many of us. It's that perennial challenge for teachers – how can we successfully teach a densely packed, often very challenging curriculum whilst ensuring pupils learn, understand and retain it?

The impact of COVID has likely amplified this issue, producing gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. From the evidence seen so far, it would appear that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are those that have been affected the most.

A focus on high-quality teaching can make a real difference to pupil outcomes, and could provide us with the best



	Worked example: What force is required to extend a spring with spring constant 5N/m by 0.1m?	**Partial example:** What force is required to extend a spring with spring constant 7N/m by 0.3m?
List values	F=? e=0·1m K=5N/m	F=? e=__ K=7N/m
Equation	F=Ke	
Enter values	F=5×0·1	F=7×__
Result	F=0·5	F=__
(Y)units	F=0·5N	F=__N

fig 2 – Worked and partial/faded example

chance we have of reducing those gaps and tackling wider educational inequalities.

Cognitive overload

Science is a complex domain that can be extremely challenging for novices to learn and remember. With its intricate concepts, tricky language and difficult problems, it routinely maxes out the limited working memory of our novice pupils. The result of this? 'Cognitive overload' ensues.

In science, problem-solving can be uniquely problematic. Pupils will often be presented with a wealth of information to process and a set procedure to follow. Novice pupils that manage to solve these problems tend to use a process known as 'means end analysis'*. That is to say, working backwards from the goal until they find something that links to the information given, before then working forwards again.

This strategy might get them to the final answer, but it imposes a significant cognitive load which makes them less likely to recall the correct method when faced with a similar problem later on. This lack of transfer from one problem to another is something most teachers will be very familiar with (and indeed, something Mr Davies grapples with daily...)

Worked examples

So, what can we do? This is where making use of worked examples can help.

First, let's define what we mean by 'worked examples'. As a teaching strategy, they provide students with a step-by-step demonstration of how to solve a problem. By making the problem-solving strategy explicit, pupils first learn the process.

This then frees up working memory that they can use when putting that process into action. As a result, pupils are more likely to be able to remember the strategy when faced with a similar problem in future. There are many studies which show that using worked examples can have a positive impact on learning outcomes.

Worked examples tend to be most obviously applicable to procedural tasks, such as solving calculations or completing diagrams. *Fig 1* opposite shows the kind of worked example that can support pupils with completing titration calculations in chemistry. The teacher in this case has completed the procedure (as shown in purple pen), which means the pupil can look at the process required and then use it themselves.

Partial/faded examples

Teachers can also model problem-solving processes by completing a worked example live. This can reduce the cognitive load demands made of pupils by breaking the problem down into smaller steps, and posing 'Think aloud' strategies.

Teachers can then further support pupils in moving to independent practice by providing partial or faded examples, alongside worked examples.

In *fig 2*, we can see that a teacher has modelled how to complete a worked example. Next to it is an almost identical partial example for pupils to complete. By partially completing the solution in this way, the teacher is providing an additional scaffold for the pupil on their journey towards independent practice.

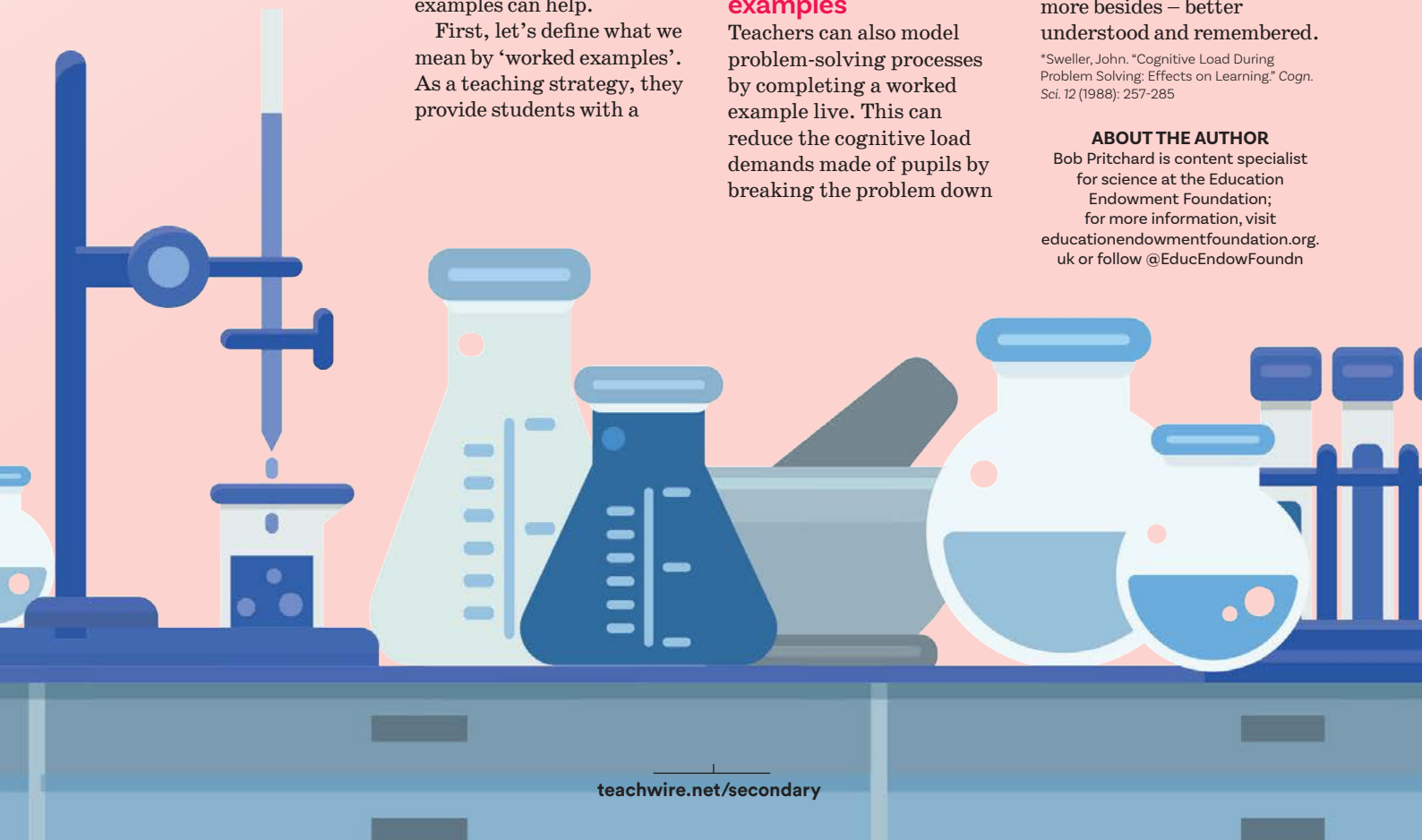
Increasing the frequency with which we use worked examples in science lessons, while also improving *how* we use them, could play a useful role in both combatting COVID-related 'lost learning' and improving learning outcomes for pupils.

For Mr Davies and his GCSE physics class, they may well prove to be essential for making physics – with all that elastic potential energy and much more besides – better understood and remembered.

*Sweller, John. "Cognitive Load During Problem Solving: Effects on Learning." *Cogn. Sci.* 12 (1988): 257-285

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bob Pritchard is content specialist for science at the Education Endowment Foundation; for more information, visit educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk or follow @EducEndowFoundn



What's New?

Our pick of the latest solutions and innovations for secondary education

1 STEM support

Have you started thinking about British Science Week 2023? It may not kick off until 10th-19th March next year, but it's time to get excited and start planning! The Week is a 10-day celebration of STEM run by the British Science Association (BSA) – a charity whose work includes encouraging and supporting STEM education.

It's never been more important to break down stereotypes about who can do science, and celebrating the Week is a great opportunity to reach students on this topic. The BSA provides Kick Start grants for schools in challenging circumstances to fund STEM activities during British Science Week, with eligible schools able to apply for grants ranging from £150 to £700! Find all the information you need at **bsa.sc/Kick-Start-Grant-BSW**

2 Breaking barriers

Unlock the potential of every learner held back by a language barrier. That's the mission of FlashAcademy – the UK's number one EAL platform for schools.

Used by over 900 schools and 50,000 pupils, FlashAcademy is an award-winning learning platform and digital assessment tool designed to support pupils in learning English from 48 languages, including Dari, Ukrainian, Arabic, Romanian and Cantonese.

Over 45% of pupils learning with FlashAcademy progress by one or more proficiency grades over a 12-month period, compared with the national average of 18%. To find out more, visit **flashacademy.com**

3 Spirit of adventure

At Kingswood, we're all about taking learning to the next level by enhancing classroom skills through adventure. Are you ready to take classroom learning to the next level?

