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INTERVIEW



**ANDRIA
ZAFIRAKOU**

*"We need compassion
in our classrooms"*

TAKE CHARGE

10 behaviour
essentials

POSITIVE STEPS

Create a better
workplace culture

SIGNALS AND STRESSORS

When behaviour
policies meet autism

COLLECTIVE STRENGTH

How to use whole
class feedback

Beyond the numbers

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MEASURING - BUT AREN'T

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HELPED MAKE A BLOCKBUSTER MOVIE?
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TECHNICIANS

THE DAVID SAINSBURY GALLERY

FROM THE EDITOR

“Welcome...



Observing the professional ire that continues to be directed at Ofsted, I've been pondering why its work is rarely compared to that of its fellow government regulators – namely Ofwat, Ofgen and Ofcom. They oversee very different (largely privatised) sectors, but arguably share common goals – to ensure that regulations are being followed, and oversee the actions of entities within those sectors, for the good of end users.

Yet we don't see water companies, energy providers or media businesses publicly rated as 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement'. Ofsted's core task of assessing the learning and safeguarding provision at some 32,000 centres nationwide is enormous, of course. Could it be that the regulator's own workload and time pressures are ultimately to blame for the punitive inspection system we've ended up with?

If you'll indulge me in a little blue sky thinking, what if we reimagined not just the workings of Ofsted, but its very *raison d'être* – by having it instead become a co-ordinating authority, overseeing a complex, nationwide system of statutory peer review?

Working teachers could temporarily assume the role of Ofsted reviewers – not inspectors – and be assigned to review another school elsewhere in the country, via an arrangement akin to jury duty. We could try running such reviews over two weeks, rather than two days, with the reviewers' accommodation and living expenses covered by central funding (blue sky, people, *blue sky*). They would be effectively 'embedded' at the school, while tasked with assessing whether said school was operating in accordance with a legally-enforced framework.

The result may well be broadly similar to what we have at present, but with some crucial differences. As working teachers on secondment, reviewers would be well-versed in the numerous socioeconomic factors that can weigh upon a given school's outcomes. Two-week reviews would afford richer insights to a school's culture, ethos and values. Final reports wouldn't culminate in one of four crude rankings, but instead present a more nuanced picture of what's working and where improvements could be made. Because if there's one thing teachers are used to, it's carrying out assessments.

Okay, so it's the sketchiest outline of a barely thought-through pipe dream. But as of right now, too many schools are finding themselves on a precipitous decline following the stroke of an inspector's pen. Even in schools that are outwardly thriving, staff are too often contending with conditions, demands and accountability pressures that wouldn't be tolerated in other sectors.

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser
callum.fauser@theteachco.com

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On board this issue:



Hannah Day is head of visual arts, media and film at a Sixth Form College



Adam Riches is a senior leader for teaching and learning



Jemma Sherwood is a senior lead practitioner for mathematics



Robin Launder is a behaviour management consultant and trainer



Rebecca Leek is a former headteacher and MAT CEO



Michael Chiles is an assistant principal and principal examiner

KEEP IN TOUCH!

Sign up for the weekly TS newsletter at teachwire.net/newsletter

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Use restorative practice effectively, give your school clubs a membership boost, and add some gravitas to your delivery...

**teach
SECONDARY**

Group editor: Joe Carter

Editor: Callum Fauser,
callum.fauser@theteachco.com, 01206 505115

Head of commercial solutions:
Richard Stebbing

Advertising manager: Ria Bentham,
ria.bentham@theteachco.com, 01206 505928

Deputy advertising manager: Hannah Jones,
hannah.jones@theteachco.com, 01206 505924

Senior account manager: Alfie Bennett
alfie.bennett@theteachco.com, 01206 505996

Art editors: Richard Allen, Sarah Barajas

Accounts: artichokemedia@integral2.com

Customer services:
events@theteachco.com

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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...



TEENAGE LOOK

As part of its unceasing mission to become the time-sink app über alles, TikTok has for a while now included a boatload of whizzy camera effects that users can engage when filming their monologues, choreographed dance routines, family arguments, #epicfails and other assorted ephemera for the app's voracious audience.

Among said filters is 'Teenage Look', which delivers a neat one-two punch of the revelatory – 'Gosh, that really is impressive, and not too far off the photo that's still on mum and dad's mantelpiece' – swiftly followed by the devastating: 'Oh my skin, my beautiful skin, what are those blotches, that's it, I'm never drinking again, WHY ARE MY EYES COLLAPSING???'

Show it off during one of your increasingly rare staffroom catch-ups, and watch as your colleagues spend the rest of the day with a haunted expression.

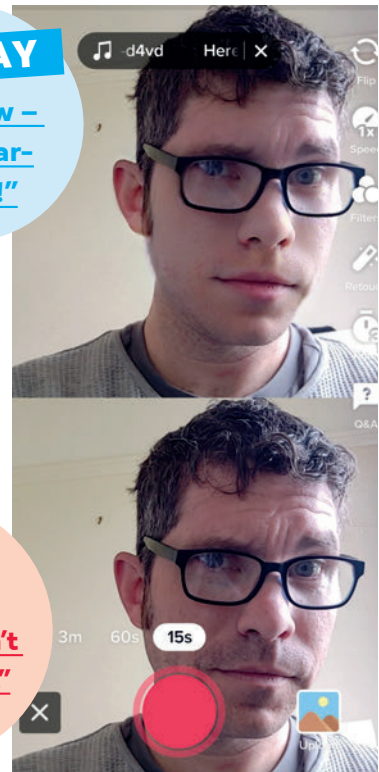
What isn't yet clear at press time is what happens if a bona fide teenager tries it. Does this 'Benjamin Button' you can actually press make them look like an infant? Will it cause a singularity collapse in reality itself? Or will the poignancy of it all be completely lost on them until they hit 35? Y'know – like in real life?

DO SAY

"Oh, wow – hi 16-year-old me!"

DON'T SAY

"It's 3am, I can't stop looking..."



BEAT THE BUDGET



Who is it for?
KS3 to KS5

What's on offer?

A resource pack aimed at students aged 11-18 focusing on the fashion industry, including a lesson plan exploring how the economy can be used to create a more sustainable future.



How might teachers use the resources?

The lesson will teach students about the key principles of a circular economy, and encourage them to analyse which societal groups have the power and responsibility to implement positive changes across the wider fashion industry.

Where is it available?
bit.ly/ts124-NL1

What are we talking about?

Climate Action: Circular Economies by Young Citizens

DON'T QUOTE ME...

"This is a fair offer that addresses the concerns raised by teachers and leaders through their representatives"

Email from Education Secretary Gillian Keegan to school leaders, outlining a pay offer for teachers comprising a one-off £1,000 payment for 2022/23 and an average 4.5% consolidated pay rise for 2023-24

Think of a number...

48%

of parents believe 5- to 18-year-olds should be active for 30 minutes per day; the official guidance recommends 60 minutes of daily activity

Source: YouGove survey of 2,310 adults commissioned by the Youth Sport Trust

30%

of LGBT+ 18- to 25-year-olds believe children should learn about LGBT+ inclusion in pre-school or earlier

58.3

The average number of hours secondary school leaders report working per week; secondary teachers report working 48.5 hours per week

Source: 'Working lives of teachers and leaders' report by the DfE

ONE FOR THE WALL

"I don't wish to be without my brains, tho' they doubtless interfere with a blind faith which would be very comfortable"

Ada Lovelace



Hard times

The cost of living crisis is increasingly prompting school leaders to scale back on essential areas of spending, such as TA wages, school trips and IT equipment costs.

That's the verdict of The Sutton Trust, based on the findings of an NFER survey conducted among 1,428 teachers. The experiences over the past year of senior leaders included within the survey produced several notable headline figures – with 64% confirming they had cut TA positions, 71% reporting difficulties in recruitment, and 41% conceding that they had turned to Pupil Premium funding to plug urgent gaps in their budgets.

Across multiple areas, more seems to have been cut from schools' budgets compared to last year, with 42% reporting having spent less on IT (up from 27% in 2022), 26% spending less on sports and other extracurricular activities (compared to 15% last year), and 40% reducing their spend on support staff; in 2022, the proportion was 33%.

The spending issue also seems to be having a direct impact on schools' academic provision, with 25% of respondents confirming that their school was now offering fewer subject choices at GCSE, compared to 17% when asked the same question last year.

The survey's findings can be seen in full via bit.ly/ts124-NL2

SAVE THE DATE

SPEECHES AND CORRESPONDENCE

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



THE STATEMENT:

Education Secretary addresses Bett 2023

WHO? Gillian Keegan, Secretary of State for Education

WHERE? Bett 2023, ExCeL London

WHEN? 29th March 2023

"AI will have the power to transform a teacher's day-to-day work. We've seen people using it to write lesson plans, and some interesting experiments around marking too. Can it do those things now, to the standard we need? No. Should the time it saves ever come at the cost of the quality produced by a skilled teacher? Absolutely not.

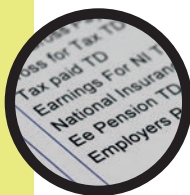
But could we get to a point where the tasks that really drain teachers' time are significantly reduced? I think we will.

My hope is that quite soon I'll be able to tell you more about how we can establish a plan for getting the most out of AI in education, as well as protecting against the risks. Tech is a tool, and it's one that schools haven't yet managed to get the most out of, but it can't be the tail that wags the dog.

We have to look at others' best practice – whether that be Estonia's integrated education data, or South Korea's exemplary leadership in AI transition. It is great to see so many of you from overseas here today to do that, and to have met some of you earlier. But we must also lead with our own best practice.

We've already done it in banking, we've already done it in travel. We've done it in retail, in music, in entertainment. We cannot wait a moment longer to do it in education. I know I'm preaching to the converted here and lots of you are already on this journey.

There's a great quote by the late Steve Jobs, who once said: "The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do." This is what great innovators do and I know this country's schools, colleges and universities can be a beacon for innovation that will transform education."



THE STATEMENT:

NEU responds to government's remarks on school funding

WHO? Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary of the NEU

WHEN? 26th April 2023

"It is amazing that the Department of Education is choosing to boast that education funding will finally match 2009-2010 levels by 2024-25. Their expectations must be very low indeed if they consider this progress, or in any way acceptable. It is evidence of profound failure at the heart of government that education funding will not have increased in real terms over 15 years. It ignores the significant comparable decline in the pay of teachers compared with other professions and the associated problems in recruitment and retention. It ignores the huge cuts to children's services elsewhere that are impacting on schools.

The government is like a low rent magician using poor sleight of hand, when everyone can see the workings for themselves."

16 JUNE 2023 The National Education Show – Llandudno | 23 JUNE 2023 Mental Health in Education Show 2023 | 6-7 JULY 2023 Festival of Education

16 JUNE 2023

The National Education Show – Llandudno
Venue Cymru, Llandudno
nationaleducationshow.com

The first of three National Education Shows scheduled for this year, the Llandudno leg will be hosting some 40+ CPD seminars and facilitating countless networking opportunities for visiting teachers. Running alongside those will be an exhibition space where visiting educators can get hands-on with the very latest products and services developed with the education sector in mind.

23 JUNE 2023

Mental Health in Education Show 2023
KingsGate Conference Centre, Peterborough
mentalhealthshows.com

Launching this year, The Mental Health in Education Show is aimed at mental health and wellbeing professionals working with schools, colleges and universities, with organisers promising plenty of networking opportunities, access to CPD and a showcase of the latest resources in the field. Michael Rosen has been announced as the headline speaker, and the event will also include an Awards presentation.

6-7 JULY 2023

Festival of Education
Wellington College, Crowthorne
educationfest.co.uk

Following a triumphant return in 2022 after a pandemic-prompted hiatus, the organisers of the 13th Festival of Education are expecting to welcome some 5,500 attendees and an impressive 300 speakers to the leafy environs of Wellington College for two days of inspiring oratory and robust debate concerning the past, present and future of education, plus plentiful networking opportunities.

High-quality, online Alternative Provision for vulnerable learners across England and Wales

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- Flexible for short and long-term requirements
- Academically focused, with a broad and balanced curriculum for KS3 and KS4 pupils

“Without Academy21, many of our vulnerable kids would have left school with absolutely nothing! Instead, they were able to continue to engage with learning and leave with GCSEs. With Academy21, we have been able to intervene and get to the root of their individual problems.”

Nathalie Ehlinger
Abbeyfield School, Chippenham

For further information about partnering with Academy21 contact:

+44 (0)1438 535 001 | contact@academy21.co.uk | academy21.co.uk



Get Into Film

Following on from this year's Mental Health Week, here are two short that films teachers can use to raise awareness and generate discussion in the classroom around the event's wider themes and topics...

I AM GOOD AT KARATE (2021, AGES 11+, 11 MINUTES)

Known around the neighbourhood as 'Karate Kid', due to their favourite outfit, a young teenager finds themselves face to face with their personal demons, who have taken the form of a large and colourful monster made of torn-up football shirts.

This short and personal film, shot on gorgeous 35mm film, tackles mental health in the UK in a surreal, yet relatable fashion, focusing in on the small things that give us strength.

BEST FRIEND (2018, AGES 14+, 5 MINUTES)

Sometime in the near future, a man named Arthur is having a birthday party surrounded by well-wishing friends. However, we soon find out that these characters exist only in the virtual world, via a new technology called 'Best Friend'.

Told with a great sense of world-building, this animated French short confronts the dangers of technology and internet addiction head-on, whilst also telling a thrilling and often scary tale of the lengths to which we'll go to feel less lonely.

Head online to intofilm.org to stream both short films for free; there, you can also visit our fantastic Mental Wellbeing theme page, with details of further films to watch and accompanying teaching resources



Retweets

Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?

ElginHSGeog @ElginHSGeog

Of late, I feel like I've lost my way a bit. Yesterday I met two ex-pupils, now well into their 30s who work in renewables / geotechnology, who cite their experience in my lessons all those years ago as setting them on the path they're now on. Never underestimate your impact as a teacher.

Miss Smith @HeyMissSmith

I doodle when I listen to people lecturing/teaching me. I did it all the way through school and uni and I still do it now. I can not imagine how I would have coped with being made to SLANT. When I am thinking really hard about something someone is saying I draw a 'word diagram'

Follow us via @teachsecondary - and let us know what you're thinking

TEACHER TALES

True stories from the education chalkface

Bird brain

The submission date for the year's final GCSE D&T projects was drawing near. The group had been building their chosen and approved designs for many months.

Some of the projects were rather large, so storage space was at a premium. Owing to the lack of space, it was agreed that several components could be taken home for assembly, prior to students bringing in their completed projects. On deadline day, many parents helped to transport their children's impressive constructions into school, for assessing by our D&T staff and an external examiner. One particularly bulky submission was a commendable bird table clearly worthy of a top grade. Which it would have received - were it not for the closer inspection that uncovered the price tag indicating the garden centre where it had been purchased...

Parlez-vous...?

While supervising a school party in France, one boy approached me. "Sir, they speak French here!"

"Yes," I said. "We're in France."

He replied, "But they speak it all the time..."

Rubbish photography

While on a school trip to France, I was performing everyone's favourite job - collecting the kids' refuse in a black sack, at a time when single-use disposable cameras were all the rage. As I moved down the bus towards the rear, one girl dropped her camera into the bag. Assuming she was just being absent minded, I fished it out and tried giving it back to her. "Oh no, that's alright," she said. "It's disposable - I've used it up."

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

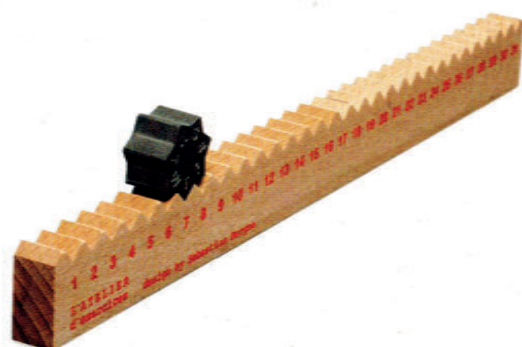
A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

#27 INGENUITY PITCH

Look at the image on this card and work out what the designer was trying to achieve.

Write a 100-word blog post or magazine article to launch the product, identifying the problem it addresses and explaining why this is a good solution.

A Few Minutes of Design INGENUITY PITCH



WHY I LOVE...

Tash Cooper shares her thoughts on the important financial lessons and knowledge that students can glean from Young Enterprise's My Money Week

ABOUT ME:

NAME:

Tash Cooper

JOB ROLE:

Associate Assistant Principal – Careers

SCHOOL:

The Bulwell Academy, Nottingham

FAVOURITE FEATURE:

The My Money Week Hub resources, demonstrate good practice for staff to follow, and have been used as exemplars and a standard against which to measure any other resources we produce ourselves.



TALKING ABOUT: MY MONEY WEEK

“ How did you first hear about My Money Week, and why does your school participate? ”

A few years ago we were looking to revamp our finance curriculum, so I did a Google search and saw that My Money Week was coming up. For us, it was perfect timing to put money in the minds of our students.

Money is more important to students now compared to when we were younger. Social media, contactless payments and other changes mean that students have more wants, but often don't understand their family's needs. I'm hugely passionate about developing the whole child, so that they're not just academically ready, but also informed about real life matters too.

“ What do you do during My Money Week? ”

We run tutor sessions for all students on savings and spending, and hold an assembly that challenges the stigma of being in a community classed as 'highly deprived'.

Subjects such as business and geography explore topics related to money, and we run homework competitions. Some students will also be lucky enough to observe guest speakers or take part in workshops.



Contact:

young-enterprise.org.uk/MMW
advisory@y-e.org.uk
 020 4526 6389

“ How do you integrate My Money Week into the curriculum? ”

For us, securing the backing of our SLT has been vital. I presented my vision to them, and they were and remain 100% supportive.

Joint planning time was implemented for staff so they could plan and develop resources and ideas. It's useful to have access to the My Money Week Hub resources, as these demonstrate good practice for staff to follow, and have been used as exemplars and a standard against which to measure any other resources we produce ourselves.

“ What are the benefits of taking part in My Money Week? ”

Increased awareness among students about the money around them. With the access students have to accurate and up-to-date information, they can make informed choices regarding money, now and in the future. My Money Week helps to highlight how important understanding money is; we'll be taking part in the week, and making it an exciting and engaging time for our students.

WILL IT WORK FOR YOU?

+ My Money Week is a national financial education initiative that takes place from 12-16th June 2023

+ Download free activities and lesson plans - available in English and Welsh.

+ The theme for 2023 is 'Mind over Money', exploring the importance of risk and reward in money matters

+ A new feature for this year is 'My Money Week' - a UK-wide community pinboard powered by Padlet

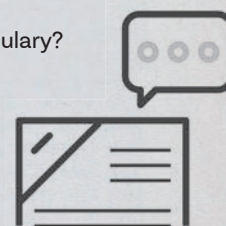
The Vocab Clinic

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

TRY THIS TODAY: **ACADEMIC ANNOTATIONS**

Do we ever consider the importance of annotations in developing pupils' academic vocabulary? In subjects like art, design technology, science, geography, and more, annotating diagrams, images and models proves crucial. In subjects where extended writing isn't always expected, annotations may prove even more important.

How then do we develop 'academic annotations'? Too often, writing annotations is left tacit or even ignored. Instead, we can be explicit about their potential to enhance pupils' vocabulary. In art, for instance, 'charcoal' can be enhanced to become 'Sfumato charcoal accents'. In geography, when annotating diagrams or photographs, 'waves' might become 'diffracted waves'.



Annotation

Cracking the academic code



Writing arguments is a crucial aspect of teaching and learning in subjects across the curriculum, from English to RE. Crucially, though, research on pupils' writing indicates that they can struggle to write developed arguments, and fail to include counterarguments that challenge their own ideas.

One solution is to foreground with pupils the necessity for 'Other side arguments'. Teachers can explicitly question 'What is the 'Other side argument?'' in discussion, or embed this into planning templates or paragraph plans. Successful 'Other side arguments' will add depth and convincing details to pupils' academic writing.

ONE FOR: **BIOLOGY STUDENTS**

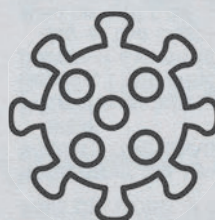
PATHOGEN

Derives from: the Greek '*pathos*', meaning 'suffering' and '*genes*', meaning 'producer of'

Means: a virus, bacteria, or another microorganism that can cause disease

Related terms: pathology, parasite, bacteria, pathos

Note: 'pathos' is a classical Greek drama term, referring to a quality that evokes sadness or pity



DO THEY KNOW?

