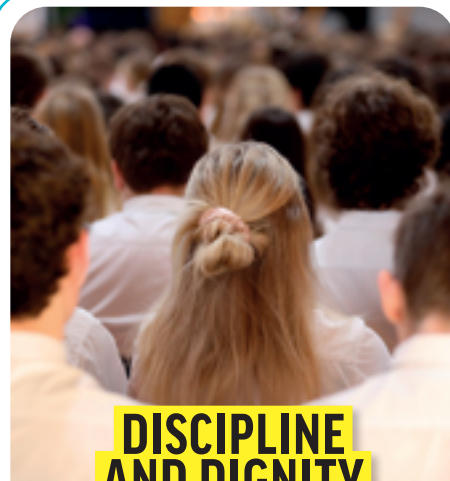


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FROM THE EDITOR

“Welcome...



If you push people and institutions too far, they will break.

Yes, that's a trite observation that should hardly need pointing out – and yet, key decision-makers at various levels of the education profession don't seem to have got the memo.

We're all wearily familiar by now with the urgent issues that continue to bedevil schools, placing ever more pressure on staff to address them in the here and now, lest they become even worse. Whether it's matters relating to recruitment (see page 43), the mental health of students (see page 25) or teachers' workloads (see page 28), the severity of the challenges at hand seem to grow inexorably in scale, with far-reaching implications.

And then, as if that weren't enough, yet more issues flare up and get added to the mix, with the last couple of months gifting us vivid illustrations of the weaknesses contained within the outsourced services model that schools increasingly rely on (see page 19) and the suggestion that schools now have it in their power to actively prevent pupils from engaging in ceremonial prayer, should they wish to take that step (see page 37)...

...and *breathe*.

Yes, when you lay things out like that, it can't help but paint a fairly troubling picture. It is, however, important to remember that the profession is nothing if not resilient, having weathered plenty of storms before, and is more likely than not to weather its current travails too. And besides, it's not as if there's nothing to celebrate.

For one thing, the readiness of staff to provide each other with mutual support remains both instructive and inspiring (see page 32). Elsewhere, there's that deep-rooted desire in parts of the profession to constantly innovate and devise new, carefully researched approaches to areas such as curriculum delivery (see page 64).

Yet the fact remains that this edition of *Teach Secondary* contains several articles themed around health and wellbeing, prompting from this editor the nagging thought that given a more empowered and less harried profession, such discussions wouldn't feel so urgent – or even necessary.

School teachers and leaders have plenty to give, and will keep on giving for as long as they can. But if you push people and institutions too far, they *will* break.

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser

callum.fauser@theteachco.com

On board this issue:



Ama Dickson is a maths teacher



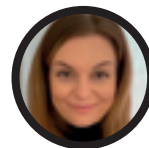
David Voisin is a head of MFL



Emma Hollis is Chief Executive of the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers



Kit Betts-Masters is a lead practitioner for science



Charlotte Lander is a teacher of English and psychology



Anthony David is an executive headteacher

KEEP IN TOUCH!

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

68

Hidden depths

Why teachers should check for knowledge gaps below the surface



Essential reading:

34

More guiding, less directing

What makes coaching work in an education context – and what doesn't

Well read

Should we teach students to read for 'purpose' rather than 'pleasure'?

50





School of thought

19 MELISSA BENN

The recent headlines concerning one head's angry criticisms of his own school's catering provision are emblematic of the issues that outsourcing continues to cause for the education sector...

25 NATASHA DEVON

For too long, developing 'resilience' and 'stiff upper lips' have been advanced as ways of tackling the mental health crisis that's taken hold among young people – so let's try something else

Regulars

12 THINK PIECE

One might assume there would be broad consensus on what safeguarding in schools should cover and how it ought to be carried out – but that's actually not the case, posits Dave Clements...

15 INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION

Too often, important decisions around classroom learning are made in the absence of evidence that simply doesn't exist – a gap that the EEF has resolved to address...

17 DICTIONARY DEEP DIVE

David Voisin examines the hidden origins and surprising behaviours concealed within our everyday vocabulary

21 MAKING SENSE OF ... INEQUALITY SIGNS

When does a '<' become a '>'? Colin Foster explains all...

44 OFF THE SHELVES

Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore

82 BEFORE AND AFTER

Sometimes, the best teachers we've had won't have just taught us; they'll have made us into better people, writes John Lawson...