A Kingswood residential is based on key curriculum outcomes and now comes with a bespoke Confidence Tracker, allowing you to monitor the impact of your residential. We're also excited to announce three new French locations, providing perfect immersive language adventures for all ages.

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For more information, visit **kingswood.co.uk**

4 Recycle in style

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Order online at **leafieldrecycle.com** or contact **01225 816 541**.

5 Striving for change

At NAHT, we exist to defend and promote the rights of all school leaders so that together, we can create a better education system. Our members include headteachers, deputy and assistant heads, school business leaders, SENCOs, phase and subject leaders across primary and secondary education.

As both a trade union and professional association, we work to support leaders so that they can deliver the high-quality education pupils deserve, ensure their voices are heard and provide them with a professional community to drive change. Join us, and together we can make a real difference. Visit **naht.org.uk/joinus** for more details.

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What's the buzz?

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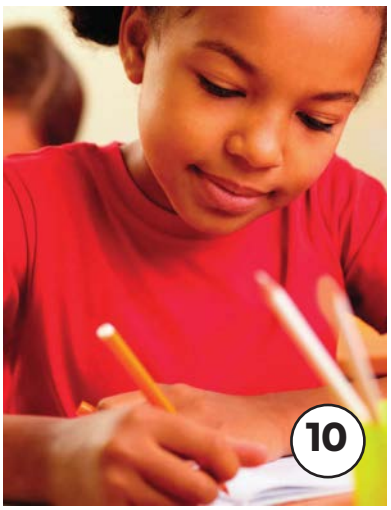

10

Help when it's needed

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 can provide a friendly and understanding ear when the going gets tough.

IDDT supplies Information Packs to parents and teachers, helping them 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, and with a cure still elusive, IDDT also funds essential research. As a registered charity IDDT relies entirely on voluntary donations.

For more information or to join IDDT, contact **martin@iddtinternational.org** or visit **iddtinternational.org**

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Computer science, flipped

Craig 'n' Dave is a comprehensive package of GCSE and A Level computer science resources designed to be delivered via a flipped-classroom learning model. The contents include schemes of learning, student workbooks, supporting videos, model answers, end-of-topic tests, programming activities and more besides, thus helping to reduce teachers' planning and preparation time.

The package's resources aim to facilitate self-starting lessons and get students engaging immediately. The included homework activities meanwhile encourage students to demonstrate independent learning, helping them to grow in confidence and take ownership of their unique learning journeys. To find out more, visit **craigndave.org** or contact **admin@craigndave.co.uk**

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2 TEACHER RESOURCES

The concert will be supported by a specially produced resource pack containing tips and suggested classroom activities. The pack will guide students through creating their own music and lyrics, in the hope that they may subsequently audition for the next generation of Future Makers.

3 ACCESS THE ARTS

Student tickets are priced at £5 each to help you bring pupils who haven't yet experienced the wonder of live music. Future Makers promises to be a memorable concert, also featuring a special performance by Jess Gillam and her ensemble, plus interactive moments for your students to join in with.

4 EXPERIENCE THE HALL

Future Makers takes place in the Royal Albert Hall's iconic auditorium, in which hundreds of world renowned musicians have previously performed. For an additional £3 per person, your group can undertake a pre-show tour of the Hall, helping your students learn more about the building and history of the venue.

Book tickets at royalalberthall.com or email engagement@royalalberthall.com for more details

At a glance

+ Future Makers is a new annual schools concert held at the Royal Albert Hall

+ A teacher resource pack is available to bring the joy of music making into classrooms

+ Tickets are priced at £5 per student, with an optional tour of the Hall priced at £3

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"The child going to university has the same equipment as one going for an apprenticeship, or a student with SEN.
They've got the same devices as each other, and therefore access to the same level of opportunity as each other. It's then up to them to see how high and how far they can reach."

"There are two sides to the educational battle – conformity versus creativity.
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Accessibility unboxed

The standard operating systems and apps used in schools often include a wealth of accessibility features that teachers and students are scarcely aware of, but could do with knowing about, observes **John Galloway...**

In recent years. the major technology companies have significantly upped their game when it comes to providing features and functions for individuals with additional needs, generally known as assistive technology (AT).

However, having spent millions developing them, they don't seem to have put much money aside to actually publicise what they've been up to. You can find out what Microsoft, Apple and Google now offer via extensive information areas at their respective websites, but you could be forgiven for having missed what they have to say.

Benefits to all

Working with technology offers benefits to all learners, but even more so to those with SEND. As well as offering the capacity for personalisation – by allowing the adjustment of, for example, fonts, point size, colour contrasts and cursor qualities – it can also facilitate independent working, provide support for text creation and correction and allow for provisionality. The latter refers to the capacity for change and revision, which in a learning context, will involve the creation and revising of works until a final version is reached that fully reflects what a learner can achieve.

This ability to develop a piece of work one step at at time enables a supportive, structured approach that would be nearly impossible without a machine. When writing an essay, for instance, a learner might begin with planning – perhaps using mind-mapping software such as Inspiration (inspiration-at.com), Mindview (matchware.com) or Claro Writing Helper (clarosoftware.com) to create a structure for the work.

The next step is transcription – namely the act of getting words down. At this point it may be worth actually turning off features such as 'as you type' spelling and grammar checks, so that students aren't distracted by the on-screen presence of various red and green wavy lines.

Once the words are on the page they can move onto editing, ensuring their work says what they mean it to say, and attending to the technical aspects of grammar and spelling. For many learners this will be best done on a printout, since errors are easier to overlook onscreen.

Finally, there's the publication stage where the output is made fit for presentation. This might entail focusing only on rudimentary aspects, such as line spacing and justification, or engaging in more elaborate design processes, like adding images and borders.

Step by step

In contrast, handwritten work requires students to remember what they want to say, how to spell it and where the punctuation goes, while simultaneously keeping everything neat, with well-formed letters and appropriate spacing. This will result in a document that's difficult to correct if you've missed out something important, short of rewriting it all (though this applies to everyone, not just those with SEND).

"These tools won't make much difference unless users know that they're there, and how to use them"

When using a computer, however, there are widely available tools to assist with every stage of this process, which are often already part of the operating system, browser or application being used.

When planning, we can provide a writing frame to help guide students in the form of a document template. For transcription, there are capable speech-to-text functions built into iPads, editions of Word and the Google Workspace for Education suite, plus predictive text input features in Windows 10 and other operating systems.

When editing, students will frequently refer to a built-in spelling and grammar checker, but could also benefit from using text-to-speech features to listen back to what they've written. This is especially useful for sense-checking and spotting any omissions, neatly circumventing the kind of error we've all made where we read text on a screen and mentally insert into it what we mean to say, regardless of whether it's there or not.

During our final publishing stage, we can look to particular fonts and colour schemes in order to make a document more readable, or add 'tool tip' descriptors to images so that visually impaired students can access them

It's not just in the creation of work that technology can provide a readily available helping hand – it can support students with their reading, too. Apple's macOS and iOS operating systems include a 'speak selection' option that appears whenever text is highlighted. Microsoft's Edge browser includes a 'read aloud' feature that works in a similar way. There's also an option in PowerPoint to add

automatic subtitling to presentations, and an 'immersive reader' viewing mode in Word that strips out all on-screen distractions (toolbars, menus, buttons, etc.) and presents on-screen documents in a plain and simple manner.

Users of Microsoft 365 Education for Schools can additionally access features that include highlighting portions of speech, breaking words down into homophones and displaying a letterbox reading guide. As well as being helpful for learners with literacy challenges, they can also be put to use as teaching tools, enabling teachers to analyse texts and focus on key elements while delivering to the whole class.

Taking a shortcut

And yet, useful though these tools are, they won't make much difference unless users actually know that they're there and crucially, know how to use them.

The first issue can be addressed with a little self-reflection. How do we, as adults, use technology? Which features and functions make our own lives easier? Perhaps it's the ability to have text messages spoken out loud to us as we drive, dictate chat replies as we walk, or use our voices to conduct searches. Some of us will change the colour temperature of our phone screens when using them at night, or have previously used a phone to translate the menu in a foreign restaurant.

By being conscious of how technology has previously helped us, we can become more attuned to the ways in which hardware and software can improve the learning experience for our students.

The next challenge is to help those learners use said tools effectively by showing and teaching them how. This needn't be too fiddly to do, since many accessibility functions can be activated via keyboard shortcuts rather than having to go through a device's settings.

For example, the 'high contrast' display in Windows can be switched on at any time via the key combination Alt+Left Shift+PrtScr. Dictations can be started with 'Windows Key'+H. Teaching students how to use these shortcuts provides autonomy, and equates to one less task for the adults in the room.