Each year, an estimated 800 to 1,000 words are added to English language dictionaries

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

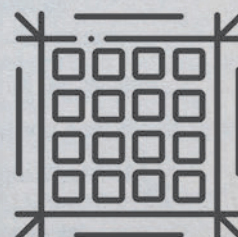
RESOLUTION

In art

The amount of visual detail contained within an image

In chemistry

The process of reducing or separating something into its constituent parts or components



One word at a time

Small words can represent big ideas and spaces. Galaxy is one such word. The word is borrowed from ancient Greek '*galaxias*', though the stem '*gála*' means 'milk' – hence the word translating directly as '*the milky circle*'. Sound familiar? It should, since the word 'galaxy' originally represented the galaxy we now know as The Milky Way.

In modern times, we're aware that the The Milky Way is over 13 billion years old, and recognise that there are likely between 100 and 200 billion other galaxies in the known universe. That the word once had such a singular focus may seem narrow to us now, but it serves as a reminder of our vocabulary's rich and varied history, and how even the seemingly biggest ideas can become even bigger over time.



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

SMART REVISE

Raises Attainment
Reduces Workload

**Baseline
assessments**

**Beat the
forgetting
curve**

**End of
topic tests**

Flashcards

**Healthy
competition**

Homework

**Identify
learning
priorities**

Intervention

**Low stakes
quizzing**

Mastery

**Model
answers**

**Online
mock exams**

**Peer
marking**

**Practice
exam
questions**

**Save
time**

**Track
progress**

smartrevise.co.uk



GCSE Business & GCSE/A Level Computer Science

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**

Like many, I spent much of summer 2021 watching incredible athletes compete at the '2020' Olympic Games. I remember being struck by the broadcast coverage's detailed analysis, with its measurements of top speeds, average speeds, cadence, stride length, PBs, SBs, ORs, NRs, WRs and more besides.

In truth, it was a little like being at school, where we see a similar obsession with measurement in terms of grades, targets, predictions and progress.

Wanting to 'win'

We love data. The measurement and analysis of statistics has become deeply engrained in our collective psyche and continues to exert a major hold on our education system.

But is this how we should actually measure the performance of our school students? Students have little choice in the matter, despite the massive impact existing metrics have on intangible elements of students' learning, such as motivation, attitudes, hopes

and ambitions, mental health and so on.

The performance of Olympic athletes can be effectively measured because it's safe to assume that they're trying to win. Students, however, might not want to 'win'. As teachers, our underlying assumption is that better grades are, well, better. A student may well be capable of achieving 3 A*s at A Level, but if they plan on teaching yoga classes on a beach, then they won't need, or indeed want to spend every waking hour revising in order to realise their academic potential.

Fervent persistence

Speed and distance are easy to quantify because they relate to clear units of measurement. Learning is far more ephemeral. There are methods by which we can *try* to measure learning – setting different types of

questions, continuous/terminal assessments, grade point averages, etc. – but we ought to consider more fundamental questions. Can learning actually be measured at all? What do we even mean by 'learning'?

Despite these uncertainties, we have fervently persisted with measuring students to the point of even allowing such measurements to drive our school policies.

No one would dispute that we need to grade students in some form or another, but should these measurements be allowed to play such a dominant role in our education system? More crucially, what impact are these detached and sterile numbers having on students' and teachers' mental health?

Human nature

Human beings don't neatly correspond to statistics and

measurements. We're intuitive, emotional, incalculable, unruly even. Our personalities, emotions and mindsets can't be measured, yet they're by far the most important determinants in teaching and learning.

We can't put numbers on these things, but we can pay attention to them – though doing so will require us to allow human nature into the equation and embrace those admittedly murky realities.

In practice, then, what should we do? We can give more weight to subjective analysis of learning, rather than becoming embroiled in dubious attempts to objectify. Subjective 'measurements' can give us an idea of how learning is going, without needing to put numbers on things. Yes, this may mean being unable to fill out forms that are universal across different schools, teachers and classes. But such is life – stubbornly unquantifiable. Just like teaching and learning.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Gary Keogh is a former lecturer at the University of Manchester, and currently a full-time secondary school teacher and PSHCE programme coordinator; his book, *The Pedagogy of Purpose: Classical Wisdom for the Modern Classroom*, is available now (John Catt Educational)



10 BEHAVIOUR ESSENTIALS

From consistent applications of rules, to following through on the assurances made to students, here's **Robin Launder's** list of the behaviour tips every teacher should know...

Students want you to be in charge. They might not always act like they do, but they do. They want you to be in charge because they want to be in a classroom where they feel safe and contained, free from both the distraction of misbehaviour and the pressure to misbehave.

Now, being in charge doesn't mean being terrifying, shouty or stern – approaches as counterproductive as they are unethical – but you do have to demonstrate your dominance. You can do this through the way you hold yourself, what you say and how you say it. You can also do it by observing the following 10 pointers...

1 Use a seating plan
Sit girls next to boys. If you're a single sex school, sit according to the register. If you know the students, factor in any relationships that may cause behavioural issues. At the beginning of every new half term, display your seating plan so that students can take their seats without any fuss.

Make sure you stick to your seating plan throughout the year. If you have to change it, only do so in order to serve teaching and learning needs. Don't change it because of friendship requests, because a student's nice or as a bargaining chip for good behaviour. Once the

students know you won't change it, they'll stop asking.

2 Embed rules
Classroom rules are like the foundations of a house. Without them, student behaviour can quickly sink to rock bottom. – so here are mine:

1. We are silent when the teacher is talking
2. We follow instructions right away
3. We let others get on with their work
4. We respect each other

The first three rules are specific, and that's their strength. The last rule is more general – and that's its strength. Rule 4 catches any behaviour that falls through the first three. You can also use Rule 4 proactively by noticing behaviours that demonstrate respect, such as turn-taking, being supportive and handing out resources helpfully.

3 Establish routines
It could be the way students enter your classroom, or how they move from one activity to the next. Or the method by which they submit their homework, have their planners checked, stand in line, get your attention, contribute to a group, exit the classroom – if it's a repeated behaviour, it needs to be turned into a

routine. And you do that by teaching it. Here's how:

- a) Detail the routine's sequential steps
- b) Model the routine if necessary
- c) Check for understanding
- d) Get the students to practice the routine
- e) Give the students feedback
- f) Get the students to practice again, this time incorporating your feedback
- g) Stop when you reach perfection (or as close as you can get to that ideal)

If you have to explain the task verbally, then your instructions aren't clear enough. Given the importance of spaced retrieval, it makes sense for the task to be a review of previous learning, whether it be from last lesson, last week, last month, two months ago or even longer. The only materials students need should be a pen and something to write on.

End the 'Do Now!' with a rapid review of the answers. Don't drag this bit out – prepared model answers on the whiteboard

“Behaviour always improves when it's being observed”

The next time the routine happens for real, remind the students of these sequential steps. This will proactively set the students up for success, while also reducing the scope for wiggle room.

4 Do Now!
A 'Do Now!' is a 3- to 5-minute, in-silence writing routine that students complete at the start of each lesson. It's not a starter activity, but rather an activity intended to settle the students, set the tone of the lesson and reinforce your high academic and behaviour expectations.

Display your 'Do Now!' activities clearly on the whiteboard with easy to understand instructions.

will the quickest way of achieving this. Once done, crisply move on to the next part of the lesson.

5 Say 'thank you', but not 'please'

Both are equally polite, but where 'please' has a begging quality, 'thank you' has the inbuilt expectation that what you want to happen is going to happen. After all, why else would you be thanking the students?

6 Scan

There are two parts to this tip. First, you need to give your full attention to what's going on in your classroom. That means no sneaky texts, no emailing, no tidying of cupboards or shelves and no prolonged turning of your back to the students. Instead, actively scan the students.

Second, you need to be *seen* scanning, so make your scanning obvious. Behaviour always improves when it's being observed.

7 Nip it in the bud

The best time to deal with misbehaviour is as soon as possible. If you wait, the misbehaviour will only get worse and

subsequently require a stronger intervention. It's better by far to nip any misbehaviour in the bud.

8 Stick to Your Word

The old adage holds true – actions really do speak louder than words.

It's also true that if you always do what you say you're going to do, then your words will be as 'loud' (i.e. convincing) as your actions, so stick to your word.

If you tell the class that you're going to return their homework on Tuesday, return it on Tuesday. If you tell a student that you're going to phone his mum to let her know how hard he's working, make the call. If you tell another student that you'll help her with her project at break, be there waiting.

The same goes for sanctions. If the sanction is stipulated in your school behaviour policy or in your classroom contract, or you've said it's going to happen, then make it happen. When what you do is the same as what you say, what you say will carry the weight of what you do. So stick to your word.

9 Avoid the 'SBT'

When challenging a student's misbehaviour, it's not uncommon to receive a bit of eye rolling, huffing and puffing and a snarky comment or two – or maybe even a very naughty word. Be careful! This response is an SBT – a Secondary Behaviour Trap. Its job is to allow the student to save face among their peers, but it's also a trap, because if you let them, such behaviours can wind you up and cause situations to quickly spiral out of control.

Instead, stay calm, stay in control and stay focused on the initial misbehaviour. Definitely follow up on any secondary behaviours – but not in the heat of the moment.

10 Be nice

You must be in charge. If you're not, then you can't have a functioning classroom. At the same time, however, being in charge alone isn't enough. You also have to be a nice person.

So be warm, respectful and kind. Take an interest in your students as individuals with lives outside of the classroom. Be proportionate with consequences and make sure you start every day with a clean slate. Smiling helps too, as does a little fun and laughter (though never at the expense of a student).

One last thing: you have to be consistently nice, and consistently in charge. Because it's the consistent combination of the two that will get students to buy in to your behavioural expectations.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robin Launder delivers behaviour management CPD across the UK and runs a five-week Better Behaviour online course; for more details and to enrol, see behaviourbuddy.co.uk

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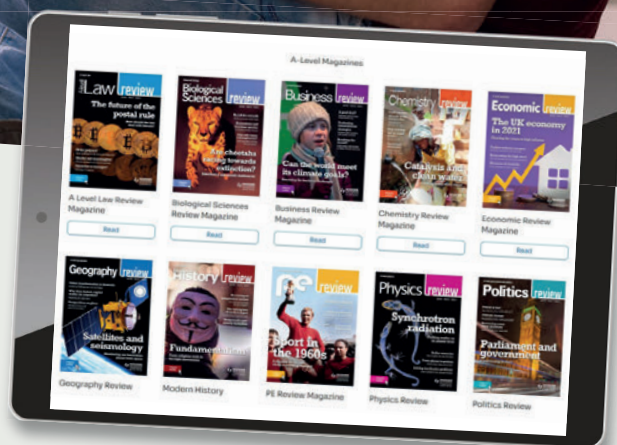
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LIFE-AFFIRMING NATURE

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

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

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

Inequity of access

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

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

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

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

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

Learning opportunities

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

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

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

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

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

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

Looking and seeing

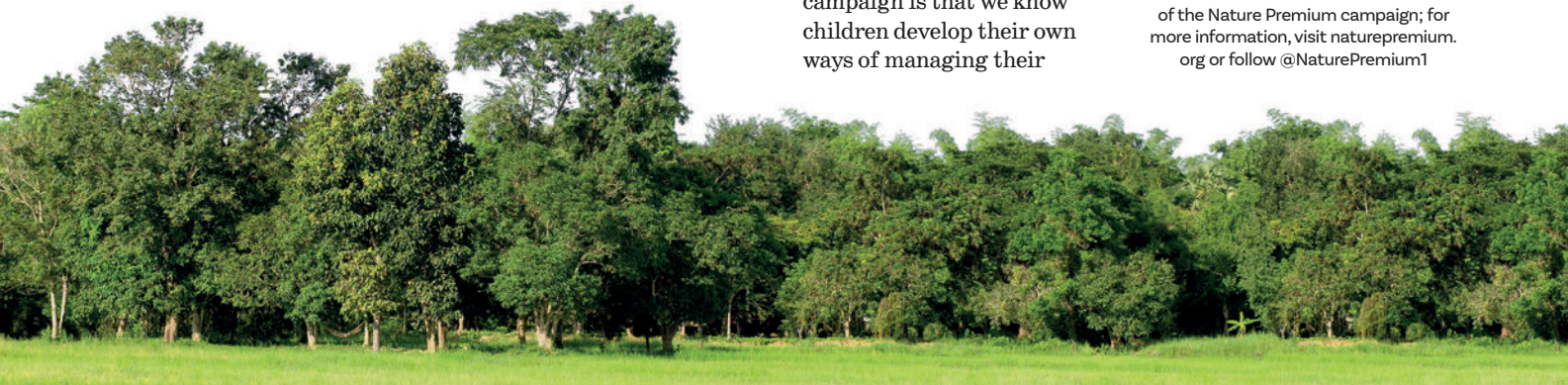
I've previously taken a group into a local Woodland Trust wood, and had a teenager ask me *"Is this a real wood?"* I didn't know how to respond to that question at first, but I took it seriously.

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

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

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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



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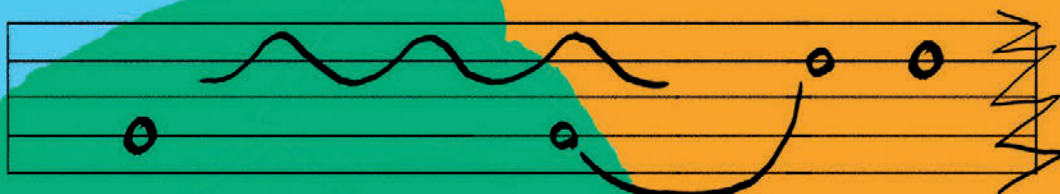
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ENGAGE YOUR 'QUIET MIDDLE'

Ben Dunford of Firefly Learning suggests some ways of improving motivation and engagement among your quieter students.

After more than a decade in the classroom as an ICT and computer science teacher I got to know all the different types of students and how to get the best out of them.

There were the enthusiastic stars with their hands seemingly permanently in the air. Then there were the disengaged and occasionally disruptive. Both types demanded attention, prompting me to think hard about how to improve engagement with one set of pupils and sustain it with the others.

And like many secondary teachers, I knew full well the challenge of meeting the needs of another set – those altogether quieter students there in the middle, diligently working away.

Eclipsed from view

These students, the 'quiet middle', can sometimes be eclipsed in a teacher's consciousness by the stars and the renegades. The quiet middle often goes unnoticed. They aren't very outgoing, but their attendance is good, they work hard and get solid grades, even though they might not be top of the class.

When put like that, it might seem that this group doesn't like a

challenge, but of course we all know that they do. If a student's efforts are properly recognised, this will create, sustain and develop their motivation and engagement. That applies just as much to your quieter students as it does to the stars and the disengaged.

When looking to improve the engagement and motivation of quieter students in particular, however, try the following:

• Recognise effort, rather than achievement

The quiet middle will often

put in lots of effort, but because they don't shout about it or ultimately get the best grades, their efforts may well go unnoticed. Look for those students who are pushing themselves, however modestly.

• Ask questions of everybody in class

'Hands down questioning' isn't exactly a new idea, but it's a very powerful one. Ask the students to keep their hands down after asking a question, give them thinking time, then randomly pick a student to answer the question.

• Talk to everyone

If there are too many students for this to be practicable in one lesson, make it your mission to spend quality time with each student over two or three.

• Get to know them

Find out more about what your students like doing outside of class, and don't be afraid to talk about yourself and any hobbies you have.

Getting to know someone works best when it's a two-way thing.

• Let them speak up

Group work can be a positive for the quiet middle if done in the right way, but be careful that quiet students are given opportunities to use their voice. Give them specific roles within a group that requires them to speak up.

• Celebrate meeting expectations over time

Students are expected to turn up on time every day, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's easy for them to do so, and it doesn't mean we shouldn't celebrate when students consistently meet these expectations.

• Look at automating your rewards systems

A manual approach can be an inefficient and time-consuming way of recognising the achievements of all pupils, not just your quieter ones.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ben Dunford is a former secondary computer science teacher, founder of Epraise and head of product at Firefly Learning; Epraise is a school rewards system and learning engagement platform that helps schools motivate students, engage parents and save teachers time. An ebook titled *The Rules of Student Engagement* is available from Firefly via bit.ly/3hSgsB6; for more details, visit epraise.co.uk or fireflylearning.com

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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 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 Satchel’s 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.

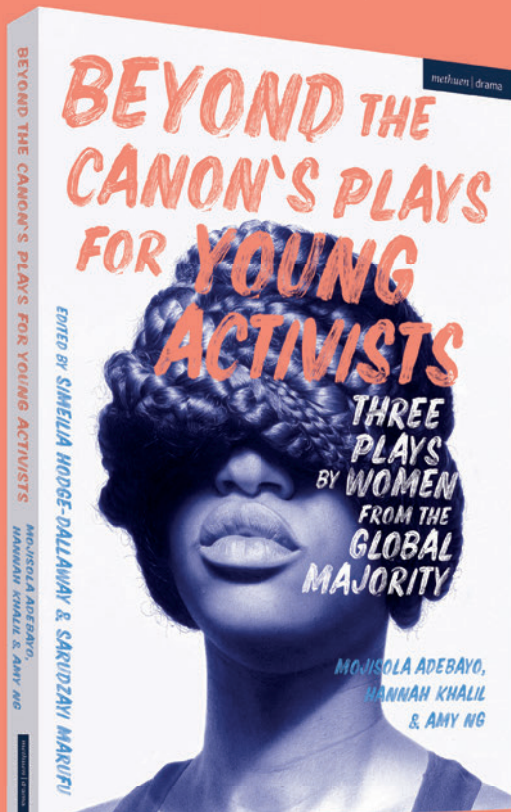
Remember that your EAL learners are going to be better linguists than many of us. Celebrate what they’re doing and encourage their successes. Who knows – celebrating our polyglot students’ achievements might even inspire some of our monoglot teenagers to take up another language...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rebecca Leek has been a secondary and primary classroom teacher, head of department, SENCo and headteacher, as well as the CEO of SEAMAT – a trust of three schools in South Essex

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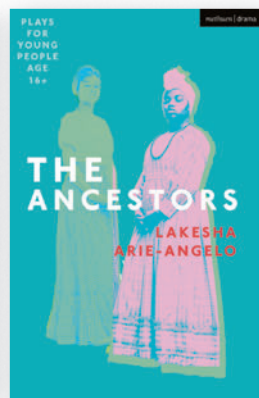
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The short-term disruptions posed by COVID-19 may have passed, but its long-term repercussions will continue to emerge for some time – further complicating a mental health situation in schools that was problematic already...

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IN FIGURES:

DO SCHOOLS HAVE A STAFF MORALE PROBLEM?

75%

of secondary school staff describe themselves as being stressed while at work

47%

of all school staff report feeling compelled to always attend work when unwell

46%

of secondary school staff rate their team culture as being positive

Source: 'Teacher Wellbeing Index 2022' report produced by Education Support

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IN SEARCH OF HYGGE

The Danish word to describe feelings of cosiness and contentment sums up how we can increase wellbeing – and it can start with a hug, says Ginny Bootman...

bit.ly/124special1

TURNING POINT

Having struggled with her mental health since starting secondary school, Liz Gee went on a residential trip in Y10 that changed everything...

bit.ly/124special2

SEN STAFF HAVE FEELINGS TOO

Support your pupils' wellbeing, by all means – but don't neglect your own or that of your colleagues, warns Susanna Pinkus...

bit.ly/124special3

Change the PERSPECTIVE

Amy Sayer looks at how SLTs can develop and contribute towards a culture of supportive mental health conversations in their schools

Conversations around mental health can be awkward and hard. This is due, in part, to a lack of training in schools about how to have them. When staff are absent due to mental ill health, it's rarely an isolated absence. There may have been numerous short-term absences for 'migraines' or 'stomach issues'. They may have exhibited changes in their behaviour, which other staff might have disregarded as the usual stresses and strains of school life.

Those colleagues working closely alongside them may have noticed these changes over a long period of time, but not known how to discuss their concerns. In some cases, these colleagues may have worried that doing so might make the situation worse, and cause further absence.

In order to look after staff mental health in schools, a change of perspective needs to happen so that all leaders can be confident in doing the following:

- a) Identifying the signs and symptoms of poor mental health
- b) Having timely and appropriate conversations with staff, to support them in looking after their mental health
- c) Creating a culture where everyone has a safe space in which to talk about

their individual mental health needs.

Investing time and support in staff should be a key component of all leadership roles within a school. School staff are under increasing pressure to spin ever more plates, in an environment where budget cuts have led to ever increasing workloads. This can often lead to staff having less time to invest in important self-care, which can act as a protective factor against mental ill health.

Some staff will be conscious of their struggles with mental health, and may be receiving treatment through their GP or other support services, such as the Education Support. They may, however, feel ashamed of this, and that they can't make their voices heard – which can in turn make things worse.