Features

22 WHO ARE YOU CALLING 'DISADVANTAGED'?

Given how often 'disadvantaged pupils' are invoked during talk of curriculum and learning interventions, we need to start approaching this group in a more sensitive, informed and nuanced way

34 BETTER BY THE DAY

Coaching is all about guiding, as opposed to directing, writes Anthony David – and when approached with the right mindset, its impact on your staff's professional development can be transformative

37 SETTING A PRECEDENT?

Philip Wood weighs up what the High Court's recent ruling in favour of a 'prayer ban' at Michaela Community School might mean for the wider profession

41 GET OUTSIDE

In PE and geography, outdoor learning comes with the territory – but there's also a case to be made for organising al fresco lessons in maths, English and other 'interior' subjects

43 NOW HIRING

The figures suggest that current recruitment and retention incentives simply aren't working, says Emma Hollis – so why not look at what else we can do?

47 MIXED MESSAGES

Secondary teacher and online comedy creator Shabaz Ali explains why schools' social media advice for students is in need of an overhaul

50 READING BETWEEN THE LINES

Instead of forcing students to respond to literature via narrowly prescribed essays, let's do more to harness their creativity and existing love of narrative, suggests Carol Atherton

55 THIS WAY!

Introducing our new regular coverage specifically for heads and SLTs – beginning with some thoughts on how to lead your team when the going gets rough...

68 WHAT LIES BENEATH?

Sometimes it's worth taking a step back and ensuring that knowledge gaps aren't creating weak foundations for the content you're attempting to deliver, advises Colin Foster

70 BALANCING ACT

The successful implementation of behaviour management strategies calls for a careful balancing of compassion with consistent discipline, says Ed Carlin

74 COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY

Kit Betts-Masters surveys the history of Bloom's Taxonomy and considers the reasons for its long-lasting staying power

TS Special – Health and Wellbeing

28 MISSION CREEP

It's easy to let too much of your personal time go when working as a teacher, warns Adam Riches – so here's how to stop that happening

31 CRUNCH TIME

Abbey Jones talks us through the wellbeing strategies in place for Y11 students at Stephen Perse Cambridge Senior School

32 BETTER TOGETHER

Charlotte Lander highlights some of the ways in which you and your colleagues can provide each other with reciprocal wellbeing support

TS Focus – Maths

60 PACK IT IN

Sharpen up the mental arithmetic of your Y7s with Rebecca Ginger's quickfire classroom activities using just a humble deck of cards

63 CALCULATING COLLEAGUES

Maths teachers are obviously employed to improve the maths skills of their students – but, wonders Ama Dickson, could they also do the same for their co-workers?

64 FROM COACHING TO CREATIVITY

Tom Francome details how a new, freely downloadable maths curriculum reimagines how maths can be taught at KS3

Learning Lab

77 BE INSPIRED

Why ADHD continues to be misunderstood; the case for teaching lessons on misinformation and bias – and the wisdom teachers could learn from sea sponges...

teach SECONDARY

Publishers: Joe Carter, Sam Reubin, Richard Stebbing

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

Group Advertising Manager: Samantha Law,
samantha.law@artichokehq.com, 01206 505499

Advertising Manager: Ria Benthams,
ria.benthams@artichokehq.com, 01206 505928

Deputy Advertising Manager: Hannah Jones,
hannah.jones@artichokehq.com, 01206 505924

Senior Account Manager: Alfie Bennett,
alfie.bennett@artichokehq.com, 01206 505996

Art editors: Richard Allen, Sarah Barajas

Customer services: secondary@artichokehq.com

Accounts: artichokemedialtd@integral2.com

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The newsletter

Teach Secondary's digest of the latest goings-on in the profession...

The UNINFORMED teacher's guide to...

NEWTRO

Tech companies would have you believe that consumer electronics only ever evolve in one direction – towards being more powerful, more sophisticated, more versatile and more expensive... sorry, more convenient.

Enter the 'newtro' trend. Where 'retro' can be taken to mean reference to, or use of vintage items and aesthetics, newtro refers to the manufacture of new cultural artefacts and goods – particularly media consumption devices – modelled as closely as possible on designs originating decades ago, complete with all their functional limitations.