Embrace the possibilities

Knowing how to use technology effectively both increases independence and aids productivity. We know full well how electronic devices allow for limitless editing and refinement of what we want to express, and so do our students.

Since 2015, the JCQ exam regulations have allowed laptops to be used in exams by students for whom laptops are integral to their usual way of working (albeit with some caveats around internet connections and writing aids). This may have previously only been the case for some students with SEND, but since the pandemic it's become much more common.

If learners more broadly can be taught how to use devices effectively in ways that ultimately improve their productivity, then there may be a strong case to be made for seeing more of them in exam rooms. That aside, just having the opportunity to edit and revise their responses to exam questions will only deliver better results and exam outcomes.

From voice recording to image and video capture, not to mention instant access to online blogging and broadcast platforms, modern devices afford students ample ways of getting creative and showing what they know.

All we need is an increased awareness of the possibilities, and the willingness to give our learners the skills and opportunities to act on them.

MASTERS OF ONE

The accessibility functions already included in operating systems are certainly handy, but it remains the case that students with SEND can sometimes be better served by dedicated software, where applicable.

Helperbird
helperbird.com
A browser extension that includes a screen reader and predictive text, and will open Microsoft's Immersive Reader when prompted. A paid-for 'pro' version adds even more features.

Read&Write by Texthelp
texthelp.com
Available as a browser extension or dedicated application, this literacy support tool can read text out loud, define unfamiliar words and even proof written work, making it useful for all learners.

Dragon by Nuance Communications
nuance.com/dragon
For all the improvements made to built-in dictation systems, this long-established speech software still offers a wealth of additional functionality, such as the ability to listen to your own dictation and automatically generate written transcriptions from recordings.

DocsPlus by Crick Software
cricksoft.com
Provides a range of literacy tools, including text to speech, predictive text and word banks, making it a useful application for opening up access to exams taken in formal settings.

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

Qualifications are the CURRENCY

In the face of celebrity tweets and parental reassurances saying that 'Exams don't' matter,' it's a teacher's responsibility to explain that actually, *they really do*...

When our students come to the end of their formal education, we make a value judgement about their ability and achievement. In each subject, students are awarded a grade – usually via external examination, but sometimes via internal assessment.

These grades are the currency that students need to buy their way into the next level of their education. Stronger GCSE grades put students in a position of power, enabling them to choose from a wider range of courses and have more control over the courses they decide to take.

In contrast, students achieving lower grades at GCSE level will find that their options have become restricted. They don't have the entry fee needed to get into the top A Level qualifications. Perhaps they're unable to meet the entry requirements for Level 3 qualifications, and must attend college to strengthen their Level 2 qualifications.

Seen from this angle, a Y7 student theoretically has a massive range of academic opportunities available them. Conversely, a Y11 student in receipt of a sub-optimal set of GCSE results has had several potential pathways closed off to them, possibly forever.

This can sometimes come as a dreadful shock. The student who built their hopes for the future around qualifying as a doctor, for example, now finds they're unable to gain entry to the necessary A Level science courses via a sudden and brutal realisation.

> **"Any short-term happiness bought by trivialising the importance of one's schooling is, to put it bluntly, a demonstration of wilful ignorance"**

An uncomfortable truth

Our students shouldn't reach this point in their education before becoming aware of just how much is riding on their success in the exam hall. It's an uncomfortable truth, because no one wants to heap considerable pressure onto young minds. Were we to do so, we would essentially be saying, *"You must do well in your exams, because if you don't, your chances of experiencing a difficult and miserable life will increase exponentially."*

However well-intentioned parents may be in telling their children that *'Exam results don't matter'* or that '*the most important thing is to be happy,*' it speaks, I'm sorry to say, to a naive view of the world.

Of course, the formative years of childhood should ideally be happy ones. But any short-term happiness that's bought by trivialising the importance of one's schooling is, to put it bluntly, a demonstration of wilful ignorance.

For better or worse, our society has, over time, created a system that labels each person's intellectual worth via the awarding of exam grades. To come out on top requires discipline, motivation and rigour. They need to work hard, and they need the adults in their lives to motivate them to do so.

Our current examinations system amounts to a Darwinian struggle for survival that rewards the cleverest and most conscientious. Looked at from this perspective, students have to engage with your subject whether they like it or not, since their future success and happiness may well depend on it.

Roads not taken

One A Level student recently commented to me, "It's brutal. Three letters – my grades – will basically decide my future path." She was right. The three A Levels she will have hopefully gone on to achieve will ultimately decide which university she can attend, which will in turn influence the career opportunities she has access to. She must give everything she has to prove her academic ability now, so that she can continue to enjoy wider access to opportunities and more choices in future.

Once past their A Levels, most students will be well on the road to specialisation, having traded in the wide open vistas of multiple pathways that lay before them as children for actualising their potential within a far smaller selection of subjects.

Next, they will further specialise in a single discipline at university or via an apprenticeship. Expertise in one area inevitably comes at the cost of hypothetical expertise in all those other areas that *could* have been studied, the many roads not taken. This is the brave and difficult decision that all students must make. Every time they're faced with a choice concerning the next set of increasingly specialised qualifications equates to a frightening fork in the road.

Climbing the pyramid

I like to sometimes visualise each student's academic career as a pyramid. At the bottom is the solid and broad foundation of KS3 subjects, whereby all students consume a curated diet of knowledge and skills across a range of different disciplines.

The next level up the pyramid is a little narrower, focused as it is on typically nine or ten GCSE subjects. Some will be compulsory, others the result of choices the students have made.

Sometimes, however, the subjects at this level will have been determined by the student's prior achievements at the level below, thus restricting their choices even at this early stage. Only the most able aspiring scientists will get to take triple science at GCSE, for instance, with most students more likely to take double science.

The next level of the pyramid is KS5 – the point at which students will usually narrow their subject choices down to just three Level 3 qualifications, be they A Levels or vocational equivalents. There will almost certainly be a distinct set of course entry requirements to meet at this stage, and therefore a toll to pay upon advancing to this level of education. Again, some doors may be closed off to certain students, depending on their performance at KS4.

Communicating value

With all that in mind, we need our young people to understand that they can't afford to mentally 'opt out' of any of the subjects they study at KS3 and KS4. By doing so, they won't just be wasting the opportunity to learn something useful in the present, but actively harming the prospects of their future selves.

It's up to us to help our students guard against such self-destructive choices, since they don't yet have the maturity or foresight to do this for themselves. Above all, we mustn't give up on our students, ever – even when it seems they've given up on our subjects.

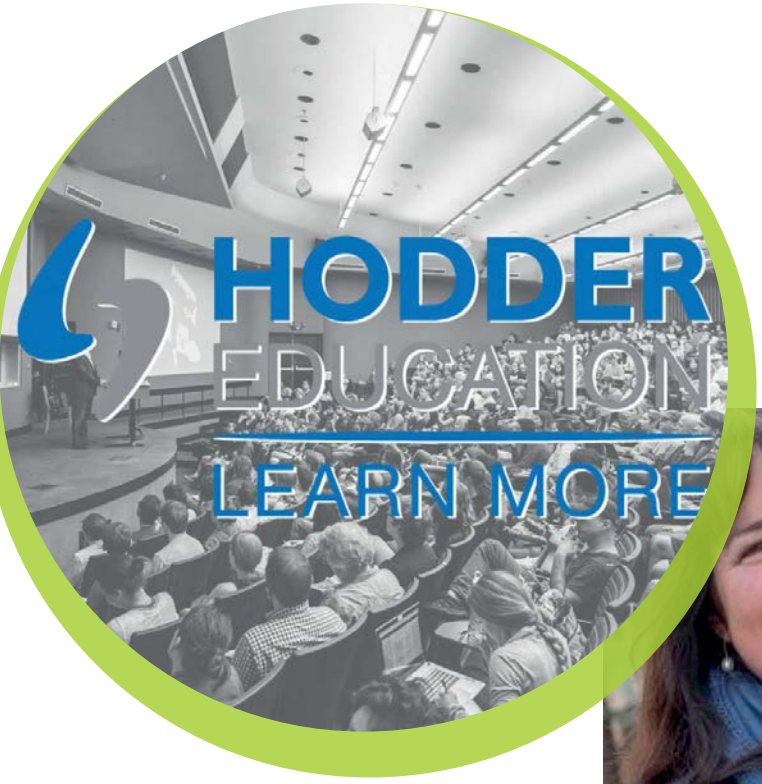
Your subject is valuable and you know it. It's therefore incumbent upon you to always communicate that value to your students. When they see the value of your subject, they will understand why they must commit to their studies. They will want to be successful, even if they don't necessarily enjoy the content.