Having a range of supportive leaders in a school who can be trusted, and who genuinely care about their staff can make a huge difference. Simply having someone in school that you can be honest with about your struggles will give you that voice, and the reassurance of knowing that you can ask for support if it's needed.

When senior leaders have return-to-work discussions with colleagues about potential mental health issues, it's important that these are conducted in a particular way that

encourages honesty and respect, and demonstrates genuine support. If managed badly, they could cause further staff absence and in the worst

potentially mark the first time they've ever opened up to someone else about their feelings and mental ill health.

That said, it's possible

"No one aspires to be the kind of school leader who behaves like an automaton"

case scenario, constitute a form of discrimination.

Undivided attention

Colleagues with diagnosed mental health conditions are protected by The Equality Act 2010. As such, they cannot be discriminated against, they will be entitled to 'reasonable adjustments' and cannot be dismissed or selected for redundancy due to their condition.

Conversations about mental health should be had in an undisturbed private location, in which neither colleague will feel rushed or be interrupted whilst discussing what can be highly sensitive personal information.

Phones should be left 'off the hook' and mobile devices kept out of reach. This latter point is important, since the colleague may be feeling quite low – to the extent that they consider themselves to be an inconvenience to others.

The fact that you are giving them your undivided attention will be hugely significant for them. The conversation could even

that the colleague may prefer to discuss their mental health away from the school site. This could be a good way for them to see that you genuinely care about them, rather than simply having the conversation with them because you have to as part of your job.

A cultural change

If a colleague is struggling to accept that they're experiencing a period of poor mental health, then it may be a good idea to prepare some concrete examples in advance – discussion of which could then lead to a dialogue about the causes of the colleague's behaviour. They need to know that you are there to help, and can signpost them to further resources and support services, if needed. The Mental Health Foundation, Mental Health First Aid England and Mind all have fantastic free printable resources on their websites which could be given to colleagues. Colleagues may get

emotional when opening up and discussing their mental health, which leaders need to feel comfortable with.

It's important that leaders don't allow the colleague to leave the conversation feeling distressed, and that they check in with them before they leave the building at the end of the day. They may feel embarrassed,

but knowing that they can return to school the next day feeling heard, valued and understood will make a huge difference.

A cultural change with regards to mental health within a given school will take time to be embedded by all members of staff. Members of SLT will themselves need to feel comfortable talking about how they are looking after their own mental health, and be ready show that they have a life outside of school. Senior leaders are role models for other staff members, and it should be acceptable for them to have hobbies, attend exercise classes, join choir practices or whatever else makes them smile at the end of a busy day.

No one aspires to be the kind of school leader who behaves like an automaton, handing out insincere 'wellbeing' ideas just to tick a box.

All staff need to be given training to make sure they know how to look after their own mental health, and they need to feel that they will always have someone in school they can talk to if they are struggling.

WARNING SIGNS

All leaders (and ideally staff) need to be trained in identifying the signs and symptoms that can be indicators of mental ill health. These might include physical signs, such as:

- Stomach problems
- Frequent minor illnesses, such as colds
- Headaches
- Weight loss or gain
- Extreme tiredness
- Frequent tearfulness
- Increased consumption of caffeine, alcohol or cigarettes

However, a range of behavioural changes may also occur, including:

- Failure to meet deadlines
- Complaints about workload
- Irritability with colleagues
- Inability to concentrate
- Difficulty with memory
- Taking on extra projects
- Withdrawal
- Loss of confidence



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amy Sayer is a freelance mental health trainer, writer and workshop facilitator for West Sussex Mind

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Open your mind

Adam Dacey tells us how meditation can play a positive and practical role in addressing mental health challenges within schools – and why those seeking a quick fix would be better off looking elsewhere...

I first came across Buddhist mindfulness meditation at 18, when visiting Nepal between A Levels and university to teach English. After acquainting myself with the practice, and experiencing the hugely beneficial effect it had on reducing the stress and anxiety I had at the time, I immediately questioned why I hadn't been taught it while at school.

That planted the seed for what would eventually follow. After completing my training, I subsequently took up teaching Buddhist meditation. Schools would often visit the Buddhist Centre where I was based, usually as part of an RE trip, to learn about the life of Buddha. Over the course of their visit these coachloads of kids also had the opportunity to learn about essential breathing meditation, and it was immediately clear how positively they responded.

Another stressor

I set up Mindspace just over 10 years ago as a way to take what I'd learned to a wider audience, visiting schools and bringing meditation techniques to children's attention.

In the years since then I've always found some level of receptivity to the idea among school leaders and decision-makers, but it's increasingly come to the forefront of people's minds now, given the challenges that were presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Introducing meditation and mindfulness into schools in a sustainable way ultimately requires getting teachers to come on board. However well-intentioned a decision-maker at a school or trust might be, however motivated they are by the mental health needs of children, it won't work without the school's teachers getting fully behind it.

What can happen is that it becomes just another stressor for teachers – *'How am I meant to squeeze in meditation sessions on top*

of everything else I have to do?'

Schools that have used meditation successfully generally follow the principle that all related activities are very much 'opt in', for both students and staff, for the simple reason that meditation always works better if the individuals partaking in it actually want to be there.

That's why we'll initially provide schools with a general introduction or taster session to which both students and staff are invited and see how many attend. Once you've discovered how large your 'core group' is, it gives you something to build on. In most of the successful implementations I've seen, schools will provide meditation sessions via clubs held during lunch or after school.

Practice what you preach

I've also seen positive examples where teachers have presented mindful meditation techniques in quite an informal and relaxed way, drawing on techniques and methods that they use themselves at various points during their working day.

That's a message I'll often emphasise to teachers – that if you want to pass these meditation techniques on to your students, it's best for you to practice them yourselves.

Of course, another key challenge with introducing schools to meditation is that everyone is often *very busy*, so that even if they're keen to reduce their community's stress levels and improve levels of mental health, they'll want to do so as quickly as possible. My approach – not necessarily a popular one – is to instead encourage staff to take a more long-term view of how their school can benefit from meditation.

That may involve envisaging what the school's mediation practice will look like in two, five or even 10 years. Many people will look to mediation as a quick fix to help address challenging personal behaviours, stress, anxiety and other issues. On the contrary, however, a school's use of meditation will only be successful and remain sustainable if it's allowed to grow organically over time. Gradual, organic growth is fundamental to the way meditation works.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Dacey is the founder and director of Mindspace and was speaking to Callum Fauser; for more information, visit meditationinschools.org or follow @mindspaceuk

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 last 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

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

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.

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)

5 REASONS TO TRY... Your Choice

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The content progresses in a spiral curriculum in age-appropriate steps,

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gives you the option to use the resources in whichever way works best for your context.

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The resources use scenarios, articles, poems, images and videos to help students imagine others' reactions in different situations, and enable them to explore and empathise with a range of viewpoints, values and experiences. At KS5, specially commissioned videos address sensitive, high priority topics for 16- to 18-year-olds, taking students deeper inside different people's life experiences, their experiences of discrimination and prejudice, and their tips for how to treat others with respect.

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Your Choice prepares students for life in contemporary society. The lessons present young people with up-to-date information on key issues, while also providing opportunities to practise and develop the skills necessary to make informed, responsible choices, and lead safe and healthy lives. Authors Simon Foster and Kate Daniels "Hope that the resources will lead to lessons involving a lively exchange of views that both teachers and students will enjoy, and find rewarding."

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CLASSROOM VOICES

“The worst feedback is that which goes ignored”

Dr Andrew Atherton explains how a teacher’s use of Whole Class Feedback can and should include space for issuing comments and observations to individual students

What’s not to love about Whole Class Feedback? It promises significant reductions in teacher workload, whilst also improving student outcomes.

And yet, it seems as a profession we’re only ever a couple of steps away from taking a superb idea and ‘lethally mutating’ it, to use Dylan Wiliam’s turn of phrase. And Whole Class Feedback is no exception.

A CERTAIN ANTIPATHY

One potential pressure point is that we become too committed to the idea that Whole Class Feedback absolves us from offering any kind of individual or personalised feedback.

The real benefit to Whole Class Feedback is the manner in which it allows us to identify and address patterns of misconception across the class, while offering a series of actionable next steps or a task for everyone to complete. None of that will matter, however, if students aren’t receptive to the feedback they’re being offered. The worst feedback, no matter how good, is that which goes ignored.

While every class and context will be different, it’s conceivable that if we adhere too stringently to the idea that Whole Class Feedback should only ever issued to the *whole class*, then the individuals within that class may feel a certain antipathy.

Pedagogically sound though it may be, students – indeed, anyone – will want to know they’re valued not as a collective, but as individuals. The risk with using Whole Class Feedback is we forget the need for individuals to act on and attend to feedback, even when that feedback is delivered to the whole class.

We therefore need to strike a

balance between retaining the pedagogic efficacy of Whole Class Feedback – thus preserving those significant workload benefits – and building in some mechanism for ensuring individuals see the feedback they’re given not as some vague homogeneity, but something that attends to them specifically.

THE RIGHT TONE

Here are two simple, yet effective ways of doing this:

Strategy 1 – Blue highlighter

When reading and marking work from my classes, I’ll always keep a blue highlighter to hand and use it to quickly flag anything I like or find especially interesting. I’ll do this for every individual student, since there’s always something to value.

When I return the students’ work, I’ll ask them to read it back and pay particular attention to the parts highlighted in blue. I’ll then ask them to imagine that every instance of blue highlighter is me sat at my desk, emitting some kind of congratulatory noise or uttering ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good point’.

This reinforces that I’ve enjoyed and paid close attention to their work – important for setting the right tone in feedback lessons – while also

providing opportunities for significant metacognitive benefit. Students can now ask themselves, ‘*Why is this highlighted blue? What am I doing well here? Are there any patterns across what’s highlighted blue?*’ It’s great for encouraging students to think deeply about their own work, whilst showing them a certain degree of individual attention – all at no extra cost to me.

Strategy 2 – Defining excellence

When offering comments on what went well across the class, I’ll pepper my explanations with specific student examples. I might live model under the visualiser something I noticed and jotted down when reading a piece of work, talking the class through exactly why I made a note of it.

Again, I’m demonstrating a level of attention to the individual. This produces real moments of pride when a student’s work is chosen as an exemplar, but I’m also modelling what excellence looks like to the rest of the class, so that others can better emulate it themselves.

Both strategies (and many others I could have chosen) have the same aim. We shouldn’t see Whole Class Feedback as synonymous with

offering no feedback at the level of the individual.

Rather, we should find ways of attending to individual students whilst still retaining the core pedagogic innovations of Whole Class Feedback.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Atherton is a secondary school English teacher; his ‘Codexterosus’ website (codexterosus.home.blog) offers a range of articles and resources for English teaching



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5 REASONS TO TRY... a transition to secondary residential

The secondary transition is often a daunting time, but a dedicated residential can help ease the pressure...



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Have you ever considered organising a transition to secondary residential? Situated adjacent to the Menai Strait, within 169 acres of National Trust parkland, Conway Centres, Anglesey is the perfect venue for whole year secondary residential trips.

1 MEETING NEW FRIENDS

At the start of secondary school, many children will feel nervous about meeting new friends. Taking children away from their school setting and into a social environment will encourage them to feel more confident around their peers, while providing them with opportunities to make new friends and create friendships that will last a lifetime.

2 RESILIENCE AND CONFIDENCE

The transition courses are purposefully run between September and March, when the weather may be more challenging, to encourage children to learn and thrive in a new, potentially tough environment. The activities on offer are designed with the aim that students will continuously improve and develop on a deeper level. The centres will support you and your students in discovering a new sense of confidence and building resilience, while supporting their physical and mental wellbeing, so that they can look forward to their time at secondary school.

3 TEAM-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

All activities have been hand-picked to encourage students to work together as a team, with the same shared goals in mind. By focusing minds with unique teamwork



activities in this way, students can be supported in making a positive contribution whilst developing their willingness to show initiative and sense of responsibility. Through working together, friendships will form and continue to grow over time.

4 GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

The course begins with a 'goal setting' session, where centre staff will look to understand, encourage and support your goals. At the end of the course, centre staff will then work with you to review and reflect on how students have achieved their

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goals during the trip. This is a great chance to understand what your students may be struggling with, and how you can support them back at school.

5 INCREASED FOCUS IN CLASS

Research has found that residential trips help young people appreciate that what they learn at school is important to them. Students will return to school with an increased appetite for learning and looking forward to the years ahead. Should you require any curriculum or learning outcomes specific to your school, the centre can adapt the course to meet your requirements.



KEY POINTS

Whether you're looking for accommodation for 250 children or smaller private accommodation for a class of 30, Conway Centres has something for every school!

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Education is at the heart of everything Conway Centres does; all residentials are organised with clear learning outcomes in mind, and can be tailored to suit your school's specific goals

Who's in charge OUT HERE?

Among the many challenges thrown up by school trips is the requirement for teachers to cede their authority to someone else and play second fiddle, observes **Gordon Cairns...**

No one's ever used the expression 'backseat driver' and meant it as a compliment. Some readers may recall Harry Enfield's 'Only me' character from the 90s – an irritating, flatcapped know-it-all forever telling people in the middle of painting a wall or buying tea bags *'Now, you don't want to do it like that, do you?'*

If we can recognise and even laugh at such behaviour, why do we find it so hard to avoid emulating it? What's stopping us from stepping back when we're with external specialists and outdoor instructors on school trips?

Learned behaviour

It may have something to do with our learned behaviour in the classroom. The Spanish have their own equivalent to the fabled backseat driver in the form of 'Maestro Liendre' – the insect-brained teacher who knows everything but understands nothing.

In the school environment, we are the autonomous deliverers of learning who possess a certain degree of freedom to lead classes on our own terms, often while enjoying to some extent the privilege of being the central focus of activity within the room. Unfortunately, it can be difficult to quickly adapt our school behaviours to outside environments once we've become the sideshow, rather than the main event.

That's how I've previously found myself in secluded forests, wondering why

the outdoor leader isn't standing at the crest of the mound, rather than at the lowest point, in order to better get the class' fullest attention. Or wishing that the sailing instructor would let my terrified students know that the boat isn't going to sink in open water because the plug is out of the bottom of the tiny yacht. That's would be preferable to saying, *'Maybe...'* in response to their worried entreaties.

I'm just thankful that thus far, I've had enough willpower to not say *'You don't want to be doing that'* and instead let outdoor teachers make the teaching points they were aiming for, without any unwanted interventions.

The need for control

We really shouldn't feel like this. Busmen don't actually go on coach

trips by way of a holiday and then drive the bus, do they? Besides, outdoor excursions where the teaching is conducted by someone else is the surely closest thing we get to having a perk of the job – so long as we're able to switch off our inner control freak.

We get to spend time outside the confines of our classrooms without having to prepare any lessons, or indeed anything that generates marking. Discipline largely takes care of itself, since the students are all too aware that fooling around in a canoe will, in the best case scenario, lead to a drenching. And we get to try out fun activities, such as kayaking around glorious Scottish lochs, which aren't otherwise readily available to us, given our daily lives and budgets.

But to fully benefit from the de-stressing benefits of the great outdoors, we have to learn to let go and allow



paid experts to do their job. Otherwise, our need for control can easily overshadow what ought to be time best spent appreciating what our students can achieve in a dramatically different environment.

Allowed to be nervous

A teacher's relationship with an instructor can be complicated to navigate. At the very moment you feel able to pass on the reins of responsibility to the person who actually knows what they're doing, they 'volunteer' you to try the activity first in front of the whole class, who observe this with a mix of emotions.

There are the students who can't believe someone of your age and bulk has enough energy to walk the length of the classroom unaided. Then there are the students willing you on to refuse being the first person to abseil down that sheer cliff face, for the ammunition it will give them back in school. And let's not forget the students who are happy to see you as a useful crash test dummy for gauging the safety of the activity before they put their own limbs on the line.

So it is that I've variously edged across deceptively treacherous rocks, surrounded by deep, black pools of water during a gorge walk up a river; in full spate,

tightrope-edged across a single strand wire bridge above a raging river without a harness, while the class speculated whether I'd make it; and mountain biked round a crumbling course, praying I wouldn't make a fool of myself.

It's a great teaching method, though – showing the young people that you're allowed to be nervous without losing face. Best of all, if a teacher does end up falling into the water, coming off their bike or making a general hash of things, their students will see them crash and survive (while also enjoying a good laugh in the process).

No 'get out'

Nor is that the only thing we can learn from instructors. Observing different approaches to teaching is incredibly valuable. It's possible, for example, to develop kids' resilience by pushing them far further than they'd be pushed in the classroom before their teacher offers a get-out.

On one February gorge walk, when freezing water was coming down from the mountains, I remember expecting the instructors to abandon the session, or at least give some of the

THE ART OF LETTING GO



1. CONTROL FREAK, ME?

7 out of 10 people report being annoyed by actual back-seat drivers, yet only 20% of people believe they're that type of passenger themselves. Go figure. The first step to avoiding butting in on an outdoor instructor's work is to therefore accept that you just might be that kind of teacher yourself and amend your behaviour accordingly.

2. ABANDON YOUR DIGNITY

Don't be the stand-offish teacher who refuses to get stuck in to the activities that have been planned. Facing the same challenges and fears as your students can help create a connection with them. Back in the warmth of the classroom, with those outdoor activities an increasingly distant memory, you'll still have those 'Remember the time that we...' conversations – even if it's just a short chat about how silly you looked dangling from that pulley...

3. BE PRESENT IN THE SESSIONS

It might be tempting to switch off, admire your surroundings and idly wonder whether it's okay to check Twitter on your phone, but the instructor might suddenly need your support. It's not a good look to be shaken out of your reverie and ask 'Who, me?...'

teenagers in the greatest discomfort a chance to get out of the water. Instead, the activity was structured in a way that let us all believe there was no such 'get out' once we were in the river. It meant we all managed to complete the activity by walking the length of the river, and got to enjoy the glow of success that comes from conquering a real challenge.

So next time you're outdoors with your students, embrace your unfamiliar role of jacket watcher, packed lunch distributor and spare glove lender – as it's only once we've learnt to let go that we'll be able to get the most from the trip. It's an adjustment that can take a few days, but it's worth it.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gordon Cairns is an English and forest school teacher who works in a unit for secondary pupils with ASD

Break the RECRUITMENT CYCLE

Schools in deprived areas can face an uphill struggle when it comes to recruiting staff, but it's possible to get the teachers you need by following some simple steps, writes **Adam Riches...**

Recruiting staff in schools in deprived areas can be tough. There's no two ways around it – in education there are certain myths, and those myths can lead to difficulties in appointing individuals to jobs at certain schools.

As many of us will know, the reality is that working at schools in deprived areas is one of the most rewarding things you can do as a teacher. It's no secret that such schools have their challenges, but rest assured, all schools do.

A lasting legacy of COVID has been that remote recruitment processes are now more common, making it more difficult than ever for certain schools to recruit. It sounds like a cliché, but you really do have to see a school functioning in order to really get a feel for it. If,

however, the school you're considering applying to is in an area with a certain reputation – or the school itself has a certain reputation of its own – prospective candidates might not get that opportunity to dispel such misconceptions.

In many ways, COVID has made it harder for schools to recruit effectively, with a number of people expressing concerns that schools in deprived areas will find it hardest of all (or at least even harder than most do at the moment). But not all is lost. There are some simple strategies that can help

ensure candidates see what they should when applying for jobs at schools in deprived areas, thus enabling them to make more balanced and informed decisions regarding the roles on offer.

Reputation management

Prejudice continues to present one of the biggest barriers to staff recruitment for schools in deprived areas. Whether directed towards the school specifically or the area more generally, this can have an enormous impact on your potential pool of candidates

before the recruitment process has even started.

Though it pains me to say it, prejudice of this kind can sometimes be fuelled by other teachers in the local area. Stories can be passed on – often fourth- or fifth-hand – in a way that very quickly puts off prospective teachers.

Reputations can, of course, be difficult to shake off. I work in a school that's seen rapid improvement in a few short years, from Inadequate to Good with Outstanding leadership, but it's been a slog. Staff and students, as well as parents and the wider community, have all banded together, and with direction from the right trust, the school has been transformed.

I'm immensely proud to have played a part in those efforts, though in many ways, the reputation of the era we've left behind is still what's initially referenced

“Schools in deprived areas have exceptionally strong bonds within the staff body and are often the most supportive”



whenever the school is discussed among the local educational community.

But still, that reputation is mentioned less often now than it was. A combination of effective PR and celebrations of the school and the achievements of its students and staff has started to sway the balance. Social media has played a big part in this, as has effective communication with the local press, so that when the school is searched for, positive sentiments are more easily discoverable than they used to be. With so much misinformation passed around due to word of mouth, dispelling the myths about teaching in deprived areas remains extremely important.