You can see it in those turntables on proud display at your local HMV, the healthy sales of replica video game arcade machines and the attempts by some manufacturers to make non-smart, stripped-down mobiles must-own items again. It's oddly endearing to see teenagers ordering cassettes fresh out of the mastering studio from their favourite artists' Bandcamp pages, only to swiftly discover how lousy-sounding and temperamental old-school Walkmans are.

Could we be witnessing a youthful disruptive response to an increasingly safe and stifling culture industry? I wouldn't get your hopes up – chances are we're simply observing a short-lived nostalgia craze that'll probably fizzle out faster than a pair of AA batteries in a Sony WM-B603...



DO SAY

"It sounds better on vinyl"



DON'T SAY

"This tune is on Spotify though, yeah?"

BEAT THE BUDGET



What are we talking about?

A new curriculum toolkit from the Religious Education Council of England and Wales

Who is it for?

KS3/KS4 RE teachers

What's on offer?

A handbook for curriculum developers, three curriculum frameworks and the National Content Standard for RE in England



How might teachers use the resources?

Produced in response to the RE subject report Ofsted published in April this year, the toolkit aims to provide teachers and curriculum designers with a set of principles for selecting RE content and tools to help deliver RE using a 'more scholarly approach'.

Where is it available?

religioneeducationcouncil.org.uk

WHAT THEY SAID

"You are trapped by an inhumane, unaccountable inspection system – but you don't have to put up with it any more. If you feel despair, you need help and hope – not to think that suicide is a way out."

Professor Julia Waters, sister of headteacher Ruth Perry, addressing the NEU's 2024 Annual Conference

Think of a number...

90%

of children excluded at primary school don't attain grade 4s or above in GCSE English and maths

Source: FFT Education Datalab research commissioned by Chance UK

60%

of school leaders and teachers agree that parents are supportive of their school's behaviour rules

Source: National Behaviour Survey produced by the DfE

3,039

The number of permanent exclusions carried out at schools in England during the 2022/23 spring term – a rise of 2,179 compared to the previous year

Source: DfE

ONE FOR THE WALL

"You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them"

Maya Angelou



If the cap doesn't fit...

The government has announced plans to waive the '50% faith cap' for new faith free schools.

Originally put in place in 2010, at the inception of the free schools programme, the cap limits oversubscribed free schools with a religious character to prioritising faith-based pupil admissions for only up to half of its places. Said schools are then obliged to allocate the remaining places according to non faith-based criteria.

It's hoped that if the proposals were to go ahead, it would lead to a rise in the number of places faith school providers feel able to offer – who in recent years have expressed wariness at opening new free schools and bringing existing schools within academy trusts. A consultation on the plans has since been launched, (bit.ly/ts134-NL1) the closing date for which is **20th June 2024**.

According to Education Secretary Gillian Keegan, "As someone who attended a faith school as a child, and having worked closely with our leading faith groups as Education Secretary, I've seen first-hand how their values and standards so often give young people a brilliant start in life.

"Faith groups run some of the best schools in the country, including in some of the most disadvantaged areas, and it's absolutely right we support them to unleash that potential even further – including through the creation of the first ever faith academies for children with special educational needs."

SAVE THE DATE

SPEECHES AND CORRESPONDENCE

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



THE SPEECH:

Sir Martyn Oliver addresses 2024 NAHT Annual Conference

WHO? Sir Martyn Oliver, His Majesty's Chief Inspector

WHERE? NAHT Annual Conference 2024, ICC Wales, Newport

WHEN? 4th May 2024

"From September, we will make changes to the way we undertake ungraded inspections for all schools. This doesn't preclude further changes to our inspections in future – but where we can act quickly, we will do so.

On ungraded inspections, we will no longer conduct deep dives from September. It isn't right and it isn't helpful to try to cram all the detail of a full, graded inspection into a shorter ungraded one. Instead, we want ungraded inspections to feel more like monitoring visits.

What do I mean by that? The emphasis of these inspections will be on providing school leaders with opportunities to demonstrate where they have improved, and to discuss where they still have work to do.

The inspection process must be a professional dialogue between the inspection team and school leadership. As I've made very clear to my inspectors, I expect them to act with professionalism, empathy, courtesy, and respect, at all times. And I hope you will meet them with the same. Because they're not trying to trick you or catch you out. They're trying to find out what's great about your school and where there is some room to improve.

It's just one of the ways we're trying to make sure you spend as much time as possible educating and caring for your children. And it hopefully shows we're serious.