Thereafter, you won't need to rely on gimmicks or attention-grabbing teaching methods to engage your students' attention. Instead, you – along with your colleagues in other disciplines – will have built a broad base of knowledge and experience that your students can build upon as they start to specialise. You will have given them the currency they need to progress successfully on to the next stage in their education.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Matt MacGuire (@MacGrammar) is an assistant headteacher; this article is based on a post originally published at his blog, Ten Rules for Teaching (tenrulesforteaching.com)

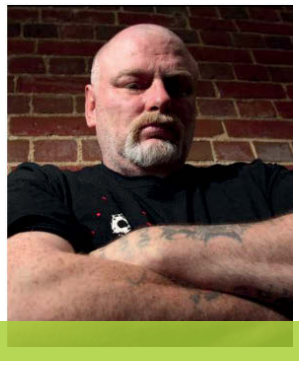
THE WOW FACTOR

This year sees Hodder Education once again hosting a conference that no aspiring criminology student will want to miss...



The No. 1 criminology conference for A-level students is back. At The 2022 Criminology Student Conference, we'll be bringing together experienced criminologists to delve into ethnographic research, the criminal justice process and infamous murder cases, alongside detailed examinations of the life and crimes of Noel 'Razor' Smith and the Mafia Princess.

With its interactive activities and cutting-edge lectures, this unmissable conference will provide your students with the opportunity to get under the skin of one of the most popular undergraduate courses in the country.



Contact:
hoddereducation.co.uk/CrimConf
01295 222 777
events@hoddereducation.co.uk

MEET THE LINEUP

It's a different world since we last held this conference in 2019, but we are extremely excited to welcome you and your students back to hear from our panel of leading criminologists exploring contemporary themes, as well as spotlight interviews with Noel 'Razor' Smith and Marisa 'The Mafia Princess' Merico.

ONCE UPON A CRIME...

Taking place at the end of November 2022 in London, Nottingham and Manchester, the conference is perfect for all students interested in studying criminology at undergraduate level, as well as all current Level 3 criminology and A-level law, sociology and psychology students.

A CRIME TO MISS

We're offering one FREE teacher place for every 10 students booked on, though students can attend on their own if permitted by their centre. Student and teacher places are priced at £24 (incl. VAT) – we can put you in touch with nearby schools that are also attending to share transport and help reduce your carbon footprint.

BOOK NOW, CONFIRM LATER

We recommend provisionally booking the maximum number of places you may require, giving you the time to gauge interest, complete paperwork and organise transport. To secure your seats, simply contact us four weeks before the event to confirm the exact number attending.

How reliable are your SAFEGUARDING RECORDS?

When Ofsted judges schools to be 'not effective', it's often down to a lack of detail in their safeguarding records, says **James Simoniti**...

As a former police officer, I've seen first-hand the importance of good record-keeping.

I've attended strategy meetings where a school's detailed recording of a child's initial disclosure was vital in a subsequent police investigation – with a clear recording of the child ensuring they weren't' repeatedly asked the same questions during an investigation, needlessly re-traumatising them.

Yet record-keeping is something that's not spoken about enough. After combing through Ofsted inspections reports between 2019 and 2022, where safeguarding was judged as 'not effective,' I found that inadequate record-keeping was the most common reason given for those failures. So why are schools finding it such a problem?

Causes of confusion

Simply put, poor record keeping can be a barrier to effective safeguarding. Unclear records may leave colleagues confused when trying to understand what has happened with a child. *You* might know a case inside out, but may not always be there to explain it to others. Similarly, sharing information with partner agencies is difficult if records aren't clear. Countless child safeguarding practice reviews highlight the importance of information sharing – can you even share that information well, if it's poorly recorded to start with?

Inconsistently kept records may cause you to miss the build-up of minor concerns. Failing to rigorously record 'nagging doubts' can sometimes cause schools to miss more significant issues lurking below the surface. All staff must be aware of this need to record accurately and consistently.

Poor record-keeping makes it more difficult for schools to track trends in concerns, leaving them in the dark about current threats to their pupils. Categorising concerns effectively will allow your school to better track patterns among your pupils and address them in a robust fashion. Poor record-keeping can put children at risk.

What goes wrong

Here are some quotes taken from those aforementioned Ofsted reports that criticised schools' record-keeping:

- "Pupils' safeguarding records lack detail and some leaders' actions are not recorded."
- "Records lack sufficient detail. They do not include the dates on which things take place."
- "Leaders have not kept accurate records of the concerns raised about pupils' welfare ... Leaders have not analysed records carefully to spot signs of abuse."
- "First-hand accounts are not recorded. Although concerns are dealt with satisfactorily, there is a lack of emphasis on the importance of first-hand reporting."

Common themes include lack of detail and placing emphasis on the responsibility of leaders to analyse and address concerns, while recording the actions that they take.

There's also a reminder to record concerns first-hand, since it's sometimes the case that a staff member raises a concern that's then recorded by the Designated Safeguarding Lead. This risks vital information being missed in the record, and would likely be scrutinised in any criminal investigation.

Helpfully, the Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance (tinyurl.com/keepingsafeed) addresses record keeping, notably within part 1, meaning all staff should be aware of its importance. Any concerns, discussions, decisions made and reasons why should be recorded in writing. This information should then be kept confidential and stored securely. It's typically good practice to keep concerns and referrals in separate child protection files for each child.

Your records should include:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved
- A note of any actions taken, decisions reached and outcomes

Rule of three

Above all, remember the rule of three – summary/action/outcome. In practice, it might look something like this:

Summary

Class teacher: Joe has come into form time this morning, crying. I took him outside and asked him if he was okay. He told me, 'Last night my grandad hit me and it really hurt.' I asked him where he was hit, and he showed me a large bruise on his upper left arm. I asked him if he was okay, and he said 'Yes, but please don't tell anyone about this because I'm scared.' I reassured him, but explained I would need to tell the DSL to ensure he was safe. I immediately visited the DSL to explain my concern.

Action

DSL: I am concerned that Joe is suffering significant harm due to the disclosure and injury seen. Referral made to Children's Social Care. Referral attached. Strategy meeting held. Minutes/notes attached containing information discussed and shared.

Outcome

DSL: S47 threshold met. Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) to be held on 16/04/2022. Safety Plan attached and to be reviewed at ICPC.

"Poor record-keeping makes it difficult for schools to track trends in concerns, leaving them in the dark"

STRENGTHEN YOUR RECORD KEEPING

Consider these five ideas for ensuring your record keeping is as strong and effective as it can be:

1 KEEP IT DETAILED
Minor details may become vital later when you look back. Record in detail to avoid any ambiguity or missed information. Remember that these records may be looked at by others who will need to know exactly what was going on, simply by looking at the record.

2 REMEMBER THE RULE OF THREE
Summary/action/outcome – stick to this formula when recording concerns. This will ensure you always know what's happening with each concern.

3 RECORD CONCERNS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
It can be easy to forget to record concerns or important minutes when you're rushing around making referrals. Make sure you record them as soon as you get the chance. Time and date the entry if you're not using a digital system.

4 USE THEIR WORDS
Record exactly what the child said, even if the words they use may mean something very different to what you understand. Also, record what questions you asked them. Recording these will assist any future investigation.

5 SPOT CHECK REGULARLY
Spot checking previous safeguarding records is important, especially when you have a range of staff updating records. Organise termly spot checks, where records can be reviewed to confirm that all the above is happening. Pick a certain student and try to read their record through a different lens. If a new DSL or another school were to read this record, would the chronology be sufficiently clear?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
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LEARNING LAB

IN THIS ISSUE

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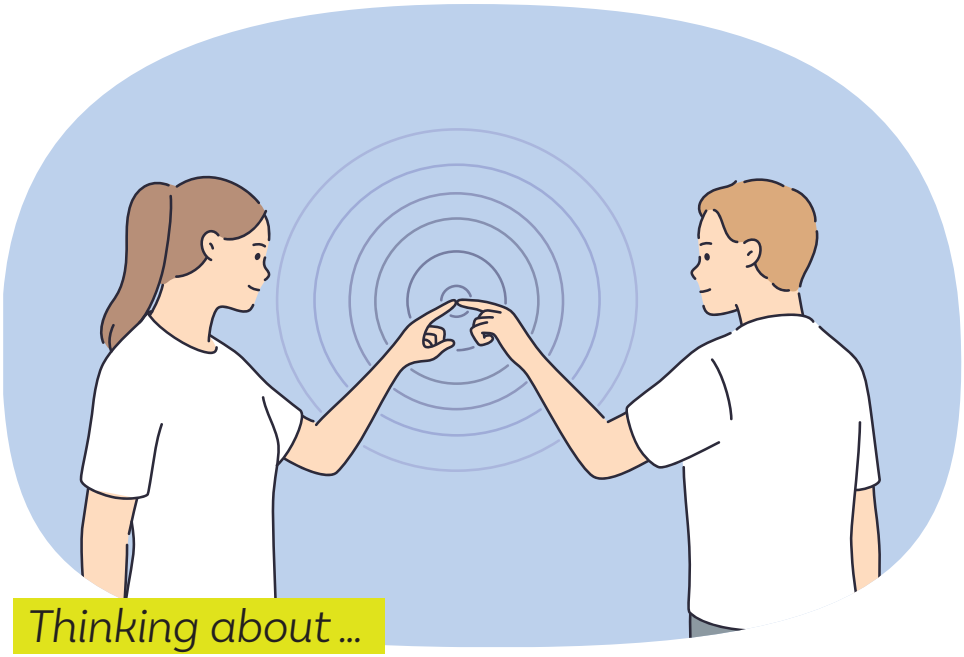


Thinking about ...