Needs and wants

Misconceptions around working at schools in deprived areas, and the associated pressures of such jobs, can cause candidate pools to be smaller than those for schools in more prestigious areas. As such, it's often the case that the narrowed choices school leaders are left with work against their 'wants' when it comes to the shortlisting of candidates.

Schools in deprived areas tend to have significantly higher rates of staff turnover. Research by Education Datalab found

that teachers in the most deprived 10% of schools were 70% more likely to leave than those in the least deprived schools. This leaves the leaders of deprived schools with even less room for manoeuvre, making the process of filling posts a delicate balancing act.

The secret is getting the right candidates through the door. By effectively advertising the post with clear and well thought through parameters and role requirements, you're more likely to get an appropriate candidate.

Careful consideration should be paid to how the advert is worded. Archaic traditions involving heavy implicature of language ought to be a thing of the past. If you're looking for a teaching and learning lead who can deliver CPD, make that explicit. There's nothing worse than finding out you've shortlisted the wrong people because you made the advert too broad in the first instance.

The right support

There are challenges regularly faced by schools in deprived areas that many teachers won't have had to confront, or been trained for during their ITT and NQT years. Some may well have been on placements at such schools, but just as many won't. Similarly, leaders

with a certain type of contextual experience might lack some of the more refined skills that come from working in deprived areas – or may even possess those qualities, but won't have had the chance to put them to good use.

When recruiting, one of the key challenges is therefore seeing candidates' potential, and considering what training and support they may need to thrive in your context. That applies to all teaching posts, of course, not just those in deprived areas – but be aware of the time that may need to be put aside for acclimatisation.

Publicising the support that your school is able to offer new teachers joining you can be a great way of dispelling any persistent myths that might be circulating around your setting. I've found that schools in deprived areas have exceptionally strong bonds within the staff body, and are often the most supportive. I know this

first-hand, having worked in a number of such schools myself. Showing prospective candidates explicitly what kind of transitional support you can offer will go a long way towards helping you get the staff your school needs.

We know that staff make the biggest difference to student outcomes, so making sure the right people are teaching your lessons is of paramount importance. Teachers – don't overlook schools in deprived areas when submitting those job applications, and assume that they're no-fly-zones, and leaders – do what you can to make sure your school doesn't look like one.

ACTION POINTS

- Avoid traditional rhetoric and be clear as to what you want
- Showcase what you have to offer new staff – make the support you can provide visible from the start
- Celebrate your successes and cultivate a positive reputation via effective communications
- Emphasise the impact you have on the local community



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

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- Life Lab (vaping)
- VolteFace (Drugs on Social Media)
- Liverpool School Improvement (practical classroom approaches)
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What's your reticence response?

If you're struggling to develop students' confidence in their speaking and listening skills, a fresh approach may be in order, suggests **Steve Smith...**

One of the main challenges facing MFL teachers is the reluctance exhibited by many KS3 pupils to engage with communicating in a new language. This is partly explained by the prevalent attitudes to other languages and cultures we see in some communities, as well as the dominance of English as a world language.

But a growing number of MFL departments around England have managed to overcome pupils' reticence and improve their attitudes, confidence and skills by experimenting with some innovative teaching methods.

Comprehensible input

These include the use of sentence builder tables and

knowledge organisers (or a combination of both) to develop confidence in listening and speaking from the earliest stages of learning. Following many years in which appearances of English were discouraged in MFL lessons, both tools make a virtue of showing pupils English translations in order to make their learning more meaningful. One of the fundamentals of language learning is that we need to understand messages in order for the brain to process new language. Put another way, comprehensible input is the bedrock of second language acquisition. When a different language is presented to us in phrases or full sentences alongside an English translation, there are no barriers to understanding. Pupils aren't limited to responding with just single words or short phrases – a

frustrating experience for those learners who want to speak in sentences.

So, what should a typical MFL lesson look like?

Noisy but productive

A printed or displayed resource can serve as the basis for tasks such as whole class repetition, paired reading, translation and comprehension.

The stress will initially be on language input, with compositional writing emerging later in the sequence once pupils have recycled the target language on numerous occasions over a number of lessons. The lessons themselves may be quite teacher-led, or feature a good deal of paired practice. MFL lessons can generally end up being noisy, but highly productive, with lots of listening and speaking.

A rigorous focus on accurate pronunciation builds phonics skills, which will in turn help to produce more confident speakers and effective listeners.

When pupils are speaking and listening a great deal, there may be a relative dearth of written evidence to show observers, particularly in the first year. It's therefore incumbent upon MFL

teachers to explain that their methodology is

underpinned by second language acquisition theory and cognitive science – notably, the importance of

comprehensible input, phonological working memory, phonics awareness and chunking language repeatedly to maximise the efficient use of working memory.

Firm foundations

Could reading aloud and translation of chunked language come at the expense of more meaningful, spontaneous communication? On the contrary, the evidence suggests that early development of phonological, phonics and pronunciation skills provides a firm foundation on which to develop more creative uses of language.

Allowing pupils to frequently work with phrases and full sentences – as opposed to single words put together according to grammatical rules – more closely reflects how we pick up our first languages, while also giving pupils the means to work confidently with a repertoire of useful language. Evidence from many happy classrooms suggests that revised schemes of work and new methodology have been making a real mark.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Smith is an experienced teacher educator and author; for more information, visit frenchteacher.net or follow @spsmith45

TAILORED TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Leyla Palmer of Windsor Academy Trust tells us why instructional coaching may well be the CPD delivery mechanism you've been looking for...

Schools across the country are often faced with the difficult challenge of ensuring that their teacher CPD is impactful. But what does impactful CPD look like?

With our long history as a provider of CPD, we've carried out a considerable amount of research in this area to try and answer that age-old question, and better understand what really makes for effective and meaningful CPD.

Closing the loop

We're well aware of the difficulties school leaders will often grapple with when it comes to CPD. All too often, you'll hear teachers remarking on how regular whole school CPD is often poorly aligned to their subject-specific and individual needs. Most school leaders are conscious that this type of CPD often fails to close the loop in terms of teachers actually going away and implementing what they've 'learnt' in their own classrooms.

Instructional coaching is an approach that aims to address the issues often associated with traditional teacher CPD, and allow for a greater degree of individualised and subject-specific training.

A core principle of instructional coaching is that trained coaches work individually with teachers to develop their expertise. A coach will regularly drop in

on a teacher's lessons for around 10 to 15 minutes, and identify a bite-sized area for improvement. They will then consider what the ideal outcome for that teacher would look like, and identify this as the teacher's 'target performance'.

Through a subsequent conversation between coach and teacher, the teacher will then move from their current performance to the

target performance by practising the identified classroom strategy, with support and direction from the coach, in a process referred to as 'deliberate practice'.

This allows teachers to close the knowing/doing gap, enabling them to overcome existing ingrained habits and adopt new behaviours, thus closing the loop between theory and implementation.

Productive discussions

Instructional coaching seeks to impart contextual and pedagogical skills and knowledge to those teachers being coached based on where they're currently at, rather than assuming a one-size fits-all model – as is so frequently the case with generic, whole school CPD approaches.

Everyone, from trainee teachers right up to highly experienced practitioners, can benefit from this form of coaching. What's important to note, however, is the approach the coach adopts will be specifically tailored to the skill level, experience and existing expertise of each respective teacher.

Generally speaking, coaches are more likely to adopt a more facilitative

approach when working with experienced practitioners. With junior and relatively inexperienced teachers, a more directive-based approach will be more effective.

Allowing the resulting coaching conversations to fall somewhere between the two ends of this spectrum allows for input from teachers and more productive discussions. Teachers thus retain opportunities to demonstrate autonomy and creativity, while coaches acknowledge and respect that teachers know their students and understand their specific classroom context.

Getting started

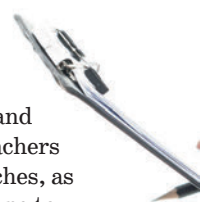
I was looking for an approach that could drive forward our teacher performance, while

transforming our teachers' and leaders' thinking around how this might be achieved. Having engaged with a great deal of research around instructional coaching from Dr Sam Sims and Steve Farndon, and having seen Jon Hutchinson (director of training and development at the Reach Foundation) present a talk on the topic during a Future Leaders conference, I wanted to explore how we might introduce instructional coaching at my school. This led me to launch a pilot programme, which saw us share the vision and research around the initiative with other senior and middle leaders in order to gain buy-in.

The next step involved identifying and training a team of teachers to become expert coaches, as well as finding solutions to various practical and logistical complexities. Where would we find the time to do this? What ongoing support could I provide the coaches with, and what resources would we need? Those were just some of the questions that needed addressing prior to the pilot's launch.

'Cringe', but vital

In common with many of the coaches who took part in the pilot, I personally found the approach's deliberate practice aspect to be the most challenging. My first attempt at acting out a



suggested strategy with a coachee ended up feeling really awkward at first. That said, we have since received positive feedback on our instructional coaching pilot programme from the coaches and teachers involved, and observed a noticeable impact on teacher effectiveness in lessons.

This prompted us to scale up our instructional coaching approach from being simply school-wide, to one encompassing the entirety of our school trust – which, after those initial months of implementation, ultimately proved to be successful.

There were numerous considerations to make when doing this, however. One was to be aware of individual school contexts. For example, larger schools tend to require a staggered, term-by-term approach to one-to-one coaching, where weekly one-to-one sessions usually aren't possible due to the sheer volume of coaches required.

Whole school, teacher deliberate practice was then built into staff meeting time, further developing the

coaching culture. We also needed to ensure that we effectively trained our teams of coaches in each school before implementation.

To assist with the latter, we enlisted the support of Jon Hutchinson, who delivered

three bespoke coaching training sessions for our coaches during the first term of implementation.

As one coach put it, “The training on identifying action steps with the highest leverage really helped me to focus on targets that actually move practice forward.

“Deliberate practice is cringey, but it is vital. We are now comfortable with it, and can see how it prepares us to do it for real. It means that we can approach different actions in the classroom with confidence.”

No silver bullet

School leaders leading the charge on

this alternate approach to CPD across our schools have had to ensure their coaching pairings are well thought out. It's critical that these are built upon trusting relationships, where teachers feel safe to practice with their coach, without fear of judgement or any negative repercussions. We've further found that pairing coaches with teachers who share their subject specialisms has allowed for greater subject specificity in the ensuing coaching conversations.

There's no silver bullet for the complexities associated with teacher CPD, and I would stress that instructional coaching is definitely no 'quick fix', since it involves different challenges of its own. To ensure it has a fighting chance of being effective, schools have to allocate sufficient time for the implementation process, and

ultimately decide for themselves which elements of their prior CPD approach have to go in order for the new method to be successful.

Looking ahead, our next steps will involve refining our approaches to instructional coaching, and utilising feedback to inform our future practice. We're also in the process of designing a coaching programme for our professional services teams, and have high hopes for the impact this will subsequently have across our family of schools.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leyla Palmer is head of professional learning and talent at Windsor Academy Trust; to find out more, visit windsoracademytrust.org.uk or follow @WinAcadTrust

“THE BEST WHICH HAS BEEN THOUGHT AND SAID”

Phil Beadle unpacks a borrowed educational rallying cry that has come to signify something rather different to its intended meaning...

It is a strategy of power to state that schools should be apolitical, without any sense of the ridiculousness of that position, to force children to sing the national anthem and memorise ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’. It is a strategy of power to demand balancing ideas to “Victim narratives’ that are harmful to British society,” as if such ideas could be balanced – the ‘balancing perspective’ to stating that Black Lives Matter being that they do not. And it is a strategy of power to direct children in the path of “The best that has been thought and said,” believing that it will “engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.”

Where does this idea, ‘the best that has been thought and said,’ come from? Is it simply, and self evidently, a notion that requires no examination, no criticism, no, erm, balancing ideas? In answer to this, it first appeared in our discourse during the middle years of the last decade when that prince regent of misquotation, Michael Gove, started throwing mangled versions of it around in lofty speeches. It appeared as “The best that has been thought and written” in his speech about the Mister Men (bit.ly/ts101-cc1) and in the same form in a letter to

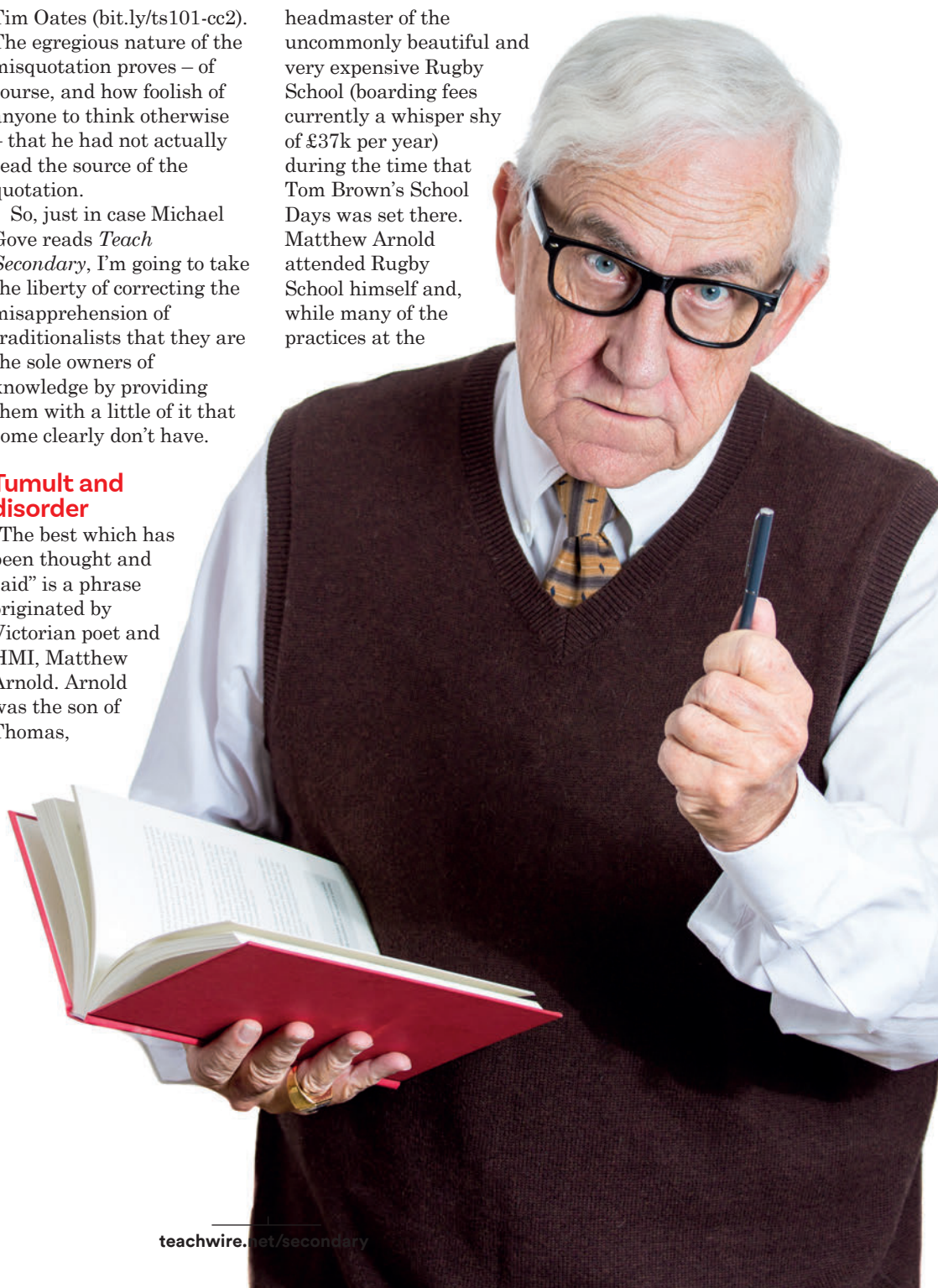
Tim Oates (bit.ly/ts101-cc2). The egregious nature of the misquotation proves – of course, and how foolish of anyone to think otherwise – that he had not actually read the source of the quotation.

So, just in case Michael Gove reads *Teach Secondary*, I’m going to take the liberty of correcting the misapprehension of traditionalists that they are the sole owners of knowledge by providing them with a little of it that some clearly don’t have.

Tumult and disorder

“The best which has been thought and said” is a phrase originated by Victorian poet and HMI, Matthew Arnold. Arnold was the son of Thomas,

headmaster of the uncommonly beautiful and very expensive Rugby School (boarding fees currently a whisper shy of £37k per year) during the time that Tom Brown’s School Days was set there. Matthew Arnold attended Rugby School himself and, while many of the practices at the



school – fagging, roasting, smoking out and tossing in a blanket – were barbaric, Arnold, in a rarely acknowledged fact, was decidedly a product of halls of privilege.

The phrase appears in his prose piece *Culture and Anarchy*, which appeared immediately after working class political protest – which Arnold refers to as “tumult and disorder” – had succeeded in securing the vote for working class urban males.

Culture and anarchy are presented as deliberate antitheses: the two potential paths out of what Arnold saw as “our present difficulties”, caused by a working class losing “their strong habits of subordination and deference”. He saw the need for the middle class to embrace knowledge, so they might be ready to guide the country away from the potential anarchy of working class rule. “Then let the middle class rule once they have perfected themselves,” he wrote in *A French Eton*.

Fresh thought

Arnold also saw two paths to enacting the will of God (with which middle class rule conveniently coincided) – the Hebraic, the study of the scriptures, or the Hellenic, the study of all knowledge. Arnold embraced the Hellenic, so, quite reasonably, he is a foundational voice for those who would argue for a knowledge-rich curriculum ... if only they had read him.

When you just take a phrase that seems to have come from nowhere, that you might dimly misremember from school, and don't do the research before putting it in important documents like the National Curriculum, you can get things wrong. Had the people responsible for the National

Curriculum read *Culture and Anarchy* they would have noticed, as Dominic Wyse did in a blog for the IOE (see bit.ly/ts101-cc3), that Arnold recommended engagement with “The best which has been thought and said” in order to “turn a fresh stream of thought onto our stock notions and habits”.

Arnold wished his people to engage with great and historic literature to come

engagement with such books, since these generally exalt freedom and individuality. The way we view such texts in terms of their position in the social space is not necessarily the way readers view them.

The working class child who realises they can understand Shakespeare, Blake and Keats is one who is subject to a profoundly emancipatory

establishment's (imagined) cultural superiority. By asserting that there actually is a best that has been thought and said, and locating that best on their home territory, they perform a nakedly political act while deluding themselves that they're acting apolitically.

Power says there is one legitimate culture for study in schools. Power says any social structure that could have hosted such great books does not have to be altered. Power says that your own culture is a prison of ‘disadvantage’. Power says nothing of worth has been produced in the last 120 years, nor indeed has anything of any cultural worth ever been produced by anyone with dark skin. Power says betterment is attained by devotion to the development of the internal realm.

Power requires you not to notice depraved inequalities in the external world. Power says ‘Here are our gods; they are better than yours.’ Power says worship them, and by extension, the hierarchies that allowed them to be produced. Power says ‘keep politics out of school’ while simultaneously loading your plate with heaps of poorly concealed propaganda.

That is what “the best that has been thought and said” is all about. It is a wolf clad in fairy's clothes, hoping no one notices it's a wolf.

“When you take a phrase that seems to have come from nowhere and don't do the research before putting it in the National Curriculum, you can get things wrong”

up with new ideas beyond their stock responses. But the DfE misuse Matthew Arnold. Far from utilising culture as a springboard for fresh thought, they use it to resurrect the primacy of the stale, the male and the pale; to reinstate the kneejerk paternalism of the private schoolboy – stock notions, check; stock habits, present also – and thereby ensure that children read only books written by white people before the dawning of the 20th century as that, allegedly, “Is the best training for the mind”.

The canonical arguments of right and left often fail to realise one thing. While they tend to agree that a dead, white and (chiefly) male canon will be likely to deliver a more culturally obedient populous, one side argues this is a good thing while the other argues against it. What is not noticed is that the idea of a repressive curriculum is not necessarily the real impact of the working class's history of

epiphany that affects his or her future engagement with the intellectual realm. As Jonathan Rose writes in *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Class*, “Contrary to all the intentions of the authors, classic conservative texts could make plebeian readers militant and articulate.”

Accepting this, however, the glib ‘did-my-homework-on-the-bus’ responses of traditionalists are not sufficiently sophisticated on this subject to be taken properly seriously. What the right wing cultural commentators tend to do is to argue for the ‘great books’ approach by erecting a man of straw so sizeable it would be a candidate for a starring role in a remake of *The Wickerman*. “How patronising,” they say, “to assume Black and white working class children cannot get anything from Shakespeare.” As no one has claimed. Ever.