Serious about listening. Serious about acting. And serious about improving."

THE RESPONSE:

DfE axes teacher recruitment scheme

FROM? Lucy Kellaway OBE – economics teacher, former journalist and co-founder of the educational charity Now Teach

REGARDING? The DfE's decision to end its funding for the Career Change Programme, delivered by Now Teach

WHEN? 26th April 2024

"What the Government is actually saying to older career changers is Now Don't Teach – as there won't be any specialised support for you. It's utter madness to axe a target-busting recruitment programme during a recruitment crisis. We have nearly a decade of experience in getting older professionals to become teachers – to junk it for the cost of a departmental rounding error is beyond short-sighted."



13/27 JUNE 2024 Eastern/Northern Education Shows | 14 JUNE 2024 National Education Show | 4-5 JULY 2024 The 14th Festival of Education

13/27 JUNE 2024

Eastern/Northern Education Shows
Newmarket Racecourse/Bolton Stadium Hotel
easterneducationshow.uk /
northerneducationshow.uk

June sees a pair of events taking place at either end of the country, both aimed at school leadership and senior administration staff. At the Eastern Education Show and Northern Education show, attendees will get to see talks from the likes of Adele Bates, Rav Wilding (Eastern) Michael Rosen and Dr Pooky Knightsmith (Northern), and take in a series of illuminating sessions on a number of topics.

14 JUNE 2024

National Education Show
Venue Cymru, Llandudno
nationaleducationshow.com

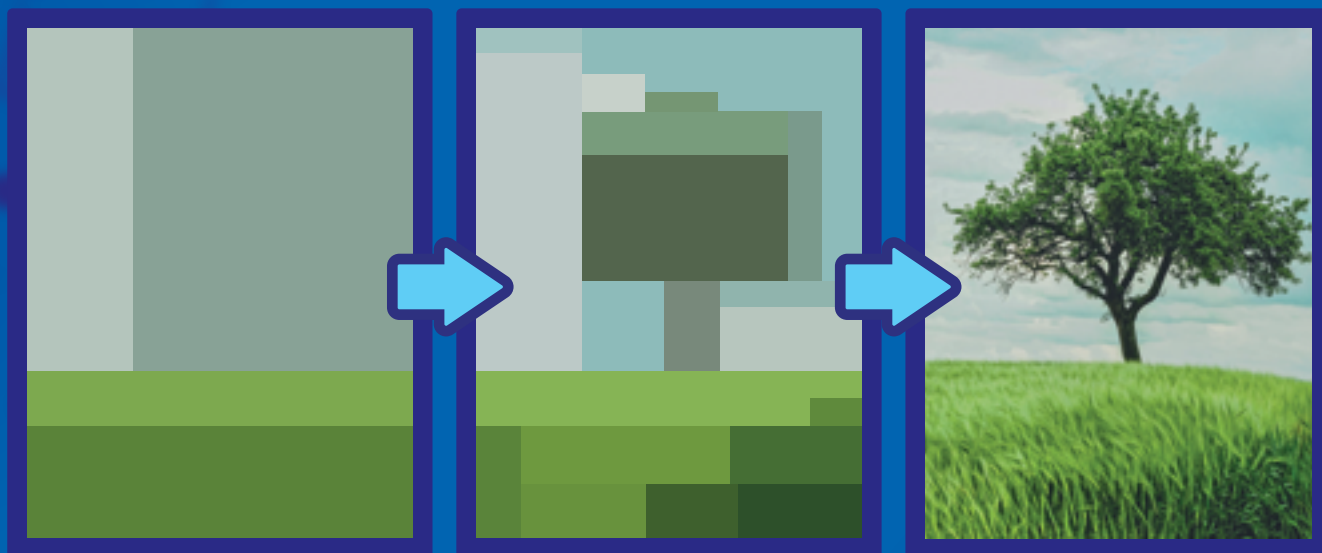
Those making the trip to the Welsh coast will get to choose from over 40 CPD seminars taking place on the day, covering topics as varied as AI, working with TAs and what to do if your school improvement efforts have become 'stuck'. Visitors can also expect to find ample networking opportunities and a comprehensive exhibition space showing off the latest products and services for members of the profession.