THE SEVEN SILENT STUDENTS

Have you ever been to a wedding and been placed on a table with strangers? If, like me, you're a people watcher, this is a dream scenario. There's the confident one who leads the table with tall tales and humour. The monotonous one, who thinks nothing of boring the entire table with stories of their nephew's plans for his gap year. And let's not forget the softly spoken great aunt to your left, who once travelled the world saving lives, but has no intention of sharing this as nobody's asked her about it.

Some people love to volunteer their wisdom, while others are happy to simply observe the world around them and wait until they're spoken to. Teenagers are no different.

A fantastic deputy headteacher who once mentored me used to talk about 'the seven silent students'. Her theory was that in any average class, there will be seven students who, unless directly spoken to, will choose to not speak. There's nothing wrong with them – they may well enjoy your lessons, and will probably express themselves freely when amongst family and friends,. They just don't see the need to do so in class.

15 years later, I think my friendly mentor was probably on to something, and that effective teachers know it too. Indeed, they expect to encounter the seven silent students, and will be actively finding ways of engaging them and making sure they're both challenged and catered to.

These teachers will cold call those reticent students, and create a safe enough space for them to answer. They'll receive them at the door with a smile and warm greeting. Most importantly, during independent work – which students should do frequently – the teacher will circulate the room, giving the seven silent students the same amount of attention as those who, if allowed to, would dominate everything. Why does the teacher do that? Because these students deserve it.

What the best educators *don't* do, however, is sit down at parents' evening and concede that the child should become something they're not. If we want to hear from all pupils in our classroom, then it's up to us to create the right conditions needed for that to happen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Femi Adeniran is currently head of mathematics at a large independent school in Sussex, after many years of working in the state sector. He is also one half of 'Beyond Good' – a podcast about teaching he hosts with one of his oldest friends and fellow HoD/SLT member Matt Findlay; for more details, follow @BeyondGoodPod

HOW TO TACKLE CLIMATE ANXIETY

The concept of 'environmentally aware' young people has changed considerably in the last few decades. Last year's COP26 summit in Glasgow, recent studies on youth climate anxiety and the publication of the Children Commissioner's Big Ask report have all highlighted how being an 'environmentally aware' young person today means facing many more climate worries compared to previous generations.

This is taking a toll on their wellbeing. Findings from The Big Ask show that 39% of children aged 9 to 17 cite the environment as one of their main worries about the future. A recent report by Avaaz has meanwhile uncovered the sense of abandonment many young people are feeling at the hands of adults over the climate crisis.

As educators, we must recognise the impact climate anxiety is having on our children and young people, and do all we can to support them. So how can we help?

1. Do the research
Seek out trusted information sources and good resources concerning climate change – not just around concerns, statistics and impacts, but also any positive projects already taking place around the world to combat the climate crisis.

2. Assess levels of awareness
Introduce the topic gradually, asking simple questions about the climate crisis to assess levels of interest and anxiety – e.g. '*Do you think it's important for us to look after the planet? Why?*' Try not to overwhelm students with information, or heighten the concerns of those already anxious regarding the future.

3. Provide a safe space
Consider holding regular sessions to discuss news and developments in the climate crisis conversation, and ask children to present their views on environmental topics. Listen to children and young people when they express their concerns, so that they feel validated and understood.

4. Transform concern into action
Remind children and young people of the power they themselves have to help tackle the crisis. Even the smallest action can make a positive difference, so empower them to make changes at home or in school to help the environment. Promote life skills that they can use to develop resilience, talk about youth environmental action and, if there's interest, research 'green' careers together. Make it clear that they are not alone in their interest in protecting the planet, and that taking action to tackle the climate crisis is important to your school.

CARLEY SEFTON IS CEO OF THE OUTDOOR LEARNING AND PLAY CHARITY, LEARNING THROUGH LANDSCAPES; THIS ITEM IS BASED ON ARTICLE ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN ISSUE 4 OF THE OUTDOOR PRACTITIONER MAGAZINE BY THE OUTDOOR RESOURCE PROVIDER, MUDDY FACES

DO THIS

ALWAYS RESPOND

EXERCISE BETTER CLASS CONTROL WITH THESE TIPS FROM ROBIN LAUNDER...

Always respond to misbehaviour. Always. Don't turn a blind eye, look the other way or pretend you didn't see something when you did. Misbehaviour has to be addressed and challenged.

A key reason for teachers failing to address misbehaviour is that they doubt their ability to effectively deal with it. There's the niggling doubt that doing so will somehow backfire on them, so that what stops them is ultimately fear.

Trust me, you have the capacity to be excellent at behaviour management. You genuinely do. Even if you think you don't, when faced with student misbehaviour, your only option is to address it. Sorry, but it's true.

But here's the good news – so long as you don't shout, or say anything unkind, then whatever you do will be better than doing nothing. If an intervention doesn't go as well as it could, you can still learn from that for next time. If you felt a degree of fear (or even a lot) while responding, know that next time that fear will be lessened. Bravery begets bravery.

Similarly, fear begets fear. So, deep breath – find your voice and say something.

Robin Launder is a behaviour management consultant and speaker; find more tips in his weekly Better Behaviour online course – see behaviourbuddy.co.uk for details

66%

of teachers would like to see core life skills (such as communication and financial management) incorporated into the National Curriculum

Source: Pearson School Report 2022

Researchers at the University of Birmingham and Tel Aviv University have unveiled a forthcoming attention training programme aimed at helping young people with autism. The Computerised Progressive Attentional Training (CPAT) programme is intended for use by teachers and other education professionals to develop basic attention skills among school-aged children.

The programme is designed so that CPAT training sessions can scheduled as part of a school's daily routine, which will involve training games targeting different types of attention at progressively more difficult levels.

CPAT researcher Dr Lila Kossyvaki commments, "Technology works really well for many autistic children, because it offers an organised and structured environment which is conducive to learning. Tasks can also be broken down into smaller steps, and there is no expectation to communicate or interact socially."

In studies, use of CPAT by children with autism were followed by a 40% increase in the number of words they could identify and copy, and an improvement in maths scores of over 50%.

Launching alongside CPAT will be a similarly free, 12-hour 'Massive Open Online Course' aimed at training education professionals in the impact of autism upon attention, the links between attention and learning, and how CPAT can help improve the latter.

YOUR GUIDE TO ...

CHALLENGE

Pitching your lesson at the right level is one of the key classroom skills it's necessary to master. Too easy, and you'll lose the top end; too hard and you'll lose the bottom.

As we all know, even in set ability classes there can still be a huge variance in what students are able to do and what they're capable of, why is why it's so important for us to possess the tools we need to challenge appropriately.

Professor Robert Bjork's conceptualisation of 'desirable difficulty' continues to be a reliable backbone when it comes to pitching challenge. Under this model, each individual will need to be sufficiently challenged in order for them to remain engaged and progressing positively in their learning. Bjork himself uses 80% as a measure for success in classroom tasks, but really that's an arbitrary number. What's important is that we're aware of how to appropriately motivate students through challenge.

The first, and easiest thing to do is to ensure that tasks are appropriate during the planning phase. It's important to reflect on how your various classes are doing with respect to learning different skills, so that you can adapt your delivery to meet their needs. For them to be appropriately challenged, they need to be catered for effectively – which may mean making small tweaks to centralised lesson plans, or recovering material that they might have struggled with first time round.