Ultimately, the misuse of Matthew Arnold is an assertion of the ruling class



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Beadle is an experienced teacher, author, broadcaster, speaker, and journalist; his latest book, *The Fascist Painting: What is Cultural Capital?* (John Catt, £16) is a wide-ranging exploration of ‘cultural capital’, its meaning and place within the school curriculum. For more details, visit philbeadle.com or follow @PhilBeadle

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“They do things differently THERE...”

Adam Riches looks at how to maximise the benefits and long-term impact of fact-finding visits to other schools

Among the many knock-on effects of the pandemic was the forced limiting of valuable networking opportunities.

While there were some huge benefits to working online and time savings from needing to travel less, what many of us missed were face-to-face interactions with teachers working at other schools.

School visits can offer much to both experienced and early career teachers. Seeing how others do the same, or at least similar things to you can have a transformative impact on your practice. Seeing the application of approaches in different contexts often also allows teachers to critique their own teaching and students' learning.

When done right, school visits can result in major gains – but how can we get the most out of them?

Pick the right place

Visiting other schools costs money and can involve complicated cover arrangements, so when the opportunity arises, it's important that you pick the right school.

You may choose to visit a particular school because it's renowned for its good results in certain subjects, or due to its reputation for reforming behaviour. Maybe its SEND provision is notably strong.

The obvious thing to do might be to focus on those settings with the best

reputations, but it doesn't always follow that they're the best places to visit. Developing schools can be just as useful as more 'polished' schools. You can learn a great deal from examples of things done well, but also just as much from centres that approach areas differently to how you'd tackle them yourself.

Yes, having the chance to study model lessons or curriculums can be great – but more often than not, you'll learn just as much from examining what *isn't* being done.

Go with an aim in mind

Another big consideration is context. I work in an area of high social deprivation, but that's not to say that visiting an independent school wouldn't be a useful exercise. I can't reduce my class size to eight, and I might not be able to provide the kind of cultural experiences they can, but pedagogically, there's still much I can glean about the teaching taking place there.

The real value of the exercise is to see how varying approaches can be applied within your context. It's rare for a model to be directly translatable between contexts, however similar those schools may appear, since there are simply too many variables involved.

You aren't going to carry out a school visit and promptly change the world upon returning to your own

school. It can be motivating and inspiring to see how things are done differently, but we must accept that one visit is just the start.

Approach any school visit with a clear mission objective in mind. Simply turning up there in the hope of seeing something, anything, that will help you and your colleagues or students is a risky strategy, so consider what you want to get out of the visit.

This might sound obvious, but setting out your end goal at the start will help you stay laser focused on one, or several aspects of the school you're visiting. We know how busy and chaotic schools can be; by heading there with some simple goals in mind, you can minimise the white noise and make sure you come away with something genuinely useful.

Be sure to liaise with staff before you go. You want to talk to the right people about the right things. If you're going with a subject focus, narrow



it down to a specific Key Stage and make sure that Key Stage is being taught when you're there. Similarly, if you're hoping to look at how a topic is being taught, make sure it's actually timetabled.

When it comes to behavioural approaches and other variable focuses, you can't really account for whether you'll see more or less of these in action, but you can still ensure that the staff there will be willing to immerse you into how the school addresses those areas.

Go with realistic expectations

School visits are brilliant for helping you to build and reflect on what you do in your school, but can also be great opportunities for establishing wider collaborative networks with others outside of your immediate bubble. They can highly effective motivators and catalysts for overcoming acute and persistent issues in your own context, but the visit itself won't necessarily solve the issue.

In all likelihood,

you'll need to spend some time reflecting on, and then putting into action what you've seen, in a way that actually enables some sort of impact to be had. Yes, there may be some techniques and strategies you can start using straight away – but go in with a set of realistic expectations.

View any visits to other schools not as solutions in themselves, but as a part of a map pointing to where the solution you're seeking might lie.

useful way of examining alternative approaches through an informative lens. Of course, I happen to think that the way my department teaches English is the best way, because that's how I've instructed them to do it – but do the kids that I teach share that view? Ask them!

Whether you're able to gain genuine insight into how well things are working, and crucially, how those approaches might be improved upon within your school, will rest on the quality of your interactions during the visit.

Simply jotting everything down into a notebook isn't going to be as helpful as actively getting involved.

Keep it going

A one-off visit is helpful. Ongoing communication and two-way dialogues

between schools more so. Regular structured peer support is better still. Taking the time to visit other schools can do much to help both parties realise the value that comes from centres working together, so after your visit, keep those communication channels open.

Invite teachers back to your school, and make the most of this newly opened dialogue around teaching. Some of the biggest improvements made within departments, across whole schools and even trusts will often start with a school visit that later turns out to be a genuine game-changer.

“The real value of the exercise is to see how varying approaches can be applied within your context”

Don't be an observer

To make your visit truly worthwhile, be proactive. Talk to staff, talk to students, ask questions, look at students' work, books and data. Take it all in.

This can be overwhelming, but you need to get a feel for the approaches, styles and most importantly, impact of the teaching and learning you encounter during the visit in order to accurately judge if, how and when you might be able to apply similar (or indeed different) things yourself.

Simply listening to a curriculum lead drone on about how they structure their topics might seem helpful on the surface, but in reality, actually seeing how that curriculum is delivered, and has been delivered, will be much more valuable.

Interacting with students can also be massively helpful. Canvassing their views and opinions will give you a



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

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KEY POINTS

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FOCUS ON: MATHS

This issue, we explore some of the barriers – real or imagined – that serve to prevent students from engaging with a subject that’s widely understood to be vital, yet saddled with a reputation for being difficult...

What can teachers do to present maths as an approachable, inclusive and compelling subject?

THE AGENDA:

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“But I’m no good...”

Colin Foster suggests some ways in which teachers can better understand and support those students who have convinced themselves that they’re simply ‘no good’ at maths...

Very young children often have boundless overconfidence.

They think they know everything and have no sense of their own limits – they’re the epitome of the Dunning–Kruger effect. They’ll often receive lots of encouragement from adults, both at home and at school, and perceive little sense of pressure, since nobody expects them to know everything.

However, this blissful state can’t continue forever. By the time these same children have reached secondary school, they’ll have often become disillusioned about

education and their own abilities. They may have already concluded that they are simply ‘no good’ at certain subjects, with maths often near the top of that list.

Why does this happen, and could it be prevented? And when it does happen, how can schools best support these students?

Cultural issues

It’s far too easy to blame teachers for this. It’s sometimes implied that negative attitudes towards maths can be ascribed to previous teachers not having provided students with sufficiently positive early experiences of the subject. Certainly, if your everyday experience of maths lessons

involves very little success – at least as defined by other people – it would be surprising if that didn’t turn you off the subject.

But there’s more to it than that. As a society, we have serious problems with how we view maths and maths ability.

Views may differ on Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s plans for students to study the subject until the age of 18, but he wasn’t wrong when he observed earlier this year that, “We’ve got to change this anti-maths mindset. We’ve got to start prizing numeracy for what it is – a key skill every bit as essential as reading,” before vowing, “I won’t sit back and allow this cultural sense that it’s ok to be bad at maths to put our children at a disadvantage.”

Maths is indeed treated differently from other subjects, but then some adults will often boast about their failings in other areas. People will happily admit to not being able to

understand Shakespeare, an inability to sing or draw, having two left feet for dancing (see Leonard, Bannister, & D’Souza, 2020), having a ‘brown thumb’ for gardening, hopelessness at parallel parking or ignorance when it comes to using technology. I think we can sometimes make too much of maths being special in this respect.



Embracing the label

Even maths teachers themselves aren't always comfortable with their identity as 'mathematicians'. Some time ago, a Twitter survey found that many maths teachers were uncomfortable describing themselves as mathematicians, whereas most music teachers will happily embrace the label 'musician'. It somehow seems easier to say *'I'm a musician'*, even if you've never taken a music exam in your life, than it is to say *'I'm a mathematician'* – even if you have a string of maths qualifications to your name and earn a living as a maths teacher!

This is perhaps because many people will study maths until they find it too hard and then stop – even those who have completed maths degrees and PhDs. They'll start off confidently, but by the final year they'll be desperately looking for 'easier' module

options – something they would never have anticipated doing when they began. I personally know of someone with a doctorate in maths who says they don't feel that they're 'really very good at maths', because they needed considerable help to complete their PhD.

There seems to be a view that if you struggle at all with maths, then there must be something wrong with you. I prefer to take the view that *'Mathematicians aren't the people who find maths easy; they're the people who enjoy how hard it is.'*

“Mathematicians aren't the people who find maths easy; they're the people who enjoy how hard it is”

Placing the 'blame'

It's also wrong to blame parents. Everyone knows that a guaranteed way to annoy your child's maths teacher is to turn up to parents evening and dismiss concerns about your child's progress by saying, *"Oh, I was never any good at maths when I was at school."* This is obviously unhelpful, because it gives the child a ready-made excuse for failure, and potentially sets up a self-fulfilling prophecy – but does it follow that parents are supposed to conceal their true feelings about maths? If parents

themselves had a negative experience of learning maths in school, they can hardly be blamed if they haven't yet got over it. Besides, we all know that teenagers don't blindly follow their parents' viewpoints – if anything, they'll often take pride in liking things their parents don't. We can't lay the blame at parents' doors.

Finally, it's also far too easy to blame the students themselves – *they didn't try hard enough, they weren't prepared to think, and so they got left behind.* I'm sure we've all come across

students who seem fine at most school subjects, but for some reason have a real block when it comes to maths.

In some of these cases, there could be issues of maths anxiety or dyscalculia at play that have gone unrecognised. More generally, however, if students have a consistently low view of their mathematical capability, then ascribing that to their own fault is clearly only going to make matters worse.

Play the long game

There's no quick fix. None of us, adults or students, change our attitudes in a hurry, and that's normally a good thing. We need to start by recognising how students feel and accepting those feelings, at least for now.

Trying to argue students out of it – *'You ARE good at maths, really – look, you got this right'* – is well-

meant, but can communicate that we don't take students' feelings seriously. Students will sometimes think they're bad at maths because they feel that they don't understand anything, even if they can perform certain procedures and arrive at the right answers.

They might not realise that other students similarly don't understand certain concepts all that well, but are perhaps simply less reflective or concerned about it. It's sometimes the most thoughtful students, those with lots of potential to make sense of the subject, who feel that they're 'no good'.

A more positive approach is to spend time working on sense-making with difficult concepts, rather than aiming for quick and cheap successes by saying *'Never mind; just do this'*. Short-term strategies are unlikely to convince students that they can really be comfortable with maths.

Likewise, attempts to motivate students by bringing in tenuous 'fun', pseudo-real life contexts will often fall flat. Instead of trying to generate superficial enthusiasm so that they work harder and are ultimately successful, it's usually better to turn this round. Focus instead on direct ways of engineering students' success and understanding, which can then lead to more genuine motivation and a more positive outlook on the subject. Play the long game, and you'll see those attitudes gradually change.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colin Foster (@colinfoster77) is a Reader in Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics Education at Loughborough University; for more details, visit foster77.co.uk

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CAN'T CALCULATE, WON'T CALCULATE

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

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

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

Is it dyscalculia?

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

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

Lack of motivation?

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



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

Feelings of anxiety?

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

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

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

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

What can we do?

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

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

With multi-step processes, introduce them gradually. Give students

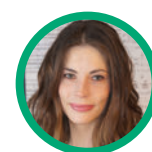
opportunities to practise component parts before putting everything together. Backwards-fading can be a powerful tool – instead of 10 questions, provide all steps, bar the last, in question 1. Then all steps bar the final two in question 2. Continue to fade out until they're completing questions without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

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

Messages count

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

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



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

“What’s a kilometre?”

When your pupils tackle questions that involve conversions, do they know what’s actually being asked of them? **Richard Coles** isn’t so sure...

The purpose of this article is to consider the way we, as maths teachers, deliver content to our students and why we do what we do. Questions will be posed throughout, alongside examples to highlight my thinking when planning and delivering the topic of conversions, though the points could easily be applied to other topics that suffer from similar misconceptions.

In recent years there has been a decline in pupils’ conceptual understanding of conversions. Across all exam boards in 2019, it emerged that pupils at both Foundation and Higher level answered questions about conversions poorly. Defined as ‘A change in the form of a measurement, different units, without a change in the size or amount,’ the etymology of the word derives from the Latin *conversionem* (‘A turning round, revolving; alteration, change’); a noun of action from the past-participle stem *convertere* (‘To turn around;

to transform,’); from the assimilated *com* (‘with, together’); and *vertere* (‘to turn’).

Why might students find conversions difficult? We live at a time where we’re plagued by a combination of imperial and metric units. We measure our speed when driving in miles per hour, but compete in 5km park runs on Saturday mornings. We measure our height in feet and inches, but weigh ourselves in kilograms. Children barely know if they’re coming or going with regards to knowing what any given unit is, let alone how to convert it.

Complex vocabulary

It’s sometimes easy to assume that students don’t answer questions correctly because they don’t understand the methods required, or the content, yet the language of the question also requires decoding. Do we spend enough time breaking down question phrasing and vocabulary?

The work of Beck and

McKeown refers to different tiers of vocabulary that increase in complexity, but are all essential for students if they are to understand exam questions. In essence, tier 1 vocabulary is everyday language that will be familiar to all students (e.g. ‘unit’). Tier 2 vocabulary is more complex, perhaps not part of everyday speech, but likely to be found in academic text across different subjects (e.g. ‘equivalent’). Tier 3 vocabulary is subject-specific and specialist (e.g. ‘algebra’).

We can generally ignore tier 1 words and assume understanding, and will naturally tend to focus on our own subject’s tier 3 key terms. However, we also need to spend time developing confidence with tier 2 words, as these are powerful for helping to decode exam questions.

Concepts and formulas

Let’s look at three examples from AO1-3 and consider how to deliver them, beginning with this AQA AO1 question:

What metric unit should be used when giving the distance from London to Liverpool?

+ Kilometres

+ Miles

+ Meters

What Tier 3 words are needed to understand this question? Do the students know what is meant by a kilometre, mile and metre?

We should then consider the students’ understanding of those Tier 2 words. I’ve seen many experienced teachers, including myself, assume that students know these already – but do they? Take ‘distance’, for example. Do we explicitly tell pupils the meaning, or simply assume they know it? What metric do pupils use for distance themselves in their daily lives? Did they make the link between ‘metric’ and ‘metre’ in the question? Do they even have any knowledge of where London and Liverpool are in relation to each other?

In many trials of this question pupils selected ‘miles’, due to them having often been in cars and knowing that signposts display distances in miles. Let’s examine a second example.

A car travels 192.5 km in 3 hours and 45 minutes. What is the average speed of the car?

Key items to consider here include the way formulas can differ between maths and science departments. How confident are you that the formulas you use are the

8 STEPS TO IMPROVED ATTAINMENT

1 Consider the phrasing and vocabulary used within questions

2 Ensure pupils fully understand all tier 2 words, as well as tier 3

3 Employ an effective delivery that takes into account pupil

starting points

4 Don’t skip the basics – ensure your starters recap prior knowledge

5 Use a variety of skilful questioning techniques to ensure pupils understand key concepts prior to attempting questions themselves

6 Present a variety of questions in different contexts, using different

phrasing and at different levels of AO1, AO2 and AO3

7 Check that pupils are fluent with all success criteria set out at the start before moving on

8 Build in opportunities for recall and retrieval throughout your curriculum and lesson sequence to ensure overlapping and repetition of the basics

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bit.ly/ts124-MC1



same as those taught by your science colleagues? It may be worth investigating this, both to maintain consistency and avoid student confusion between subjects.

I have personally used both methods, and found that students with lower attainment are more successful when using formula triangles. A personal favourite of mine is teaching the acronym 'Don't Squash Turtles' – cheap chuckles from the pupils, but they remember it and get the order correct. I first saw a colleague using this in 2010 and have never looked back since.

Returning to our question, can your pupils convert minutes to decimal form? Have they practised this as an explicit skill prior to being given the AO2-style question? Also, consider again what tier 2 words might need addressing. Do your students understand the concept of 'average speed'? Have you sequenced the learning within your curriculum to ensure that averages were delivered in advance of teaching speed / distance / time? Make the link between the two explicit.

Underselling our pupils

Let's look a final example, AO3, taken from the 2019 international exam specification:

You often hear the word 'acre' when farmers are talking about the size of their farms. Farmer Giles likes to think of himself as a modern farmer. He says that his farm occupies an area of

1,011,750m² – that's one million, eleven thousand, seven hundred and fifty square meters.

But Farmer Morris is still a bit old-fashioned. He says that his farm, which occupies 250 acres, is larger than Farmer Giles's farm. If one acre is equivalent to an area of 4,047m², whose farm is larger?

How many of your pupils would simply skip this question altogether due to its wording? Can they extract the key information? A task that I've found effective is for pupils to redact the text

and then see what information helps. As with AO1 and AO2, it's essential that pupils understand in advance not only the technical vocabulary of tier 3, but also the tier 2 words within the questions.

This specific wording may be unlikely to appear as GCSE question, but we undersell our pupils if we don't cover questions of this type because they don't employ the exact same wording as the specification. Pupils are still being called on to demonstrate the same mathematical skills required for conversion, but with

deeper contextual understanding. In my opinion, the development of these overall skills is more important, and certainly more beneficial for later life, than simply satisfying the exam requirements.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Coles is an assistant director of sixth form at Brockhill Park Performing Arts College and an experienced head of maths; follow him at @richardcoles10

Make those REVISION SESSIONS COUNT

Shaun Allison highlights the research, techniques and strategies that can help ensure your revision sessions are doing what they need to

As the GCSE exams season concludes for another year, many teachers will be reflecting on the extent to which their students were sufficiently prepared. Can any lessons to be learnt from this year's cohort, and is it worth thinking now about teacher-led revision sessions in 2023/24?

Now, whether these should take place during lesson time, after school, before school or at lunchtimes is a debate for another time – and a question probably best left for schools to decide themselves.

The reality is that these sessions will be happening, so how can we use research evidence to ensure that this precious pre-exam time is used efficiently? Here are some ideas for activities we can be doing during revision sessions that will most likely be effective.

Deliberate Practice

The purpose of revision sessions should be to support students with what Anders Ericsson calls 'deliberate practice' (see bit.ly/ts-deliberate). The idea is to concentrate on a specific element and repeatedly practise that element under guidance, rather than concentrate on improving the end result; if you succeed in mastering the individual elements,

the end result will take care of itself.

Therefore, rather than endlessly practising past exam papers in full, focus on specific types of question and get the students to become really good at doing these. A great example of this can be seen in professional football. FC Barcelona haven't become great by practising whole games. What they do is endlessly practise the fine elements of the game, such as passing and moving, which is demonstrated brilliantly when they do 'tiki taka' on the practice pitch – take a look at an example via bit.ly/fcb-tiki. Instead of seeing your revision sessions as forms of 'whole exam' practise, think of them as tiki-taka!

Spaced Practice

There's a strong body of evidence from cognitive science which indicates, perhaps counterintuitively, that we all need a little 'forgetting time' in order to remember things. We're best off coming back to material we're trying to learn having left some in between – we call this 'spaced practice', which you can read more about via bit.ly/rb-spaced.

With that in mind, rather than trying cram in lots of revision sessions close together, it's best to space them apart. Most school timetables will thankfully do this for us, but it's

worth thinking about in our planning.

Practice testing

There's also a large body of evidence which suggests that the act of having to retrieve something from your memory strengthens the memory, and in turn the long-term retrieval of that information (you can read more on this via bit.ly/rb-retrieval). Taking this into account, it makes sense for us to use revision sessions for retrieval practice, but going over content from throughout the course. Useful activities here might include:

- Quick retrieval quizzes at the start of the lesson or revision session
- Creating a mind map from memory, maybe with some cues
- Filling in a blank knowledge organiser.

Worked examples

Put simply, a worked example is a completed (or partly completed) problem that students can see and refer to while working on a similar problem. Worked examples allow students to concentrate on the specific steps they need to follow in order to solve a problem. What makes them effective is that they reduce the cognitive load of a task, which means that students don't have to hold as much new information in their

working memory.

This is a good activity to use in revision sessions, since it will help build students' confidence with tackling a particular style of exam question. The trick, of course, is to gradually withdraw and eventually remove the worked examples as students become increasingly confident and competent at tackling the area in question. You can read more on this via bit.ly/rb-worked.

Metacognitive strategies

The Education Endowment Foundation's 'Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning' guidance report (see bit.ly/eef-meta), is a great resource that can support teachers with implementing metacognitive strategies in the classroom – i.e. the way students monitor and purposefully direct their learning.