4-5 JULY 2024

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Wellington College, Crowthorne
educationfest.co.uk

If you like the idea of getting some valuable CPD within the bucolic surroundings of Wellington College, then put a date in the diary for this year's Festival of Education. Expect a packed programme with over 300 speakers, a host of engaging sessions, stimulating talks and passionate debates wherever you look, plus networking opportunities aplenty with thousands of fellow attendees from all corners of the education sector.

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JOKER
(2019, 122
MINUTES,
15)

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Arthur Fleck is an aspiring stand-up comic living in Gotham City who can't seem to catch a break. Suffering from a condition that makes him break out into maniacal laughter whenever he feels anxious, Arthur's fragile mental state becomes even more unstable after he's told his funding for psychiatric support will be withdrawn.

With his life on the edge, Arthur adopts a new persona as 'the Joker', and turns to a life of crime that will see him rise to the fame he always craved.

Discussion questions:

- How does the film and its performances portray Arthur's transformation into the Joker?
- How do you feel about *Joker's* portrayal of mental health?
- How would you describe the film's overall message and underlying ideology?
- Are there any 'good' or 'moral' characters in *Joker*?
- Watch the staircase scene – why do you think the filmmakers included it, and what were they trying to portray?

Head online to [intofilm.org](https://www.intofilm.org) to stream this film for free and download the film guide containing Teacher's Notes. Look out also for our films, resources and guides to support work around themes of mental wellbeing – see [intofilm.org/mentalwellbeing](https://www.intofilm.org/mentalwellbeing) for more details

Retweets

Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?

Emily-Grace Folorunsho
@MissFolorunsho

Me: What do you remember from last lesson about Henry VII?

Student: He is currently dead.



I really love my year 7s! They always make me laugh.

Jon Biddle @jonnybid

Told my class I had a meeting with the governors this afternoon. Some of them got quite excited and thought I had a meeting with the government. One of them then asked me if I'd ask Rishi Sunak to do something about the cost of crisps in the Tesco at the top of our school field.

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

TEACHER TALES

True stories from the education chalkface

Most illuminating

Following the installation of our new sports hall, its lights were now activated from the corridor. One day, a teacher wanting to use the hall asked at the PE office how to turn the lights on. For a laugh, I informed him that the lights were voice activated, and offered to show him how they worked. A fellow PE teacher in the office realised what I was up to, and stealthily followed us to the darkened sports hall.

Upon entering the hall with the teacher, I shouted out 'Lights On!'. As I did so, my colleague in the corridor duly flicked the switch. The teacher was amazed. I suggested he try it himself, to make sure his voice could be recognised, and my colleague responded accordingly. We then left him to it.

Some days later, the PE office telephone recorded an irate, expletive-ridden voice message from the teacher. It transpired he'd spent five minutes in a gloomy sports hall, vainly shouting for the lights to come on, and

went to report the technical issue to the caretaker – who promptly chuckled, and showed him the switch in the corridor...

Mr Who?

Having spotted a Y7 who was looking a little lost, a teacher stopped to help. The boy explained that he was looking for a member of staff. When asked for the teacher's name, the boy said he couldn't remember, but that it was definitely a man.

The teacher suggested that the boy try thinking a little harder, as that might jog his memory. After some thought, the boy confidently proclaimed "It was a Mr. Something!"

Have a memorable true school tale or anecdote of your own? Share the details, and find more amusing stories, at [schoolhumour.co.uk](https://www.schoolhumour.co.uk)

A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

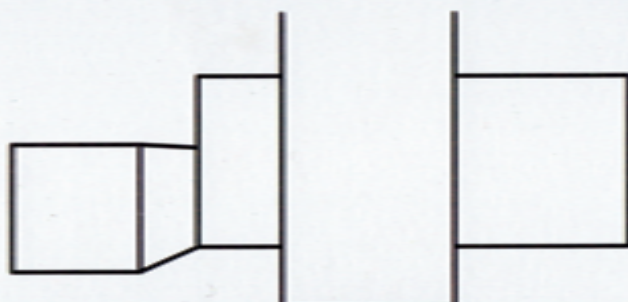
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Finish it in a logical and pleasing way so that the outline is continuous.

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ASK THE EXPERT

“We empower breakthroughs”

PGL's Jay Richmond explains how the UNITE! and GROW! R.E.A.C.H. programmes spark learning outcomes outside the classroom

What expertise do you have that visitors can draw on?