One challenge-related 'quick win' is to prepare some back pocket tasks you can call upon as learners are completing standard set tasks. Having a selection of simple tasks to hand that will add complexity to the standard task is a great way to stretch learning. These extra tasks needn't be complicated in format, and could potentially be used to model adding sophistication to responses – for example, using alternative evidence or sources to support additional points.

Socratic questioning can be a great way of examining ideas logically, and determining the validity of those ideas. The style of discussion this encourages will add an extra level of challenge to class talk, getting learners to think metacognitively in ways that more traditional classroom questioning styles might miss.

ADAM RICHES IS A SENIOR LEADER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING; FOLLOW HIM AT @TEACHMRRICHES

89%

The proportion of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsmen investigations concerning councils' failures to arrange alternative education for school-age children that have been upheld

Source: 'Out of school out of sight?' report – see lgo.org.uk

Need to know

A new report from the Institute for Fiscal studies concludes that the past two decades have seen barely any change in the 'disadvantage gap' when it comes to GCSE attainment.

According to the report's authors, despite the period in question seeing a range of far-reaching government reforms and interventions ostensibly aimed at improving outcomes across all social groups, 16-year-olds eligible for free school meals remain around 27 percentage points less likely to earn good GCSEs than less disadvantaged peers.

The report cites the 2019 GCSE cohort as illustrative of how this gap appears early on, with only 40% of disadvantaged 11-year-olds working at the expected level going on to attain to good GCSE results in English and maths, compared with 60% of their less disadvantaged peers.

Moreover, pupils not eligible for free school meals were found to be around three times more likely to achieve above the expected level at age 11 and at GCSE, compared to those who were. The report also highlights 71% of private school students had earned a degree by the age 26, while just 17% of those from the poorest fifth of families could claim the same.

Download the full report via bit.ly/TS116-LL-IFS

WHAT WE DO
TRANSITION WEEK

Each year for the past decade, we at Bedminster Down School, South Bristol, have run week-long programmes of transition activities.

We serve 22 primary schools and have a pupil admission number (PAN) of 216 students in each year group. The student and parent feedback we've received strongly supports our choice to opt for a week of such activities, rather than the single day organised by most other secondary schools in the area, and I'd argue the benefits definitely outweigh the costs.

The transition team comprises three members of staff, including the school's assistant principal, SENCo and a pastoral worker, who will commence planning together in term 3. The work completed prior to transition week includes information gathering and school visits during term 5, where larger numbers of students join us.

My colleagues will speak with the SENCo and Y6 teachers, while I meet the students and answer any questions they may have. We then plan out transition week itself, which this year commenced on Monday 4th July. We always aim to hold it towards the end of term 6, to coincide with Y10 being on work experience and our Y11s having left.

Throughout the week, the Y6s will follow a timetable that closely resembles the one they'll have when they start with us in September – the main exceptions being problem solving and team building events that all students take part in on the Thursday morning. There's also a welcome assembly they'll attend upon arrival at the start of the week, plus a rewards assembly at the end of the week on Friday afternoon.

The week is staffed by our own teachers – typically those that have surplus year Y10/Y 11 teaching time. What we've learned over the course of holding our transition weeks is that a growing number of Y6 students are demonstrating heightened anxiety and nervousness at the prospect of joining secondary school.

An overwhelming majority of these students say afterwards that temporarily joining the school for a whole uninterrupted week helped remove their anxieties around starting and gave them a surge of confidence, having prepared them for what things are really going to be like in September.

Needless to say, planning in a whole week of transition activities rather than setting aside a dedicated day entails considerably more work – but we've found it's definitely worth it.

Daniel Goater is assistant headteacher and safeguarding lead at Bedminster Down School; for more details, visit bedminsterdown.org.uk

On the radar

Time out of mind?

New psychiatric research has found that school-based mindfulness training may be of limited effectiveness. The My Resilience in Adolescence (MYRIAD) trial examined a model of mindfulness training that sees teachers trained in the techniques of attentional control and emotional and social regulation, who then deliver the training to students.

The MYRIAD researchers compared this approach to standard educational provision of psychological wellbeing over a series of five studies involving 85 secondary schools and approximately 700 and 8,500 11- to 16-year-olds, all of whom were already receiving social–emotional learning (SEL). One study randomly assigned schools to either an 'SEL' or 'mindfulness' group and found that the latter initially enhanced teachers' mental health, reduced burnout and improving some aspects of the school climate, but that those effects all but disappeared within a year.

The trial further found that mindfulness may be useful for older children and those who are well, but less suitable for younger children and those with existing or emerging mental health symptoms.

According to Dr Elaine Lockhart, Chair of the Child and Adolescent Faculty of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, "Mindfulness can be helpful in managing emotions, but it won't be enough for those children and young people who need support with their mental wellbeing, especially in the aftermath of the pandemic."

The full MYRIAD findings can be seen in the journal Evidence-Based Mental Health via **bit.ly/ts116-sbmt**

TRENDING

Our pick of the recent resources and launches teachers might find useful...

PEACE OF MIND

Pantene has partnered with the Ideas Foundation to launch a new schools programme dubbed 'Power of Hair', aimed at boosting the positive representation and understanding of Afro hair in schools. A series of free lesson plans have been produced to accompany the initiative, and there is the option for schools to apply for facilitated learning workshops and teacher training sessions. bit.ly/ts116-LLT1

BARDIC KNOWLEDGE

English teachers might want to look out for *Teaching Shakespeare* – a free, annual publication from the British Shakespeare Association that explores the teaching The Bard from a range of perspectives. Topics covered in the latest issue include decolonising the teaching of Shakespeare and the transformative power of live performance. bit.ly/ts116-LLT2

TEACHER WALKTHROUGH

REFRAMING BEHAVIOUR IN THE CLASSROOM PART 1

BASED ON A TWITTER THREAD FROM @IANWHITE21, ON HOW WE CAN APPROACH PERENNIAL BEHAVIOUR ISSUES USING A MORE MEASURED RESPONSE

1

SCHOOL POLICY

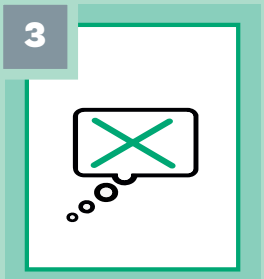
The most common mistake is inconsistent use of behaviour policies. If students pick up on unique rules in one classroom, they'll exploit this. By sticking to the agreed language and systems, you won't be alone.

2

POOR POSITIONING

Having set students a task, don't wander off to the side for a one-to-one. Instead, stand still, stay central and be seen looking. Scan the room. Narrate positive behaviours and sanction off-task behaviours.

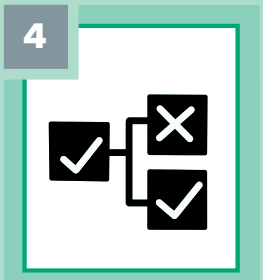
3



NEGATIVE FRAMING

It's tempting to describe what you don't want to see, e.g. '*Don't turn around, Jodie.*' It's better to say, '*Face the front please, Jodie.*' This tells Jodie what to do and builds a positive culture.

4



LOW EXPECTATIONS

Many schools use a 'Warning, move, out' in-class system. Don't allow multiple indiscretions before advancing to 'warning' – be strict. Students will respond if they know expectations are followed through.

5

UNLOADING

Declaring before the class '*This behaviour is outrageous. I'm trying to teach, and all you can do is...*' will only make you seem out of control. Just follow the system, and practice turning back to the learning with positivity.

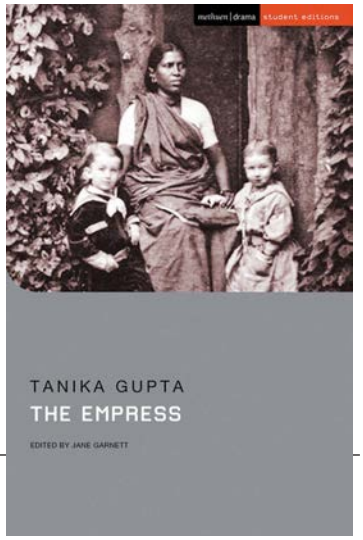
ZEPH BENNETT IS A PE TEACHER AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT LEADER WITH 25 YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE; YOU CAN FIND MORE OF HIS EDUCATIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY FOLLOWING @PEGEEKSCORNER

Got a great learning idea? Email editor@teachsecondary.com or tweet us at @teachsecondary

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND DRAMA

The Empress Methuen Drama Student Edition

A thought-provoking, yet accessible play that helps broaden the range of authorial voices studied at GCSE English and Drama



AT A GLANCE

- **Written by the award-winning playwright, Tanika Gupta**
- **Adopted as set text on Pearson's GCSE English Literature Lit in Colour Pioneers Programme**
- **Includes contextual notes, dramatic insights and an author biography**
- **Views British colonialism through the eyes of fictional and historical characters**
- **A compelling story with a rich cast of characters**

REVIEW BY MIKE DAVIES

There's been an increasing appreciation of the need for school students to study works by writers from a broader range of backgrounds, and not before time. Young people's literary diet ought to reflect the diversity within our society, broaden perspectives and resonate with personal experiences – and that's where the admirable Lit in Colour initiative comes in.