The report contains seven recommendations that are really useful when it comes to structuring revision sessions for students having to tackle a particular type of exam question. Worth noting in particular is what it suggests around needing to support students with memorising a strategy we've modelled to them – for example, by questioning. We should then model it again, but this

time with some input from the students – or as the EEF puts it, “Promote and develop metacognitive talk in the classroom.” Students then can attempt the strategy themselves, before being encouraged to reflect on how useful the strategy is and how they might apply it in future.

Elaborative interrogation

This is a process whereby students are prompted to generate an explanation for an explicitly stated fact. This will usually involve an explanatory prompt – from the teacher, a peer or themselves – in the form of a question. For example, ‘*Why does it make sense that....?*’; ‘*Why is this true....?*’; ‘*Why is [X] true and not [Y]?*’; or just simply, ‘*Why?*’

The evidence suggests that elaborative interrogation works, because it enhances learning by supporting the integration of new information with existing prior knowledge. Further explanation of this can be found via bit.ly/rb-ei. The most straightforward way to apply this during revision sessions is to make sure that you’re asking follow-up questions when students respond to a question.

Self-explanation

Finally, try incorporating self-explanation into your questioning during revision sessions. This is when students are asked to explain how new information is related to known information, or detail the steps they’ve taken during a process of problem solving. This has been shown to be a high impact strategy in terms of supporting effective learning (Dunlosky et al, 2013 – see bit.ly/ts-dunlosky).

If you’re interested in developing approaches to improving the long-term memory of your students, you might be interested in Durrington Research School’s 3-day ‘Improving Memory’ training programme – for more information, visit research.school.org.uk/durrington.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shaun Allison is co-headteacher at Durrington High School; He has also authored a number of books, including the award-winning *Making Every Lesson Count*, co-authored with Andy Tharby (£20, Crown House Publishing)

Can we teach CULTURE?

If you want to ensure a rich future for your students, make sure they possess cultural capital, advises **Hannah Day**...

Cultural capital' has made it into edspeak. Something of a buzzterm, it's not specifically mentioned within Ofsted inspections currently, but it came up frequently in conversations around the regulator's 2019 framework, and its detail that inspectors would be looking for schools to offer a 'rich and broad curriculum'. So what is it? And why all the fuss?

The term was originally coined by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and is perhaps best understood if broken down into three applicable sections – 'objective', 'embodied' and 'institutional'.

Objective capital

As educators, the institutional element of cultural capital should be second nature to us. This refers to the type of sought after qualifications leading to positive post-educational outcomes we're all helping students to achieve. But what of the other two?

Objective capital relates to less quantifiable qualities, such as being well-read, knowledgeable of the arts, well-travelled or well-versed in other nations' cultures, histories or political structures.

As an A Level art teacher who's passionate about the contextual aspect of art provision, I often see marked differences in students' objective capital. Take

Bauhaus – someone with limited objective capital will be able to assess the visual aspect of said art movement, noting its clean lines, limited colours and simplicity. Someone with high objective capital will be able to engage with, and explain how its founders responded to their time in the WWI trenches and return to a broken Germany by formulating design principles that aimed to make life flow and function accessibly for all.

Understanding people, theories and events in relation to wider contexts can only be achieved by students practised in objective capital. Students able to widen their understanding of topics, beyond what can be covered in class time, will connect more deeply to them.

Contextual understanding

We can help this process along by signposting excellent documentaries, similar to a reading list. Beyond the more common historical dramas (which are known to sometimes play fast and loose with the facts), there are many fine arts documentaries broadcast by BBC 4 and Sky Arts, both of which are free-to-air channels. Those no longer available for catch-up viewing or download can often be found on YouTube.

But watching is not engaging. This should be a family homework, assigning programs for all with key

discussion points set for afterwards. The aim is not to produce 'right' answers, or even to assess learning, but rather to encourage a culture of reflection, discussion and debate.

At Ludlow College we have a long history of deeply taught contextual understanding. Alongside our lessons we produce mini packs that are sent home via email, which help students explore topics further with the aid of additional information and dinnertime discussion starters. A good example is the 1915 photograph 'Wall Street' by Paul Strand. Questions such as, 'What is capitalism and communism' are asked; 'How might these ideologies impact a viewer's thoughts about Wall Street? Where does Strand stand politically? How are his views expressed in the image?'

Many families won't complete the tasks set, but among those who do, their objective skills will grow.

A fuller understanding

Within school, a key way of increasing cultural capital is to organise various trips and speakers. Who can you access? Who will give your students

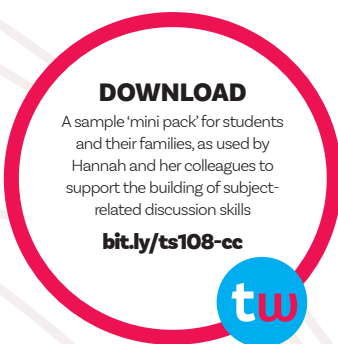
valuable insights into life beyond your walls?

For the past 10 years we've organised an annual careers day each November, and have been lucky to have had many gifted people visit us. One particularly memorable talk was given by an internationally renowned illustrator, who generously brought along his own A Level work (which, by his own admission, was awful). The look on the students' faces, when they realised that his career

had involved a lengthy journey that they might be able to undertake themselves, was revelatory.

A varied curriculum will also help students build a fuller understanding of the world. The current focus on STEM subjects is limiting – I would hope to see teachers and school leaders adopt a more rounded focus by placing STEAM at the heart of our institutions.

Finally, let students question. Give them open-ended topics and time to explore. I can still recall the first year A Level photography cohort who were set a weeklong challenge of taking their darkroom knowledge and devising new, creative ways of generating photographic



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A sample 'mini pack' for students and their families, as used by Hannah and her colleagues to support the building of subject-related discussion skills

bit.ly/ts108-cc



imagery. Some floundered, but oh, how some flew...

Embodied capital

Embodied capital deals with what can sometimes be referred to as 'soft skills' or 'social etiquette'. It's an area of cultural capital that deals with language, behaviour and mannerisms, as well as knowledge of what to do in different work and social situations.

In my experience, private education places a laser focus on embodied capital. Visits from alumni don't just involve talks, but will also include lunch in the head's office attended by select groups of students who excel in the related subject and will be expected to participate in an adult discussion. Then there are the regular public speaking competitions, as well as constant linking with the world beyond the school – all of which contributes to making students feel part of the wider culture, rather than simply looking at it from outside.

Privately educated alumni will often feel comfortable in

8 WAYS TO INCREASE CULTURAL CAPITAL

- Widen students' contextual understanding with a home 'watchlist', signposting high quality documentaries and films
- Organise ways for students to meet individuals from different backgrounds and communities and get them conversing
- Familiarise students with public speaking by assigning class and assembly presentations
- Organise weekly visits to the school library, where students can select books based on their own interests
- Use role play and improvisation to better engage students with poor literacy skills
- Find out what students love – recognise and encourage these interests
- Challenge students to talk to older members of their family and find out about their childhood
- Present students with a viewpoint you know they'll disagree with and challenge them to come up with three valid points in its favour

themselves, in the situations they find themselves in and when facing various challenges. They're nurtured to enter the world with ease.

When you have visitors, do you use the post-lesson time? Is there a space usually off limits to students that could be used to give the occasion a greater sense of prestige? How can you go about building a similar sense of ease among your students?

We can build this muscle by assigning students certain subject-related responsibilities. Could your business studies students run a stall at the local market? Could your history students undertake some form of work in partnership with a local museum? What other outside agencies could help you get your students out and engaging with the wider world?

Listening and learning

Discussions around cultural capital should also be sensitive to matters of social diversity. As society has become increasingly fractured, we've seen a growth in initiatives aimed at bringing together people from different backgrounds.

Could your English and drama students talk to residents at a local care home

to gather and record their stories? You could also hold a 'Talking day', where people from all walks of life are invited to openly discuss their backgrounds and livelihoods with students, either one-to-one or in small groups.

This is about listening and learning – not about being right. Help students learn that connections can be found with most people, and that bonds can be formed with those we disagree with – a valuable lesson for almost any career.

By encouraging students to talk to, work with and help people from different backgrounds, sectors and cultures, we will be preparing them for the unknown.

Qualifications, however important, are only part of the story. The reality is that cultural capital is a form of wealth we all need more of.



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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1

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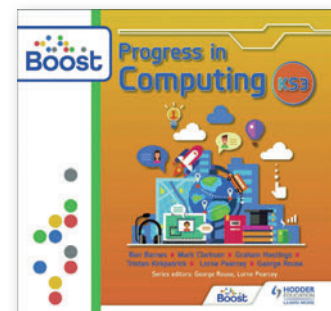


2

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CLASSROOM VOICE

“It feels like we’re in a pedagogical minefield”

Pedagogical research can be hugely valuable, writes **Bhamika Bhudia** – but given the speed at which it moves, we should be wary of going all-in on the latest fad...

Teaching is an ever-changing discipline. Accepting that, and evolving your practice accordingly is a necessity – but when the latest research becomes outdated as quickly as the latest student dance craze, how can you be expected to keep up? Should you even try?

I spent hours of my training and early years in teaching frantically cutting up pieces of card. How else would my kinaesthetic students ever meet the learning objectives if I didn’t cater to their individual learning styles?

These days, the notion of learning styles is met with derision throughout the teaching community, despite numerous teachers having previously been trained in it, and the acronym ‘VAK’ once being a common sight on lesson observation forms. It feels that all that time I spent enslaved to those tiny pieces of paper was wasted, but it’s not just VAK that’s taken a hit. Bloom’s taxonomy, Thinking Hats, even the way we measure progress – all have similarly come into the firing line.

OUT WITH THE OLD...

As time moves on and we reflect upon the impact of such approaches, the logical thing to do is move forward. Thus, we may conclude that it’s best for our students to put down the scissors, forget the triangles and for the *love of God*, take off those hats...

However, problems can arise if the focus of an entire school shifts according to newly published research findings; when limited CPD opportunities are focused solely on ‘the next big thing’, or precious

time is spent on creating new schemes of learning in line with the latest ‘Correct way to teach’ – only to soon find that these too are redundant.

Currently, retrieval practice is all the rage, as are dual coding and knowledge organisers, but how to implement them is already being hotly debated within the teaching hive. If you’re not planning lessons in accordance with cognitive load theory, how will your students ever build learning over time? How can you ensure they’re building schema and making links if you haven’t simplified the intrinsic load enough?

Is the latest ‘correct way’ direct instruction, or is it discovery learning? No, wait, it’s instructional coaching – right? It feels like we’re in a pedagogical minefield.

THE WAY FORWARD

Ultimately, there is no ‘correct way’, silver bullet or perfect formula that will withstand the test of time, because teaching isn’t, and never has been stagnant. It reflects our students, who change as society changes.

Pedagogical science is fascinating, and while I can’t pretend to understand all of it, it certainly can’t and shouldn’t be ignored. Its results and research findings warrant our attention.

However, that’s not to say that every time something new is published, or even postulated, we should go back to the drawing board, scrap everything and start again. Even under now defunct methodologies, children still learnt, exams were still passed and objectives were met. Teachers have been successfully doing their jobs for millennia, but if a well-informed study comes along and tells us that there’s a more efficient way of doing things, let’s see that as an opportunity to try something new.

Overhauls aren’t the answer, but ‘micro changes’ could be. Experiment, switch things up, refine your practice. Put new ideologies and methods to the test in your classroom before any full-scale rollouts or scrapping of existing resources. This needn’t entail hours of work, blindly following the latest crazes; it means doing some research of your own by seeing how things work, in your school, with your subject and, most importantly, with your students.

Sure, what you’re doing now may well be contradicted, and perhaps even scoffed at in years to come.

But whatever you’re doing in your classroom, it should be because you can see it has merit; because it’s working in practice, and is giving your students the best possible chance at success.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bhamika Bhudia is a teacher of English and lead teacher in a mixed comprehensive secondary school in London; follow her at @MissMika_Eng



The power of EXPLANATION

The process of explanation is so integral to what teachers do, that we can sometimes miss how important it actually is, observes **Michael Chiles**

When we're explaining and modelling concepts to young children, or sharing something we're knowledgeable about with friends, the quality of our explanations is crucial. As the science writer Dominic Walliman puts it, "You can pretty much explain anything to anybody, as long as you go about it the right way."

And yet, within the teaching profession there can be a tendency to underestimate the importance of this for our classroom practice. After all, the way in which teachers deliver their explanations will determine how pupils receive the information, which will in turn inevitably affect their understanding of the subject they're studying.

This is why investing time in preparing and practising the delivery of teacher explanations ought to be made more of a priority in any school's CPD curriculum.

Self-reflection

We've all been there – you've just finished delivering a lengthy explanation to the class when one pupil puts their hand up with the words, "*I don't get it!*" Conversely, there will also have been other times when you've observed pupils experience that lightbulb moment before exclaiming, "*Oh, I get it now!*"

Our classrooms are

diverse places, contained within learning environments that are constantly changing based on a multitude of different factors and events that might occur over the course of a typical school day. For all that, though, the difference between whether a pupil 'gets it' or doesn't will largely depend on the quality of our explanation. When we explain something, we do so in order to enable pupils to acquire new knowledge and skills – which is, of course, a core part of our roles as teachers.

I believe, however, that the power of our explanations rests upon three core principles: how we set up our arena (i.e. the classroom); the time we spend on preparing our pitch; and how we actually deliver those explanations.

I can personally remember how, during the early years of my career, I wouldn't always be fully prepared for lessons. My strategy would sometimes be to just have a quick skim through the PowerPoint the night before, and reason that teaching the content would be no problem.

This tended to happen most when covering lessons I hadn't planned myself, using presentations prepared by colleagues within the department. Inevitably, of course, this approach would lead to problems when delivering the lesson, because I wasn't prepared for tricky questions and didn't always

possess the necessary confidence or conviction when giving explanations.

The upshot of this would be that pupils found the subsequent tasks difficult to complete. I'd soon find myself frantically running around the room, trying to answer individual questions so that the pupils could actually complete the task they'd been set.

Time investment

In an extensive 2014 research review titled 'What makes great teaching?' (bit.ly/ts107-exp1), the Sutton Trust found pedagogical content knowledge to be a significant component of successful teaching, observing that, "The most effective teachers have deep knowledge of the subjects they teach, and when teachers' knowledge falls below a certain level it is a significant impediment to students' learning."

With this in mind, preparing explanations shouldn't be something teachers do on a whim. If teachers are to develop a genuinely deep knowledge of their subjects, they will need to invest time in preparing the delivery of the explanation(s) they'll be giving during the lesson. This is important for ensuring a level of precision that will reduce misconceptions and prevent pupils' understanding from becoming fragmented.

So how can we do this? First, we need a clear understanding ourselves of

the curriculums we're expected to deliver. That means being sensitive to the curriculum sequence, and how everything fits together to form a complete subject tapestry. Once teachers fully understand how each knowledge base is layered, it's worth taking the time to work collaboratively with colleagues on practising the delivery of your explanations.

Subject and school leaders could also try building in time for departments to present an example of how they intend to deliver a particular explanation for a lesson the following week.

In geography, for example, we might be teaching how longshore drift influences the morphology of a beach. This is a complex series of processes that works to change the shape of beaches, thus departmental meeting time could be set aside for colleagues to demonstrate how they would explain that to a class.

Reflect on each other's pitches and give constructive feedback. This will give you and your colleagues time to not only craft and hone your explanations, but also consider any misconceptions pupils might come away with and how those could be dispelled. Spending departmental time working on your own explanations

while seeing how other colleagues approach theirs will be time well spent.

Finding the right pitch

Another area worth considering is the level of demand applied to the knowledge we want pupils to know. This is a sentiment echoed by Mary Myatt, who has talked passionately about the importance of teaching pupils content that is '*Above their pay grade*'. If we pitch the knowledge too high, pupils will naturally – and quickly – hit a mental panic zone and effectively switch off. It doesn't help that this can also happen if the level of demand isn't challenging enough.

Again, from a geography perspective, a classic example of this would be teaching map skills to a Y7 class in the first few weeks of September. Most of the pupils will have already

learnt some form of map reading at primary school, so you can be fairly certain that dedicating a whole half term to exploring different map skills won't create the awe and wonder we want pupils to get from studying geography.

If, however, we integrate map skills with other aspects of the subject, we could show them something new and create a meaningful challenge for pupils, right from the very beginning of

their KS3 studies. The first step to creating challenging lessons that activate deep level thinking is to therefore consider what we are going to teach, why we are starting with this, and how we can create a series of rigorous and challenging lessons. This is where that aforementioned curriculum planning would come in.

The power of our explanations is largely determined by the amount of time we invest in preparing, practising

and critically reviewing them. As teachers, our aim is for pupils to be challenged, and to hopefully enter into a zone where there's a healthy struggle that activates deep thinking.

But if we're to get this right, then we need to give teachers time to invest in the intricacies of their subject, and work collaboratively with colleagues to establish the most effective ways of delivering their explanations with precision.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Chiles is an assistant principal and author of *The CRAFT of Assessment* (John Catt, £14); follow him at @m_chiles



Is it insolence – or could IT BE AUTISM?

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 flight, 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.

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

“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

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? Because 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

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

– 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 '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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EMBRACE THE FEAR FACTOR

Author **Cynthia Murphy** makes the case for why it's well worth steering your reluctant readers in the direction of the horror genre

We all know a reluctant reader. You may even be one yourself, especially when it comes to notions of what qualifies as 'literature' and which works can be called 'classics'. Yawn. Yes, I'm well aware that there are titles out there that are universally recognised as great. But I'd wager that most of the kids in your classroom would prefer to not spend their time analysing why everyone in *Wuthering Heights* is such a horrible person and instead hang out on TikTok...

...or enjoy the sensation of reading a book that scares them.

An indelible mark

The horror genre has seen something of a resurgence in recent years, particularly in YA fiction aimed at 12 to 18-year-olds. Many writers, myself included, will tell you that a teenage love of horror novels (notably the Point Horror series – remember those?) shaped what they would go on to read later in life.

These are books that can claw an indelible mark into the psyche. You'll often find that many of those horror fans turned authors identify as being easily distracted, and some as dyslexic. Unique among literary genres, horror has the unerring ability to catch a reader's attention and hold it. It's addictive in the best

possible way.

Let's get back to those reluctant readers. It seems harder than ever to engage young people with a book these days, surrounded as they are with a plethora of distractions in the form of on-demand everything and social media. Instead of admitting defeat, though, let's look at what actually makes those modern attention sinks so endlessly engaging and compelling.

On-demand media channels provide viewers,

“Horror drags readers into an unsettling world where characters are pushed to their limits and the adrenaline rush is real”

listeners and readers with the ability to switch content on and off at will, to dip in and out of stories and narratives as they please. Social media, on the other hand, serves up instant gratification and concentrated dopamine hits via those ever growing likes, favourites and followers. There's a real sense of exhilaration to be had at seeing a meme or video we've posted suddenly go viral.

Terror and control

But what does any of that have to do with horror fiction? Well, to put it simply, it's the thrill, the danger – that sense of being utterly terrified, while retaining the power to leave

this frightening world behind whenever you want. In a sense, it's about control – something that many teens feel they lack in other areas of their lives.

Sue Wallman, author of the popular YA thrillers *Lying About Last Summer* and *Dead Popular*, is also a secondary school librarian. She describes encountering students who are thirsting after good, age-appropriate horror books: “Reading for pleasure is about finding a book which makes you go,

eyes.”

It's a sentiment echoed by Amy McCaw, author of the teen vampire thriller *Mina and the Undead*, who has this to say: “Horror drags readers into an unsettling world where characters are pushed to their limits and the adrenaline rush is real.”

In Amy's view, horror can also serve as an effective introduction to many other forms of literature, without being intimidating in the way that the works of Austen or Shakespeare might be. “Authors can push their imaginations to the darkest places, while also giving readers elements they might get from other genres, like romance and thrillers, as an added bonus.”

Teachers and librarians, however, may shy away from horror as a genre – often because the content could be seen as too mature for young readers. Yet YA horror has come a long way in recent years, and can be very sophisticated in how it grapples with a range of age-appropriate themes. Modern horror writers don't just deal with the morbid and macabre – they also portray everyday challenges that teens face, from coming out as LGBTQ+, to mental health issues and friendship worries.

These are books that have teen stories at their heart. Having the central protagonists face relatable challenges will naturally make the reader root for them – whether that challenge is moving to a new

PUTTING THE 'BOO!' IN BOOKSHELF...



Breaker
Kat Ellis
Set at a boarding school where kids sneak off

for secret parties while avoiding becoming the Bonebreaker's latest victim – what more do you want?!



The Dead House
Dawn Kurtagich
Another boarding school horror, this

one has a unique twist. Kurtagich, who herself is dyslexic, breaks up the prose with details such as old therapy records and video transcripts.



Wranglestone
Darren Charlton
A gay, coming-of-age, zombie apocalypse story.