Research by PGL has highlighted how important learning outside of the classroom is for schools. In fact, over 80% of teachers rated it as 'very important'. This inspired us to develop our new R.E.A.C.H. framework in collaboration with teachers: an action-packed, classroom-free range of activity programmes that put a fresh spin on how young people grow and develop. Whether the focus is relationships, experiences, ability, character, or health and wellbeing, our aim is to spark those breakthrough moments that you just can't get from a textbook.

What breakthroughs will my class make on their UNITE! programme?

UNITE! adventures are designed to improve relationships, build bonds and harness the power of teamwork. Your Y7-9 students will enjoy a winning combo of thrilling adventure activities, team-building tasks and character-building challenges, plus free time for relaxing, socialising and having fun. Whether students are working together to achieve victory in archery tag, encouraging each other to brave the giant swing, or trusting their classmates on the Jacob's ladder, each activity has been chosen for its amazing relationship-building powers!

There is an emphasis on learning outcomes: boosting teamwork by overcoming challenges and celebrating success; enhancing communication skills through listening and sharing opinions; building relationships through shared experiences; growing confidence through mastering new skills; and encouraging empathy and understanding of others.

What learning outcomes are achieved on a GROW! trip?

On a PGL GROW! adventure, a range of activities, from dawn till dusk, will help your students boost their social and emotional skills. Whether they're encouraging one another while 10 metres up on the abseil tower, overcoming fears on the zip wire, or



EXPERT PROFILE

NAME: Jay Richmond

JOB TITLE: Sales executive

AREA OF EXPERTISE: Outdoor education

BEST PART OF MY JOB: Knowing that I'm helping to spark breakthroughs in students' learning



building resilience while stand-up paddleboarding, each activity has been chosen for its character-building qualities.

GROW! adventures focus on sparking breakthroughs: boosting independence through problem solving and managing self-motivation; building resilience so students can keep themselves mentally healthy; growing confidence and taking new-found leadership skills back to the classroom; and encouraging empathy and an understanding that difference is a positive – all essential lessons that your group will be able to take back home with them.

How do you like to work with visiting groups?

PGL are experts in supporting your students' development. Time out of the classroom to harness the power of outdoor learning goes a long way towards inspiring breakthroughs in young people. It's why we work closely with every school to deliver programmes that meet their needs. With a little support and the freedom to try new things, young people can R.E.A.C.H. new heights, and we hope you'll see the benefits long after they return to the classroom too. Whether you opt for a UNITE! or a GROW! programme, the PGL team are on hand every step of the way to make your life easier and their adventure unforgettable.

ASK ME ABOUT

LOCATION – With 15 centres to choose from, your nearest PGL adventure is never far away! 95% of UK schools are within a two-hour drive of us.

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The trouble with SAFEGUARDING

In our efforts to ensure every possible safeguarding scenario is covered, we risk overlooking the most important safeguarding duty of all, observes **Dave Clements** – that of listening...

It's a familiar mantra – 'Safeguarding is everybody's business' – but too often, it's anything but. It's an activity carried out by officialdom.

Safeguarding is a procedure you have to follow. It's a box that must be ticked. It's mandatory training. Something to be endured and then promptly forgotten about.

Procedures and checks are a necessity, albeit often overdone. But they can also become a prop, or an excuse for inaction. They can short circuit *real* safeguarding – by which I mean the relationships between people that develop in communities. The kind of relationships that can't be easily identified on school spreadsheets, or rigidly defined in the pages of statutory guidance.

Well read

Working Together to Safeguard Children (see bit.ly/ts134-TP2) is the 'safeguarding bible'. It details multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and protect children, is filled with flowcharts on who should do what and when, and runs to 168 pages.

Anybody working in a school is also expected to read the statutory guidance, *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (see bit.ly/ts117-kcsie). As I'm sure you know, this covers everything from the legislation intended to protect children and what staff need to know to keep them safe, down to safe

recruitment practices and how to respond to concerns regarding staff.

And then there's *The London Safeguarding Children Procedures* – which until recently was a hefty volume always found in the offices of children's services (if not always observed), and

fostering mistrust in each other was out of all proportion to the peril brought about by its actual incidence. Despite what some in the industry would irresponsibly claim, abuse wasn't (and isn't) 'widespread'. Indeed, the cases of abuse we hear about

have been recent break-ins, racial slurs and threats of arson made against Barclay and Michaela schools in East and West London respectively.