Launched by Penguin Random House, in conjunction with the race equality think tank The Runnymede Trust, Lit in Colour aims to help schools increase students' access to writers from minority ethnic backgrounds. Bloomsbury is among a number of publishers that have pledged support for the initiative, and is doing its bit by expanding the portfolio of plays from diverse voices as part of its Methuen Drama Student Editions series.

The Empress by Tanika Gupta is a fine example of what the series offers. It's an engaging and accessible play that explores aspects of Victorian British colonialism through the lives of multiple fictional and historical characters. As you might expect, it touches on themes of racism, exploitation and betrayal, but does so by showing the impact of historical realities on personal experiences, rather than through polemic.

The audience thus encounters Lascars, sailors of Indian, Chinese, Arabic and East African origin, who were treated far more harshly than their European counterparts. We also spend time in the company of Ayahs, Indian nannies for European children, who were regarded as possessions and often abandoned far from home once their 'owners' no longer had any need for them.

For all its uncomfortable truths about British colonialism, *The Empress* is, at its heart, a thumping good story. Above all, it's a story of love, depicting the love between Rani the ayah and Hari the Lascar; between Queen Victoria and her Indian 'gift', Abdul Karim; and the love of historical figures such as Dadabhai Naoroji and M K Ghandi for their Indian homeland. These tales are skilfully interwoven, beginning and ending with epic sea voyages.

Teachers should be forewarned that *The Empress* does include some salty language and 'adult themes'. However, given that this only adds to the authenticity of the storytelling, it should be easy enough for the confident teacher to manage.

It seems like a shame to reduce such compelling works to educational practicalities, but teachers will doubtless appreciate how the play unfolds over relatively short scenes that are perfect for reading, discussing and performing within a lesson.

This Methuen Drama Student Edition also comes with extensive guidance notes to support those who aren't already familiar with the play. In short, *The Empress* could be the perfect embarkation point for your school's voyage into the world of Lit in Colour.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ **A great story**
- ✓ **Promotes minority ethnic writers**
- ✓ **Confronts some uncomfortable but important historical realities**
- ✓ **Encourages class discussion**
- ✓ **Contains thorough guidance notes**

PICK UP IF...

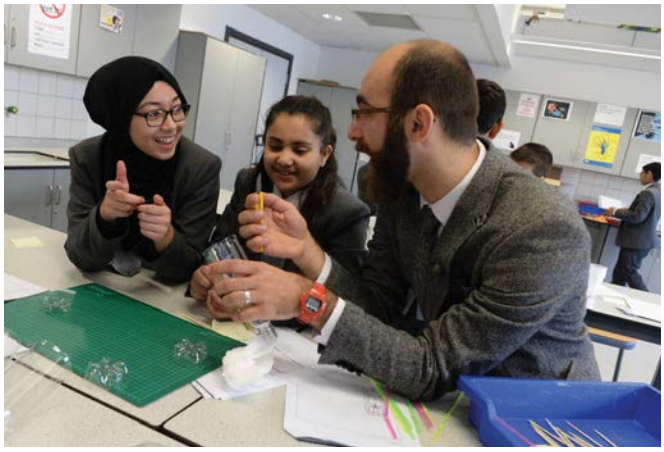
... you want to shift the literary diet provided by your school towards including a greater diversity of authorial voices.

£10.99, bloomsbury.com/empress-9781350190573. Find out more about Bloomsbury's Lit in Colour Partnership at bloomsbury.com/LitInColour

SCIENCE

CREST Awards

Find out how you can help nurture a sense of scientific curiosity among your students by taking part in the CREST Awards...



AT A GLANCE

- **A comprehensive science-based activity programme with accompanying resources**
- **Lets students experience what it's like to conduct their own scientific investigation**
- **Encourages independent thinking and self efficacy**
- **Research-informed, science-focused planning and pedagogical approaches**
- **Aspirational and founded in real-life contexts**

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES

CREST is the British Science Association's project-based learning programme that can be used during enrichment activities to encourage open-ended investigations in science, technology and maths. At secondary level, the CREST Awards in particular are designed to inspire young people to think like scientists and engineers via specific project-based inquiry, thus allowing young people to develop a love for science.

This is principally done by giving students the chance to develop key skills, which will in turn encourage them to build up their self-efficacy. The real world contextualisation of the CREST resources that accompany the activities work to foreground the need for problem solving and independent thinking, in a way that lets learners directly apply what they've learnt to processes and phenomena they will have encountered in their everyday lives.

This not only helps to further develop their understanding of the science at hand, but will also hone their decision making and critical thinking abilities, while getting learners to reflect more deeply on the world around them.

The CREST Awards are divided into three age categories of Bronze (11+), Silver (14+) and Gold (16+). The task set at each level is the same – undertake a research-based project that looks at how the appliance of science and engineering can be used to solve real world problems.

Students have the option to devise projects of their own, or select one from a pre-existing library. Suggested titles include the likes of 'How rockets work', 'Building robots' and 'Understanding how atermerans float' – a real lure for inquisitive minds.

Factor in the resources designed to accompany each session, and you're looking at enough material for around 45 minutes to one hour of teaching time. One thing that stands out most for me is the student workbook, which enables learners to record findings they've obtained from each stage of their investigation project in an ordered and straightforward way. This emphasis on self-study and independence is consistently strong, scaffolding for learners how to conduct a real research investigation.

"A real lure for inquisitive minds"

While the ultimate purpose of the activities is only made implicit to learners, it's abundantly clear that the activities are intended to get young people thinking like scientists.

In the course of their research and gathering of information, learners engaged in a CREST project will be called upon to reflect on and share their findings with others, before undertaking their own evaluations. It's a form of structured learning that goes a long way towards helping young people derive genuine satisfaction and enjoyment from exploring scientific topics.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

✓ **Exceptionally intuitive resources**
✓ **Self-study workbooks help build the metacognitive skills of learners**
✓ **Enables the use of instructive, student-led investigations**
✓ **Builds learners' research skills and inspires their curiosity of the wider world**

TRY IT IF...

You're looking to build upon your science offer, or present project-based inquiry as part of the curriculum

crestawards.org / @CRESTAwards

SCIENCE

Oxford Smart Activate

An impressively-featured curriculum that can take your KS3 science lessons to the next level

AT A GLANCE

- **A comprehensive science resource for teachers and students**
- **Part of the *Oxford Smart* Curriculum Service**
- **Student books and other materials accessible online or via hardcopies**
- **Integrated literacy and maths aspects for cross-curricular support**

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES

Oxford University Press has created something special here that's going to have science teachers rejoicing. *Oxford Smart* Activate, part of the *Oxford Smart* Curriculum Service, blends curriculum, planning, learning and training into one well-rounded bundle, providing schools with a comprehensive resource science departments can use to refine their existing KS3 practice, or redevelop it from scratch. OUP's brand new curriculum for KS3 science, based on *Oxford Smart* pillars, is at the heart of all the resources, assessment and CPD.

Oxford Smart Activate is available online through the Kerboodle online learning platform, enabling teachers and students to access hundreds of science lessons, resources and materials from anywhere, at any time. The user-friendly interface lets students and teachers easily navigate through different topics and drill down for more depth when needed.

One of *Oxford Smart* Activate's most notable features is its Kerboodle-powered adaptation and individualisation capabilities – a brand-new feature for the *Oxford Smart* Curriculum Service. A background algorithm monitors the resources learners are assigned, based on the results of automated assessments. Get it right, and there's further challenge; get it wrong, and they'll receive some supporting materials to help them try again.

OUP worked closely with teachers at 29 trial schools, and it really shows. Not only is there an extensive library of CPD material for teachers on how to best approach each topic, but also the option for departmental teams to attend three live CPD sessions per term, with said sessions featuring content and speakers that are of a very high standard indeed. The sessions are available within the platform itself and can thus be used straight away, complete with accompanying PowerPoint slides that staff can edit and adapt based on their specific needs.

Also worth noting are the assessment tools teachers can set and use to track learners' progress. *Oxford Smart* Activate provides users with a handy score converter, which outputs standardised levels and projections based on completed tasks. This allows for detailed, lesson-level planning, underpinned by curriculum mapping and seriously impressive levels of clarity. In short, it's a teacher's dream.