Nominated for the Costa Prize, this is heartfelt and gripping. And did I mention the zombies...?



Frozen Charlotte
Alex Bell
This book is the one that got me (and

my teenage niece) excited about YA horror again. It's reminiscent of the early Point Horrors and features a very creepy little doll in the main role. A must for teens who will look at their own childhood toy collections in a very different way after this!



White Out
Gabriel Dylan
When this school ski trip goes wrong, it really goes

wrong. Students will love that the teachers are the first to bite it, leaving the cast of teens to fend for themselves when they're snowed into their resort with some, erm, undesirable company...

school, or facing off against a newly-minted vampire...

A perfect bridge

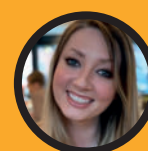
Therein lies the real magic of horror fiction. Horror novels often involve taking a pacy, breakneck journey through the life of someone who is (probably) having a worse time than the reader. The books themselves tend to present a vivid form of escapism and are structured in short chapters that typically conclude with cliffhanger endings.

If your reluctant teen readers balk at the idea of picking up a novel about windswept Regency darlings, then one or two thrilling chapters of the latest YA could be just the thing to whet their appetites – all the more so if the subject matter appears more mature in content.

Kat Ellis, author of *Harrow Lake*, sums up this latter point particularly

well: "Horror is a perfect bridge between fiction for young readers and adults, and gives readers that same thrill-seeking experience as riding a roller coaster. Who doesn't want that in a book?"

So don't be scared to put the latest blood-curdling YA title under the nose of a student who has proclaimed all books to be 'boring'. It just might be their gateway to a lifelong love of reading...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cynthia Murphy is a YA writer from the North-West of England working in education; her debut novel, *Last One to Die* (Scholastic, £7.99), was published in 2021; for more information, visit cynthiamurphy.co.uk

Creativity and COMPASSION

Andria Zafirakou makes the case for why, post-pandemic and amid the the cost of living crisis, students need more than ever the skills that only creative subjects can provide...

There's always something magical about the start of a new academic year. I've now been teaching for 18 years, but still get that feeling of excitement and anticipation all teachers feel when September arrives.

When I sit at my desk staring around the space – this art room that's been my second home – I still can't help but reflect on the extraordinary teaching years that have passed since 2020. I know I'm not alone in finding this one of the most surreal periods of teaching I've ever seen – a time in which 'returning to normal' after the pandemic was far more challenging for young people than expected.

Tip of the iceberg

The pandemic's social effects on young people's wellbeing could be easily demonstrated – firstly, by the changes in behaviour and attitudes among the many young people who struggled to integrate back into their school community and routines.

We've also seen a lasting impact in the decline of some students' communication and oracy skills, and a resulting loss in speech confidence. It could also be attributed to the experience of online learning during lockdown, when students' opportunities to talk freely with their peers was significantly reduced.

Yet the most significant challenge we've had to come to terms with is the knowledge that this was just the beginning – only the tip of the iceberg, with the worst yet to come.

Thousands of schools across the UK have seen and felt first-hand the devastating damage and harms wrought on young people in our communities

“Creative and practical subjects help students feel valued, respected and proud”

by the cost of living crisis – all of which can't help but affect their wellbeing.

With families struggling to budget and survive, we've witnessed for ourselves the ripple effects enter our school gates. Dirty, worn-out uniforms and emptier than usual lunch boxes have become a common and noticeable sight. So too the more serious, yet less outwardly visible symptoms of frustration, hunger, anger, neglect, anxiety, stress, withdrawal and depression.

These are all a direct response to chaos and challenges that our young people are experiencing at home, leading to significant learning and wellbeing challenges – especially for our most vulnerable children.

“My work is just as good”

That's why the case for practising creative and practical subjects in our schools must be made stronger than ever before. Because it's through these that we'll be able to help build the confidence, resilience, communication and self-regulation abilities our young people

engage with everyone in the room.

Nitin could control pencils and brushes well, mix and apply all media and stay focused on lesson tasks whilst carrying out a sustained piece of work. More importantly for me, he would contribute to class discussions, and produce consistently exciting work. He clearly enjoyed the experience of being in an environment where there were no right or wrong answers. If you asked him why he enjoyed his art lessons, he would simply say, “Because I'm the same as everyone, and my work is just as good.”

will need to cope with the challenges that lie ahead of them.

I can still recall how my art room once helped to transform the life of a student, Nitin (not his real name), who was 12 years old. Nitin had been diagnosed with various forms of SEND, including ADHD, dyslexia and autism, and came from a challenging home. He didn't enjoy being at school, and would often find getting through the day a colossal challenge.

He would rarely produce any written work, since he was frequently embarrassed and frustrated with his outcomes. However, in the course of his artwork, he would willingly undertake all activities, focus continuously, readily participate and happily

For many students like Nitin, creative and practical subjects help them feel valued, respected and proud of their achievements. They make them feel safe and happy. Their identity is accepted and valued, in the absence of labels and other challenges.

Opening up space

As the current academic year gradually winds down, we see schools expected to do whatever they can to solve the exceptional challenges presented by the difficult climate confronting their local communities – with little in the way of resourcing, support or training.

To support these needs, the Dreamachine project – part of the UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK creative programme – developed resources for science, citizenship, health and wellbeing lessons that explore how brains and minds work to support young people's development. Produced by Collective Act, their development was led by the non-profit A New Direction alongside UNICEF UK and

the British Science Association.

The project was additionally supported by insights from Professor Fiona Macpherson of the Centre for the Study of Perceptual Experience, and Professor Anil Seth – a world-leading neuroscientist and professor of cognitive and computational neuroscience at the University of Sussex.

In a conversation with the British Science Association, Anil and Fiona explained how a deeper understanding of our perception is linked to greater wellbeing, building on the concept that how things 'seem' isn't necessarily how things actually 'are'. This helps with the self-regulation we try to develop in our young people – opening up "A little space between our experience in the moment, and the conclusions we may draw from this," as Anil and Fiona put it.

Creative and practical subjects are ideal for exploring and understanding that 'space', as they help us practise various ways of tuning into what we're feeling and thinking, and the different ways we have of expressing ourselves. We can begin to create wellbeing environments in our classrooms by using calming breathing exercises to steady and clear the mind in preparation for learning. We can also use simple drawing exercises to begin freeing students' minds and start exploring creative moments.

For a glimpse of what's possible, visit Dreamachine's Creative Wellbeing Classroom activities workshop and start using the many ideas there to help you get started and suitably inspired.

Compassion in classrooms

A better understanding of our own perceptions can help us build more compassion into our classrooms, and emphasise how we are all different and unique – and that these differences in experiences should be appreciated.

If you wish to pursue this further with your students, an exciting place to start is by exploring some of the themes and our different senses on the Life's Big Questions website (dreamachine.world/lifes-big-questions), which begins by posing the challenge, 'Can I believe everything that I can see?'

Alongside this, however, we must continue pressuring our government to start being more strategic in the support they give to schools. Top of the list would be providing new funding and expert resources that limit the catastrophic damage currently threatening the wellbeing of our young people, society at large and the very future of our economy.

All we want is for our school graduates to be confident, skilled and creative thinkers who can problem solve and communicate, while remaining kind, healthy and happy. If this doesn't align with their strategy, then our education system really is failing to understand the needs of our young people.

What can we do in the meantime? As an art teacher, I'll continue to make my art room a space that supports students like Nitin in finding their true potential, and developing the strength and happiness that will prepare them for what's set to be a difficult future.

As William Shakespeare put it in *Henry V*, "Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more."



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andria Zafirakou is a teacher at Alperton Community School and a Global Teacher Prize winner; For more information about Dreamachine's Life's Big Questions programme and to involve your class, visit dreamachine.world/lifes-big-questions



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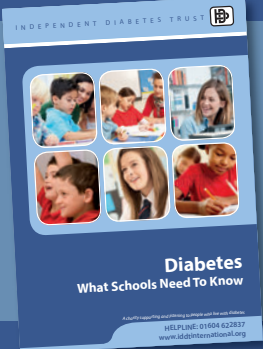
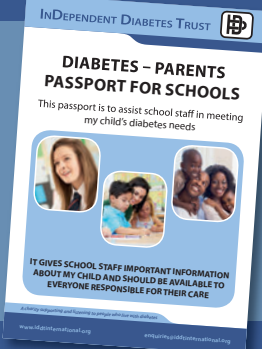
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LEARNING LAB

IN THIS ISSUE

- + How challenging topics can drive engagement with school clubs and societies
- + 5 ways of adding gravitas to your classroom delivery
- + The importance of establishing (and rigorously maintaining) regular routines
- + 7 strategies for making your students' descriptive writing less clichéd and more imaginative
- + Why it's worth creating and curating your own video resource bank
- + Familiarise students with the different ways in which they can store and recall information

CONTRIBUTORS

CAROLINE WEST

History curriculum team leader,
Bedminster Down School, Bristol

ROBIN LAUNDER

Behaviour management consultant and speaker

ADAM RICHES

Senior leader for teaching and learning

MR E

Secondary English department lead

COLIN HEGARTY

CEO, Sparx Learning

ZEPH BENNETT

PE teacher and school achievement leader



How to use...

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

Let's look at the system of retribution many schools have in place and how it can end up causing more harm than the original transgression.

First, there's a 'What happened?' part that's all about gathering facts as quickly as possible. Next, we turn to finding out equally quickly who's to blame. We then identify which rule has been broken, and work out what an appropriate punishment might be – one that fits the crime.

Here, we can be creative. You dropped litter, so you'll spend all lunchtime picking up litter. Or, given how busy we are, we'll just slot the student into the nearest passing discipline event or process. Perhaps one of the regular whole school detentions on Wednesdays, or the curriculum-area detentions on Thursday. Actually, we have a vacancy in isolation booth 3, a week on Friday – *see you there...!*

We get on with our lives, thinking that something has changed and lessons have been learned, and that we're all bigger and better because of it. Repeat.

So long as we're able to overlook the damage done to the relationship between the transgressor and the authority; that the students and colleagues who were harmed have been ignored; and that

accountability for any sense of closure has placed squarely at the door of the punishment – justice has prevailed. So let's move on.

A restorative view, however, seeks to create a better sort of system which sets about things slightly differently. Firstly, the 'What happened?' element is designed to give everyone involved an opportunity to share their unique perspectives. Remember, at any given time there is always *my* truth, *your* truth and *the* truth.

Next, we'll ask who has been affected and how, and follow this by examining and exploring the impact on people and relationships.

We'll then draw things together by asking the 'needs' questions. What needs are there, and what needs to happen to repair damage and allow us to move forward?

This alternative structure of thought and practice will help move us towards a much more interpersonal process; a culture of shared responsibility and problem solving.

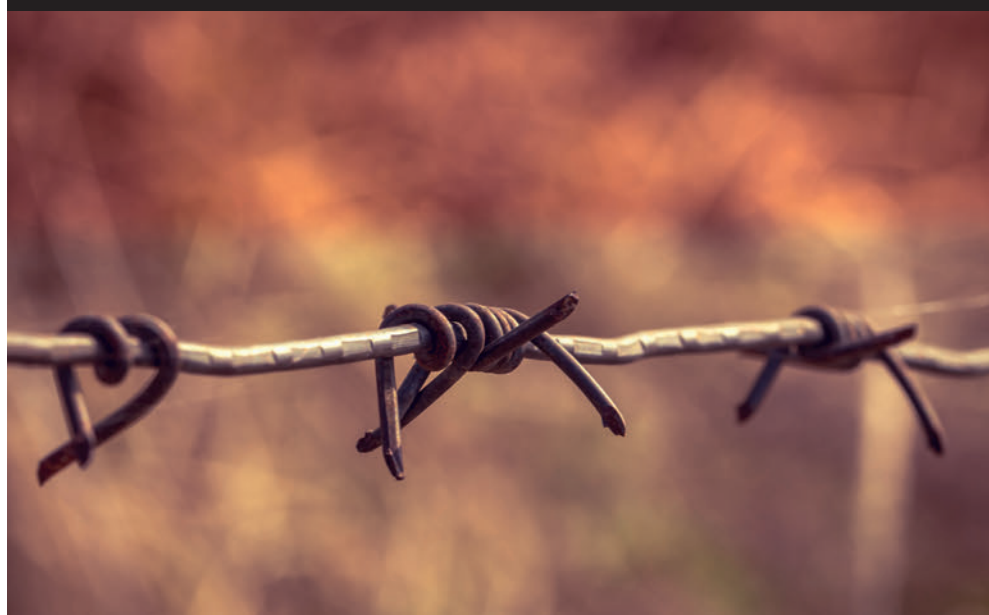
The voices and needs of all those involved are clearly outlined and addressed and – while some sort of punishment may well be necessary – the focus is on restoring trust and connection, on putting things right, making things better and ultimately moving forward.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Finnis is an Independent Thinking Associate and one of the UK's leading exponents of restorative practice, with many years' experience working with schools, local government agencies and social services; this item is an edited extract from his book *Independent Thinking On Restorative Practice* (Crown House Publishing, £9.99); for more information, visit l30relationalsystems.co.uk or follow @Markfinnis

USING CLUBS TO EXPLORE CHALLENGING TOPICS



In September 2021, I started at a new school where, partly due to COVID, clubs and society uptake was at an all-time low. The whole school focus at the time was therefore on organising groups, trips and competitions, which gave me the opportunity to set up two new lunchtime clubs.

Colleagues predicted I would see zero uptake for our Debating Society and Genocide Awareness Project. They felt the proposed clubs had merit, but observed that our students weren't used to giving up their lunch times, and hadn't previously been exposed to such emotive and thought-provoking topics.

I've always felt that engaging in public speaking and debating is vital for students. My passion for Holocaust education and genocide awareness meanwhile stems from experiences in my early teaching career

that included teacher training in Poland and Israel.

I've subsequently found that subjects such as the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide engage both the most gifted historians, and those students who struggle with historical concepts and skills. I've additionally found senior leaders to be extremely supportive of such topics, especially given recent concerns over hate crimes and antisemitism.

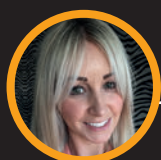
Students have slowly but surely found my door at lunchtimes, following assemblies run by Genocide Awareness Project members. We began with just three students, but they were so passionate about improving understanding of genocide among their peers that the membership soon grew to over 15. It's been a similar story for our debating society – which, for example, has previously debated with style and

substance whether cultural artefacts should be repatriated.

Those might not be huge numbers, but each week I remind myself that neither club existed at the start of the 2021/2022 academic year. It's been exciting to see them grow, to the point that hopefully one day, the students will run the clubs themselves.

Get your club going

1. Treat the development of extra-curricular clubs with the same level of importance as outcomes
2. Base your club on your passion
3. Be confident of senior leadership buy-in
4. Have faith in the small number of students who will initially engage – they are your best ambassadors for spreading the word
5. Seek support among the wider teacher community and social networks



CAROLINE WEST IS THE HISTORY CURRICULUM TEAM LEADER AT BEDMINSTER DOWN SCHOOL, BRISTOL

5

WAYS TO ...

ADD GRAVITAS

1 GET THE BALANCE RIGHT

When addressing the whole class, assume a commanding central position square on to the students and give an attention primer, such as 'Students, eyes on me.' Once they're looking at you and silent, begin delivering your message.

2 PACE YOURSELF

Speak slowly, clearly and succinctly, emphasising key words. A formal register and tone will elevate the importance of your message, thus communicating to your students that they need to be listening to you.

3 PRACTICE AT HOME

This might feel silly at first, but you're partly an actor and partly an orator – no one in those professions would face an audience without practising, and nor should you.

4 BE ABRUPT

If a student starts chatting while you're speaking, stop abruptly. Mid-sentence is powerful, mid-multisyllabic word even more so. Look at the student, adopt an expression of surprise and wait until there's silence. Pause a moment longer, then talk to the class again.

5 PARK THE QUESTIONS

If you choose to take questions, do so only at the end. It's often better to get all students working and on task before then speaking to the student with the question. Chances are it will have been answered by then, anyway...

Robin Launder is a behaviour management consultant and speaker; find more tips in his weekly Better Behaviour online course – for more details, visit behaviourbuddy.co.uk

50%

of education staff have used their own money to pay for classroom supplies and materials (with 24% of said group doing so regularly)

Source: Survey of 1,000 education workers by the membership service Discounts for Teachers

The recent publication of Renaissance Learning's annual 'What Kids are Reading' report has once more shed light on children and adolescents' reading habits, and which books and authors are proving popular among said groups. The report's findings draw on data recorded by the Accelerated Reader (AR) platform used by 6,442 schools across the UK and Ireland, 42% of which are secondary schools.

Among the headline figures this year are the 27 million books read by AR users in 2023, marking a rise of 24% compared to 2022.

The books faring best in the popularity stakes among secondary readers include the *Heartstopper* series by Alice Oseman and *It Ends With Us* by Colleen Hoover, with the report noting the large followings both have attracted via TikTok's literary 'BookTok' community.

Less positive, however, is an apparent decline in reading for pleasure. A Renaissance survey of 62,149 children and young people across England and Wales found that 47.8% enjoyed doing so 'very much' or 'quite a lot' – down from a previous high of 55.9% in May 2020.

The report also highlights a discrepancy in comprehension levels between primary and secondary reading, with the former group showing an 'average percent correct' (APC) score on quizzes of 78%, compared to the latter's 69%.

The full report can be downloaded from renlearn.co.uk/what-kids-are-reading-2023

YOUR GUIDE TO...

ROUTINES

There's no doubt that clear and consistent routines are one of the most important cornerstones of a successful classroom. Not only will routines ensure that learners feel safe and comfortable in their learning environment, they also help with behaviour management and help reduce cognitive load considerably.

In this case, at least, predictability is a positive. But routines need to be taught. Establishing routines in the short term will pay dividends in the longer term – so how should you go about doing that?

Be explicit

Don't beat around the bush. Be explicit with the instructions for what you want the learners to do.

Give them time to practise what you tell them, and if they don't do what you ask, tell them again.

Routines shouldn't be left to discovery. The most efficient classes may only need to be told a few times. The process may be considerably longer for others...

Model

When you're establishing clear routines, don't neglect to model the processes

yourself. To reduce the cognitive load and make the process of learning a routine easier, show learners what to do by doing it too.

It might sound strange at first, but if you aren't underlining the titles on the board, why should they be expected to?

Demand 100% compliance

As with anything behaviour-orientated, it's important to ensure that standards are kept consistently high. Demand 100% compliance and don't accept anything less than you expect.

That way, learners will quickly pick up on the importance of the routines in your classroom. For a routine to become a habit it needs to be consistently applied – so make sure it's applied correctly!

Step back

Once routines are established, learners will have built habits that are hopefully aligned with your initial goal. At this point, you can take a step back and focus your attention on learning intricacies.

However, it's still important that you continue monitoring routines to ensure they don't start to slip!



ADAM RICHES IS A SENIOR LEADER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING; FOLLOW HIM AT @TEACHMRRICHES

32%

of senior decision makers at small to medium enterprises believe the primary purpose of education is to create efficient workers for the future

Source: Representative YouGov survey of 551 respondents commissioned by ACS International Schools

Need to know

The teachers' mental health and wellbeing organisation Education Support has produced a new report that attempts to quantify the ways in which teachers' professional roles have changed in recent years, and the resulting impact of extra professional demands on both teachers and students alike.

The findings contained within its 'Teaching – the new reality' report draw on a mix of survey data, an online poll and a series of focus groups. A survey of 1,000 secondary teachers, for instance, found that 74% 'often helped' with students' personal matters outside of their studies – of whom 41% had also purchased essential stationery supplies. When teachers were asked to cite the areas generating additional responsibilities outside of actual teaching, 'Offering emotional support to pupils' and 'Dealing with difficult pupil behaviour' both scored highest with 62%.

The report's data further shows that teachers feel most prepared to deal with safeguarding provision, parental engagement and liaising with external agencies. Conversely, the three areas teachers feel least equipped to tackle are supporting vulnerable pupils and families, providing emotional support to colleagues – and addressing difficult student behaviour.

The report can be downloaded in full via bit.ly/ts124-LL3



ONE FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS DESCRIPTION WRITING

1. Metaphors beat similes!

Ask students to complete a series of similes in under a minute ('As white as...?', 'As sly as a ...?') – this makes a firm point about clichés. Give them time to come up with improved versions and turn these into metaphors. 'His body was as heavy as a sack of coal' can become 'His coal-sack body...'

2. Verbs beat adjectives and adverbs

For many, 'being more descriptive' means piling adjectives in front of every noun. Good writing, though, often rests upon a judicious choices of verbs. A man walking slowly can *amble*, *saunter* or *dawdle*.