At the time of writing, Michaela has recently seen its 'prayer ban' – which sparked spurious allegations of Islamophobia – ruled lawful. But wherever you stand in that particular debate, it seems as though there's been a notable absence of outrage against the attacks on these schools.

The incidents at Barclay happened in the midst of 'pro-Palestine' protests featuring angry scenes. As a parent, I know of primary-aged children who have got into disputes with peers over the wearing of Palestinian scarves, and the same keffiyeh worn by Hamas and its supporters being displayed on the badges of well-to-do parents at the school gates. If it's in the playground and at the school gates, is it in the staff room too?

The hierarchy of risk

Why do we seem to care about some safeguarding risks more than others? Why do we worry about vanishingly small risks, yet appear far less interested in safeguarding against other bigger and avoidable risks?

“The cases of abuse we hear about the most are typically the rarest of all”

these days has a sprawling online presence at bit.ly/ts134-LSCP. Arranged alphabetically, that from which young Londoners must be protected would seem to include everything from animal abuse, begging and circumcision, to self harm, surrogacy and trafficking.

Fostering mistrust

For all the documentation and bureaucratisation of our children's safeguarding infrastructure, one fundamental question remains: 'Are our children any safer as a result?'

When I worked in children's social care, I was under no illusions regarding some of the awful cases we dealt with. These would typically concern a small number of 'chaotic' families beset by drugs, alcohol, abuse, neglect and/or violence – but I was also keen to keep things in perspective.

It seemed to me that the damage done by exaggerating the extent of abuse and

the most are typically the rarest of all.

Parental concerns

Those of us who have worked in and around safeguarding, or are grappling with these sorts of issues in schools, could do worse than actually speak to parents. What worries *them*? Is it the risk of female genital mutilation?

According to the Metropolitan Police, following a recently successful conviction for the practice, it was 'Only the second time in UK history that somebody has been convicted of FGM since it became illegal in 1985'. And the offence in question wasn't even committed in the UK.

Or are parents worried about knife crime? Their kids being glued to their devices? Are Jewish parents afraid to send their children to school wearing kippahs because of rising antisemitism? Why aren't we worrying more about 'extremism'? There

The recently published Cass Review (see cass.independent-review.uk) documents how a number of gay and autistic children have been subjected to irreversible gender transitioning – and yet we’re still teaching kids that they can change their gender.

On the other hand, we’re also safeguarding too much. Whether it’s a school trip, or a child in care refused a sleepover, otherwise valuable experiences are too often getting tangled up in a backside-covering culture of compliance and consent forms.

Growing up in communities

Of course, there are some genuine safeguarding concerns – from schools

removing items from young people who then accuse the school of assaulting them, to the reservations expressed by some parents regarding inappropriate lesson content being taught in schools.

Indeed, the greatest damage done to our children in living memory occurred during the pandemic. While the virus itself posed little threat to the young, the impact of closing down schools was profound. As numerous reports have since shown – and as teachers have seen for themselves close up – the social, emotional and academic consequences have been all too real.

By contrast, we can’t seem to cease worrying over kids and their devices. In February, the government issued guidance backing school bans on smartphones, and is now reportedly considering banning their sale to under 16s.

You can understand their reasoning. Today, most of us are glued to our phones and living lives often

embedded as much in social media as what we used to call the ‘real world’.

It follows that this can’t be good for kids. Jonathan Haidt, a psychology professor at New York University’s Stern School of Business, was right when he was quoted in *The Spectator* as saying “**You cannot grow up in networks. You have to grow up in communities.**” (see bit.ly/ts134-TP1)

Making lives easier

But our communities have changed beyond recognition. Both parents now often have to work, and many can’t afford the considerable expense of childcare. Is it any wonder, given these circumstances, that kids are increasingly babysat by devices and accessing stuff they probably shouldn’t be? A government genuinely set on ‘*Making the UK the safest place to be a child online*’ might have tried to make parents’ lives a little easier, over introducing the draconian Online Safety Act.

We have responsibilities too. We’re encouraged by authorities to disengage, to not take matters into our own hands – but this unwillingness to intervene can result in bad behaviour going unchecked, and leave vulnerable kids unprotected.

If we want our schools and communities to be safe and secure places in which our young people can thrive, then we’re going to have to look up from our policies, procedures, laptops and phones – and start actually talking to each other.