OUP's traditionally paper-based resources remain readily available, of course – *Oxford Smart* Activate has reminded me how convenient it is to have course materials and assorted books within easy reach at all times via Kerboodle's e-reader functionality. Learners can even change the background page colour of their books to make them easier to read.

Oxford Smart Activate has been designed with users in mind from the very start, and all resources and assessment have been developed in tandem with the curriculum. What Oxford University Press now has on its hands is a product that carries some real clout.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ **Features an exceptionally intuitive interface**
- ✓ **The resources are all well-designed, and evidently informed by up-to-date research**
- ✓ **The presence of additional CPD resources is a real bonus**
- ✓ **The integrated e-book functionality is extremely well-designed**

PICK UP IF...

You're looking to build upon or completely redesign your KS3 science offer. Also worth considering for departments that are keen to develop their collective subject knowledge.

For more information, visit oxfordsecondary.com/smartactivate

EDTECH

Logitech Pen

A sophisticated stylus for electronic devices that can be used just like a real pen

AT A GLANCE

- **Works with any Chromebook, tablet or learning app that supports the Universal Stylus Initiative**
- **Allows users to fully utilise the input features of certain touchscreen devices and compatible apps**
- **Designed with proportions and responses that mirror those of traditional pens**
- **Suitable for use within a wide range of learning activities**

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES

As technology has become increasingly commonplace within schools, we've now reached the point where learners routinely use many different items of hardware on a daily basis. Now the Logitech Pen aims to bridge the gap between traditional schoolwork and modern learning technology.

One of the Logitech Pen's most impressive features is that it physically looks, handles and feels just like a traditional writing implement. Not only that, it's exceptionally well-balanced for a wide range of different users.

It's not too cumbersome, nor too dainty; it's weighted perfectly for teachers and students alike, allowing them to use it on screens almost exactly as if they were writing on paper. Logitech carried out extensive research and testing with the Pen in classrooms during its development, which would seem to have paid dividends.

The Logitech Pen is designed around a 'no-pair' connection method, making it easy for students to simply pick up the Pen and start writing straight away. On a full charge, the Pen should last for around 15 days of use during a regular school day. In the event that someone forgets to put theirs on charge, users can get an impressive 30 minutes of use from the Pen after plugging it in for just 30 seconds, so you can rest assured that those electronic writing activities needn't come to a sudden standstill. Charging is carried out via a standard USB-C cable, of the sort that typically come supplied with Chromebooks, which keeps things nice and simple.

The Logitech Pen works seamlessly with chromeOS on USI-enabled Chromebooks and is supported by numerous apps. It provides students and teachers with a tool that couples traditional study with new technology, adding to classroom engagement levels.

The Logitech Pen is capable of performing a variety of different pen strokes. Its 4,096 levels of pressure sensitivity will enable students to write more clearly than they otherwise could with fingers or a rubber-tip stylus. Combined with one of the many third-party apps that support palm rejection, the Logitech Pen makes it easy for students to work naturally and study more efficiently, while utilising the many advantages of electronic writing, such as instant text capture from handwriting, highlighting and colouring. The possibilities are endless.

As teachers will be all too aware, children can be notoriously heavy-handed with sophisticated edtech. That's why the Logitech Pen has been tested to meet military standards and is designed to withstand drops of up to 4 feet (1.2 m). In short, it can take some serious knocks, making it ideally suited to secondary classrooms. It's also engineered to withstand the kind of frequent cleaning that's required for shared equipment in school environments.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ **Hugely versatile and suitable for a vast range of applications out of the box**
- ✓ **Quick, convenient and efficient mains charging**
- ✓ **Can be adapted to a diverse range of learners' needs, allowing for the same level of expression as a traditional pen**
- ✓ **Marries traditional learning activities with cutting edge technology**

UPGRADE IF...

You're looking to make the most of your school's touchscreen-enabled devices, while ensuring that students develop the skills required for traditional writing. Also worth considering for staff keen to streamline their note taking processes and reduce their paper consumption.

Find out more at logitech.com/education

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** or follow **@johninpompano**

THE LAST WORD

Success is for everyone

You might think it's obvious that secondary education exists to equip your students for success in their adult lives, but you'll likely find that they see things differently...

"*It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves*" **– Shakespeare**

'*When you give anything your everything, you will be successful*'. This is a mantra that 'champions' of every stripe exude, and one that should be championed more often in classrooms – especially as we begin this new school year.

Success can be defined as being the best we can be at something we love. We can't all *be* the best, but we can certainly all *give* our best.

Most students enjoy exploring their talents, and thanks to Aristotle, we know that the pursuit of *eudaimonia*, or happiness/wellbeing, is written into their hearts. Even Dickens' arch misanthrope, Ebeneezer Scrooge, ultimately sought a form of happiness. It just took three ghostly teachers to redirect him.

We must teach teenagers not to dismiss education as a soulless process of acquiring awards, grades, and certificates, but instead recognise that its real worth lies in what it can do to help us acquire an identity that goes on to shape our destiny.

We shouldn't assume that students are aware of how important mindsets are, or know how to study effectively, because most of them don't. If you need proof, ask your charges to evaluate their understanding of secondary education, and be prepared to encounter some amazing and occasionally bizarre answers.

I'd wager that their responses likely wouldn't match mine – that secondary education involves teachers helping students to discover their natural talents, and encourage their development so that they may enjoy and value the gift of life that everyone has equal shares in.

What's in your teaching credo?

The pursuit of happiness

Learning to think independently and study effectively plays a key role in adolescent formation. I can still recall my first life skills class, when teaching at a school in Florida, with a group of high-flying seniors a semester away from graduation. I'd challenged them to compose and frame '10 Commandments of Success' that they'd take with them to college.

What I received from these 30 Advanced Placement (A Level equivalent) students was astonishing. Why would teenagers who had secured places at Harvard and Princeton tacitly accept that stress and success were inseparable? Why were so few of them excited to pursue careers offering something beyond outward respectability, comfortable salaries and robust pension plans?

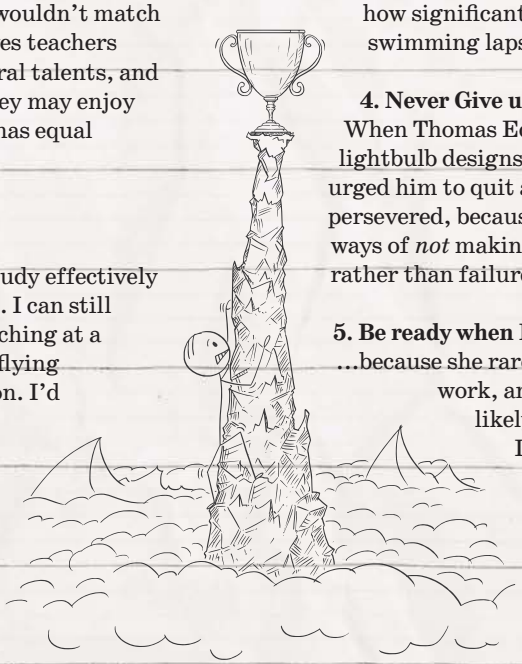
I can't pretend that the pursuit of happiness and academic success will ever be easy, or entirely stress-free. It is, however, much easier to take on life's mountains when we're properly equipped and willing to listen to the lead Sherpa.

These, then, are my own five indisputable steps to success in any field, which I'd invite you to share with your students...

1. Want it
When you want to succeed as much as a drowning person wants to breathe, you'll be successful. We all need to discover who we are and find that one thing we value above everything else.

2. Show up every day – body and soul
If you want to be a winner, you have to sign up for the race and be ready to give everything. We can only take out of life what we've deposited into our accounts.

3. Don't shirk from hard work
It's absurd to think that laziness can be priced into any success story. Michael Phelps is the most successful Olympian of all time, and nobody knows better than him how significant the eight hours a day he spent swimming laps was to his phenomenal success.



4. Never Give up
When Thomas Edison was experimenting with various lightbulb designs, his frustrated research assistant urged him to quit after '2,000 failures'. But Edison persevered, because he realised that discovering 2,000 ways of *not* making a lightbulb is still a type of progress, rather than failure. So go light your world!

5. Be ready when Lady Luck calls...
...because she rarely does call-backs. The harder we work, and the more risks we take, the more likely it is that we'll eventually attract Lady Luck.

May this be a stellar new school year for you all, blessed with energised students and great teachers who are ready to show them that success isn't a zero-sum game, nor the preserve of other people.

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