3. Curate colour-compound words

Use displays and scrapbooks to curate new and exciting compound words. Use a thesaurus or paint charts to identify colour variations, then match these with familiar objects – 'traffic-light red lipstick', 'pavement-grey cardigan', 'puddle-brown trousers'.

4. Alliteration fixation

Encourage pupils to get a feel for the effect of repeating consonant sounds. Plosive alliteration using 'p', 'd' and 'b' sounds can be more hard-hitting; softer consonants such as 'w' and 'f' can create a gentler effect.

5 Simple is better!

Make students aware of the proportion of simple to complex sentences in their writing. Many overuse the latter. Read examples from writers like Hemingway, who use simple sentences to pack a punch.

6. Micro-paragraphs

Standalone paragraphs of simple sentences or single words can be very effective if used sparingly. Abstract nouns, such as 'silence' and 'nothing', can work well to hold suspense.

7. Paragraphing for effect

Teach students the use of paragraphs as structural devices. In descriptions, a flashback paragraph to an earlier time can be highly effective and demonstrates forward planning!

MR E LEADS A SECONDARY ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AND IS A PUBLISHED WRITER; DISCOVER MORE WRITING TIPS AT HIS 'MR E'S ENGLISH HACKS' YOUTUBE CHANNEL VIA [BIT.LY/TS124-LL1](https://bit.ly/TS124-LL1)



Try this

Video resource banks

During that first year of COVID lockdowns, online video content was everywhere. As a result, video lessons will now often be used to support teaching at school, set homework and help learners revise. Having produced video lessons myself since 2011, here are a few shortcuts I've picked up...

Format for video

It's tempting to create exciting, fast-moving videos festooned with pictures and graphics, but these distract from the learning. Instead, replicate what you do in class. 'Writing along' in your video is a great way of adopting a

pace similar to classroom teaching and helps students keep up.

Think about what you want students to have written in their books by the end, and share your own notes at the start of the lesson so they understand what you're expecting from them.

Keep it short

Concise videos are best. If your lesson is 20 minutes long, break it up into four five-minute chunks. This is more flexible and makes editing easier if you've made a mistake. If any elements of the curriculum should then change, you need only remove

the chunk that's no longer relevant.

Don't mention ages

Avoid using on-screen graphics and titles with age or Key Stage details; just describe the topic the lesson covers. Keep the age labelling to file tags that students won't see.

Creating video lessons is helpful for students, but also valuable CPD. You may cringe seeing yourself on-screen, but watching yourself teach can provide useful insights into your current practice.

COLIN HEGARTY IS THE CEO OF SPARX LEARNING (SPARX.CO.UK)

TRENDING

Our pick of the recent resources and launches teachers might find useful...

ART IN PERSON

Ahead of its reopening on 22nd June 2023, the National Portrait Gallery has announced a new programme of in-person learning events for secondary schools – including history workshops, where portraits are used as historical sources, as well as more traditional art and design workshops that include explorations of specific themes and practical activities.

bit.ly/ts123-LL2

TAKING FLIGHT

Entries are now open for the 2023 RSPCA Young Photographer Awards, with aspiring photographers aged 18 and under being encouraged to enter their animal photography under 10 different categories – which this year include 'Pet Portraits' and 'Mobile Phone and Devices'. Entries close on Tuesday 15th August 2023. rspca.org.uk/ypa

STUDENT WALKTHROUGH

HOW WE REMEMBER

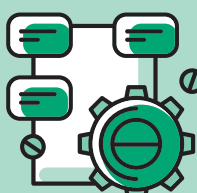
HELP YOUR STUDENTS BECOME BETTER LEARNERS WITH ZEPH BENNETT'S VISUAL EXPLAINERS...

CONCRETE EXAMPLES



Take a difficult topic or concept and try to find examples that make understanding it easier

ELABORATION



Ask 'How?' and 'Why?' when revising a key topic; come up with different ways of asking the question – then make sure you know the answer!

INTERLEAVING



When revising, switch between topics, subjects or even problems you're solving, so that you can cover a range of material

Taken from 'Understanding How we learn' by Sumeracki, Caviglioli, and Weinstein

SPACING



Plan your learning, organise your work and revise work over time in small chunks – record your learning as you go

RETRIEVAL



Revise and learn key concepts by questioning, bringing back information and connections without using your notes

DUAL CODING



Use verbal and visual notes to learn and recall subject matter; use sketch notes and mind maps with notes

ZEPH BENNETT IS A PE TEACHER AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT LEADER WITH OVER 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](https://twitter.com/teachsecondary)

MATHS/SCIENCE

Organise and Retrieve your Knowledge

Help your KS3 maths and science students retain those essential building blocks of knowledge with this thoughtfully crafted series of revision guides

AT A GLANCE

- A series of six KS3 revision guides for maths and science
- Clear and simple revision guidance, packed with subject essentials
- Available as single volume, pocket-sized books for each year group
- Range includes knowledge organisers for each topic, along with matching retrieval tests
- Can be used in a range of different learning contexts

REVIEW BY JOHN DABELL

There's a plethora of KS3 maths and science resources out there – though a sizeable proportion are distinctly run of the mill, somewhat pedestrian and not fully up to the task of helping students learn and retain what they need to know.

Those certainly aren't criticisms you can level at Collins' Organise and Retrieve your Knowledge series for KS3. Spanning six volumes (three for science and three for maths, each with one book per year group), they're specifically designed to maximise retrieval so that those core concepts and topics stick.

The books making up the series are pleasingly handy and compact, saving students the struggle of lugging around breezeblock-sized tomes. Yet small though they may be, these volumes pack an incredible amount into their 80 pages, and are positively bulging with the crucial parts of their studies that students will need to know.

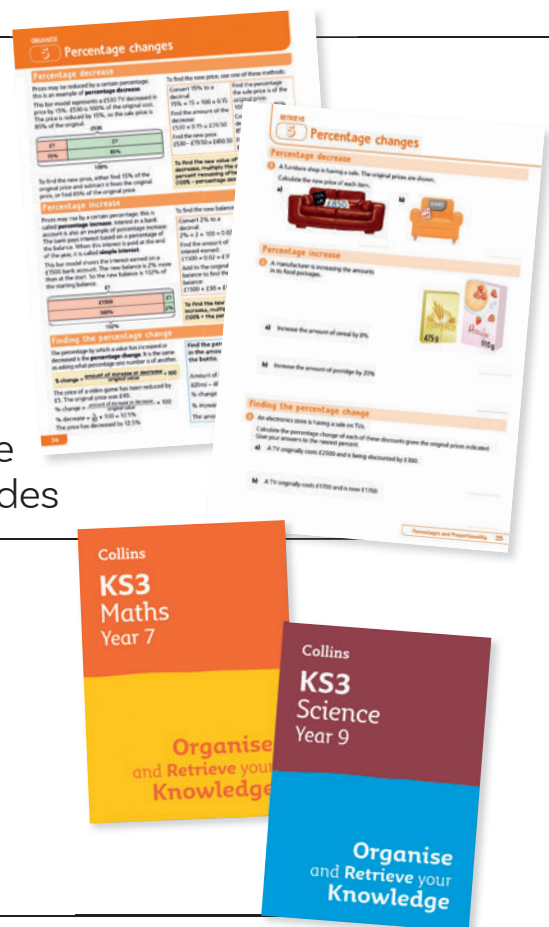
Key to this is how the books are structured. Each topic is presented via a two-page spread showing explanations, and then retrieval practice. The first page gets straight down to business, with short, punchy explanations that ably cover the ground in question. Gimmicks, superfluous information, design clutter – all are very much absent, in favour of a focus on colourful imagery and diagrams that reliably provide support and clarity where they're needed.

Key points are all clearly highlighted and signposted, and therefore unlikely to be overlooked. Accompanying explanations are visibly boxed out, ensuring that the information they contain is easy to digest and can help students grasp the rudiments. There are also some short workout sections included for quick practice purposes.

After each topic page, students are then presented with a page of test material comprising a healthy mix of questions designed to challenge their recall (with answers at the back of the book to aid self-marking, as you'd expect). The layout of these pages is easy on the eye, and evidently the product of much refinement, given how user-friendly and visually engaging they are.

Towards the end of each book are a set of mixed question tests to assist students with their retrieval of key topics, alongside 'key facts' and vocabulary sections that can serve as mini-dictionaries for important terms and definitions, complete with accompanying examples and illustrations.

Collins has produced here a set of extremely well-written books containing elegantly concise explanations, backed up by well-judged retrieval opportunities. Taken as a whole, the Organise and Retrieve your Knowledge series provides a solid foundation upon which to help students develop a detailed, connected and secure knowledge of maths and science, while affording them regular opportunities to revisit and build on that knowledge so that it's not forgotten.



teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Ideal for catch-up, retrieval and intervention
- ✓ Extensive use of no-nonsense explanations that are smart and succinct
- ✓ High standards of presentation, with accessible, colourful and engaging designs across the series
- ✓ The books are physically compact, making them easy to carry and read

PICK UP IF...

You're looking to embed the essentials across all topics in KS3 maths and science via a series of easy-to-use, straightforward organisers for boosting knowledge and cementing understanding

LITERATURE AND DRAMA

Beyond The Canon's Plays for Young Activists

Unlock your students' inner activist with this anthology of hard-hitting plays

AT A GLANCE

- A collection of three revolutionary plays by female writers
- Contains interviews with all three writers, alongside research guides and activism test sheets
- Also included are tips on creating safe spaces and addressing practical drama challenges and supporting games
- Readers can gain access to an accompanying multimedia online learning resource

REVIEW BY JOHN DABELL

This liberating new book is a genuine first – an anthology that seeks to showcase three award-winning plays by female writers and activists from the global majority, in a way that will hopefully inspire students to elevate their own activism and bring sustainable change to the world.

The plays comprise *Muhammad Ali and Me* by Mojisola Adebayo, *A Museum in Baghdad* by Hannah Khalil and *Acceptance* by Amy Ng. Each one invites audiences to take the themes and provocations they present, and consider the role that activism can play in forging a positive identity – as, say, an anti-racist ally, paradigm shifter or disruptor.

The book itself sets out to disrupt the mainstream narrative by moving marginal conversations firmly towards the centre, helping to create a new and better space for everyone, wherein students are encouraged to recognise the importance of decolonising thinking.

The book begins with two powerful introductions – one by the internationally acclaimed director, producer and dramaturg Simeilia Hodge-Dallaway, and a second by the actor, writer and director Sarudzayi Marufu. You can't help but be inspired by the drive, determination and dynamism shown in both essays.

These are then followed by 10 points of advice on how to approach the study of politically-charged plays, so that students can freely explore the often bold and provocative ideas presented by such works,

and examine their connections and legacies.

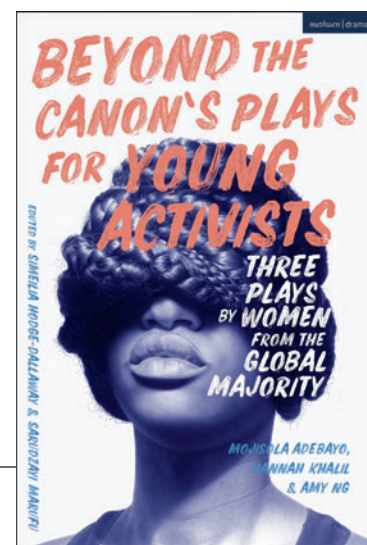
We then move on to the plays themselves, each preceded by a biographical overview of, and interview with the respective playwrights, alongside some superb supporting resources that include practical challenges, quizzes and other activities.

All three plays are exceptional, powerful works that tackle a number of heavyweight issues and themes, including power in relation to race, the difficulties of foster care, child abuse, rape, colonialism and the nature of belonging. These are genuinely groundbreaking plays, full of provocations and rich sources of discussion, both in and out of the classroom.

The book's companion website (see bit.ly/ts124-beyond) goes further, by offering students plenty of extras for each play. These include 'Writer's Room' interviews with the authors, breakdowns of specific characters and scenes and more besides, all of which reveal these stories' additional layers of colour and texture.

What this anthology does is inspire young people to use their voices, dig deeper into important issues that affect them and others, and be active agents for change.

The watching, studying and reading of these plays can contribute to those aspirations being realised, encourage students to take a deeper and more clear-eyed view of our shared history and cultural assumptions, and ultimately help them step out of their comfort zones.



teach
SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ A powerful collection of writing centred on empowerment
- ✓ Provides opportunities for students to explore their understanding of politically-charged plays and wider issues relating to social justice
- ✓ Contains advice and encouragement directed to students on how to become effective activists and agents for change
- ✓ Inclusive in tone and approach, and accompanied by a range of well-curated online learning resources

PICK UP IF...

You're looking for a paradigm-shifting collection of revolutionary writing with which to inspire young people to recognise the value and past contributions of impassioned and effective activism



THE LAST WORD

A letter to ... my IT-obsessed manager



One teacher spells out why the decision to issue a new scheme of work is, at best, pointless, and at worst, actively harmful...

Thank you for the latest guide. What is it this time? ILPs? Lesson plans? Oh, it's the new scheme of work. Can I ask who decided that we need this, and on what pedagogical grounds – research or consolation?

This is yet another occasion where the role of the teacher has been turned into that of an administrator, in the process taking away our autonomy and professional judgment. I've developed my own scheme of work over a number of years, during which I've spent many hours of time engaged in reflection and intelligent, informed consideration of what I do and why I do it.

It covers all the points listed in the new scheme of work you've created for us, but in a way that's far more relevant for my subject, my students and myself. If I were to convert what I've developed into the new format, it would become significantly devalued as a practical tool, or result in me to having to create *two* schemes of work. One I actually use, and another for management box-ticking.

Culture shift

It seems to me that there's been a shift away from trusting the judgement of individual teachers and supporting us as staff, to an IT-informed approach that works to significantly reduce the quality of what we're able to offer our students.

Take our new individual learning plans. I now ask students what the computer has decided I should ask them, rather than what we actually need to discuss, based on our previous interactions and my own observations over the *time that I've known them*.

This isn't lost on the students themselves. One of the smarter students I teach recently used the comments section of their ILP to issue a plea to 'stop these pointless forms' and instead spend more time simply talking to them and listening.

I have no doubt that if these changes go ahead, they will actively lessen what we're able to offer our students. As a manager, I therefore urge you to understand why this

proposed 'one-size-fits-all' approach effectively amounts to 'one-size-fits-none'.

Trust us

Please bear in mind that I'm always happy to have you review my paperwork. Should you wish, I will gladly send you any and all aspects of my planning.

I say all this to you as a teacher who's already been reviewed and judged in every way imaginable. I've been consistently marked as a grade 1 or 2 teacher, in an institution which still clings to the idea that 'teaching quality' can only be assessed via an extremely reductive numerical ratings system.

My results, my student feedback via observations and student surveys have always returned positive results. My department organises and puts on numerous extra-curricular activities. Is it too much to ask that you simply trust us to plan and deliver our own specialism to the young people we've been charged with teaching?

I understand that there are others bearing down on you too – Ofsted, the school governors, the exam boards, government officials and, of course, parents. We're all being watched and judged. As a parent, I know I'm to blame at times for this too.

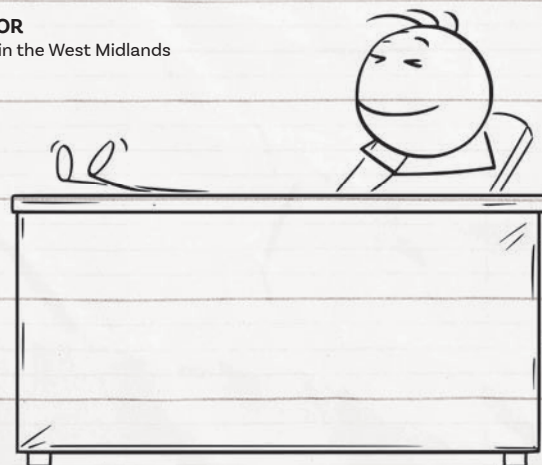
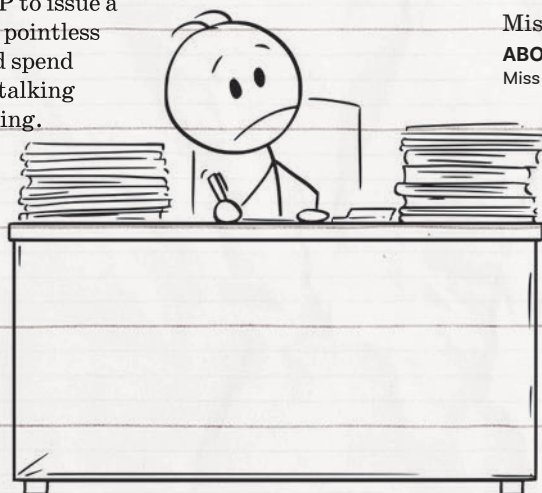
So for now, while I can't ensure that you'll trust me, I must trust that the teachers within my team will have similarly thought through their work, projects and lessons. To be allowed to support our students, in our own way, is ultimately the only way for any of us to truly teach.

Regards,

Miss

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Miss is a Head of Art in the West Midlands



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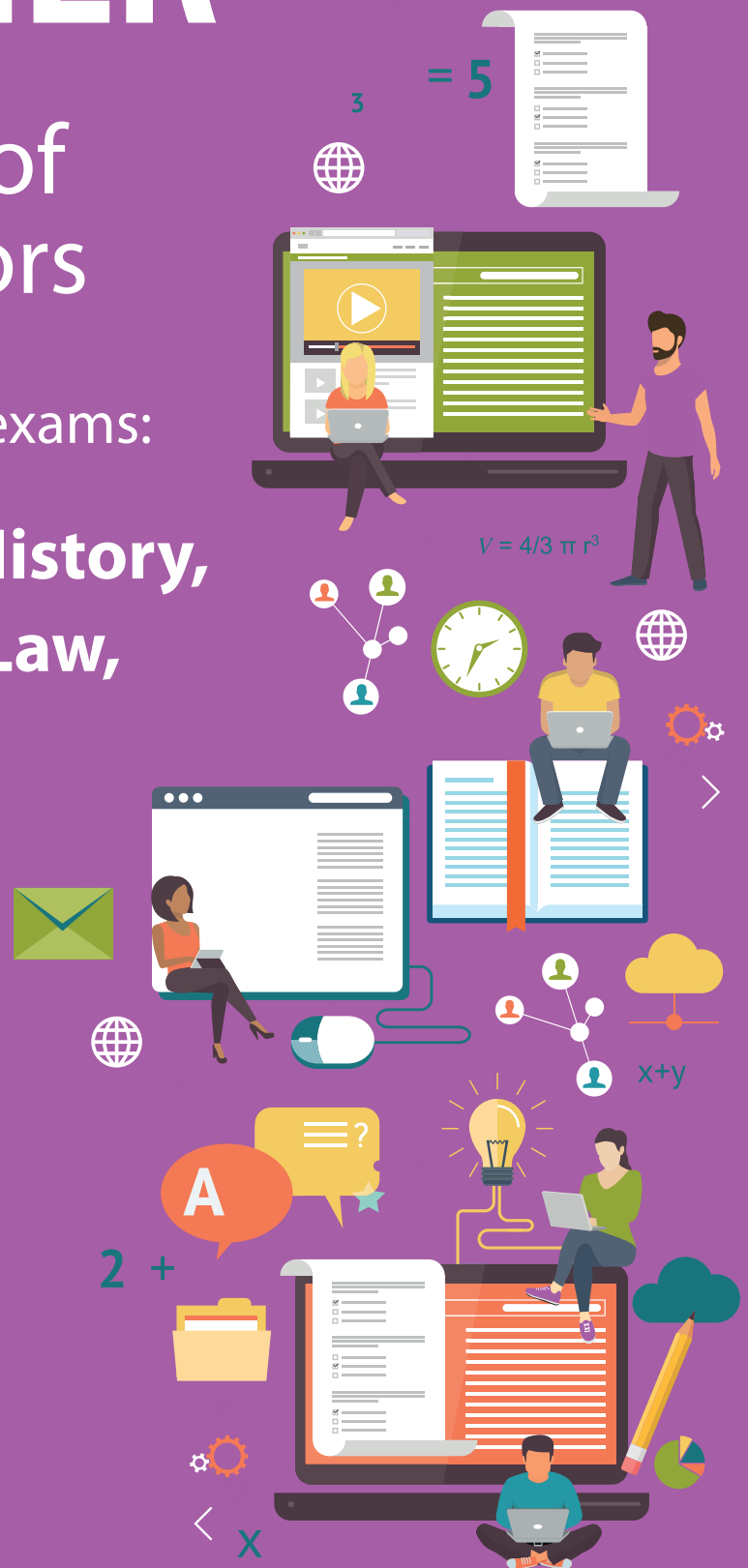
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