IN BRIEF

What's the issue?

The process of safeguarding children has become an increasingly administrative exercise, with official guidance and record-keeping taking precedence over the cultivation of positive community relations.

What's being said?

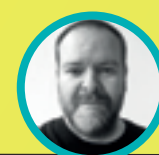
Certain groups have sought to raise awareness of issues hitherto not classed as pressing safeguarding challenges (smartphones, FGM, trafficking), in the belief that ever more comprehensive safeguarding policies are necessary to guard against modern threats to children’s livelihoods.

What's really happening?

A curious ‘safeguarding hierarchy’ has started to emerge, whereby certain active threats and harms (such as vandalism at schools linked to controversial policies regarding secularism) are given less priority than others (such as adolescent media consumption and the right to protest).

The takeaway

Statutory guidance has its place, but the distancing effect produced by the bureaucracy surrounding safeguarding risks putting up barriers between schools and the local communities that they need to be talking and listening to.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Clements is a local government policy advisor and associate of the Education Forum at the Academy of Ideas



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Evaluations FOR ALL

Christine Kelly and **Faizaan Sami** look at how the EEF's new stream of evaluations can give teachers better evidence to support their everyday practice

Teachers regularly make decisions in their daily practice to try and improve pupil learning, with limited evidence available to support their choices. To try and help with this, we introduced a new approach to evaluation in 2019 called Teacher Choices, which sought to generate relevant and actionable evidence that could inform the dilemmas that teachers routinely face. After some disruption during the pandemic, we're now launching a new series of Teacher Choices evaluations and taking stock of what we've learned so far.

In Autumn 2023 we published the first set of Teacher Choice feasibility studies, including 'A Winning Start', which compared two approaches to lesson starters in Y8 classes. This study, along with others at both



primary and secondary level, aimed to assess whether real-world, practice-based questions could be successfully evaluated using a randomised controlled trial (RCT), and whether teachers could integrate a discrete set of approaches into routine teaching without disruption.

The findings have left us highly encouraged. First, we found that teachers were

highly motivated to take part. Participation in these trials aligned with schools' professional development priorities to apply relevant, evidenced-based practices, and also supported a desire shared among teachers to directly contribute to the evidence base.

We also learned that short and simple teacher guides were sufficient for teachers

to understand the trial, and apply the choice approaches with fidelity. Striking a good balance between strict prescription and flexibility within provided guidance is no easy feat. We therefore gathered input from EEF content specialists, as well as practitioners from our Research Schools Network, to distil the guidance down to the core elements of practice, and had teachers use their best judgement when 'localising' the approach to their contexts.

Finally, the pilots provided a useful test case for disseminating findings to the wider sector. We want to help teachers quickly digest which approaches are more impactful and find out about participants' experiences of implementation, so that they can make more informed choices when replicating the chosen approaches in their own classroom.

WHAT NEEDS DOING - AND WHAT'S TO COME...



Methodological challenges

The Teacher Choices feasibility trials have thus far underscored the importance of close collaboration with teachers at every stage of the research process.

Despite some exciting initial findings, however, there remain some methodological challenges associated with the Teacher Choices trials. For example, running causal evaluations of teacher practices means having to identify specific outcomes that we would expect the practice to influence, and evaluating these with sensitive assessment measures.

When standardised test measures lack the necessary precision, evaluators like NFER have opted to create and validate bespoke assessments, or collect teacher-developed topic tests in order to evaluate the impact of Teacher Choices.



Multidisciplinary expertise

Integrating RCTs into real-world practice entails navigating some level of variation. Not all teachers instruct the same topics in the same sequence, and pupils in classrooms may not be grouped in the same way across settings.

Such differences in contexts challenge our ability to test pupils across settings and produce a standard impact – but they also present unique opportunities for working alongside teachers to try and identify innovative testing solutions.

Every new Teacher Choice project will therefore be guided by a Study Advisory Board comprising methodological, subject and practice experts, who will be able to provide fresh perspectives in order to help inform the evaluation.



Next steps

Three more Teacher Choices evaluations have just completed their scoping phase – including 'Using Examples to Teach Grammar to Year 7 (Cognitive Science Teacher Choices)'. This evaluation will seek to support teachers in establishing which modelling technique that uses examples is most effective for teaching English grammar.

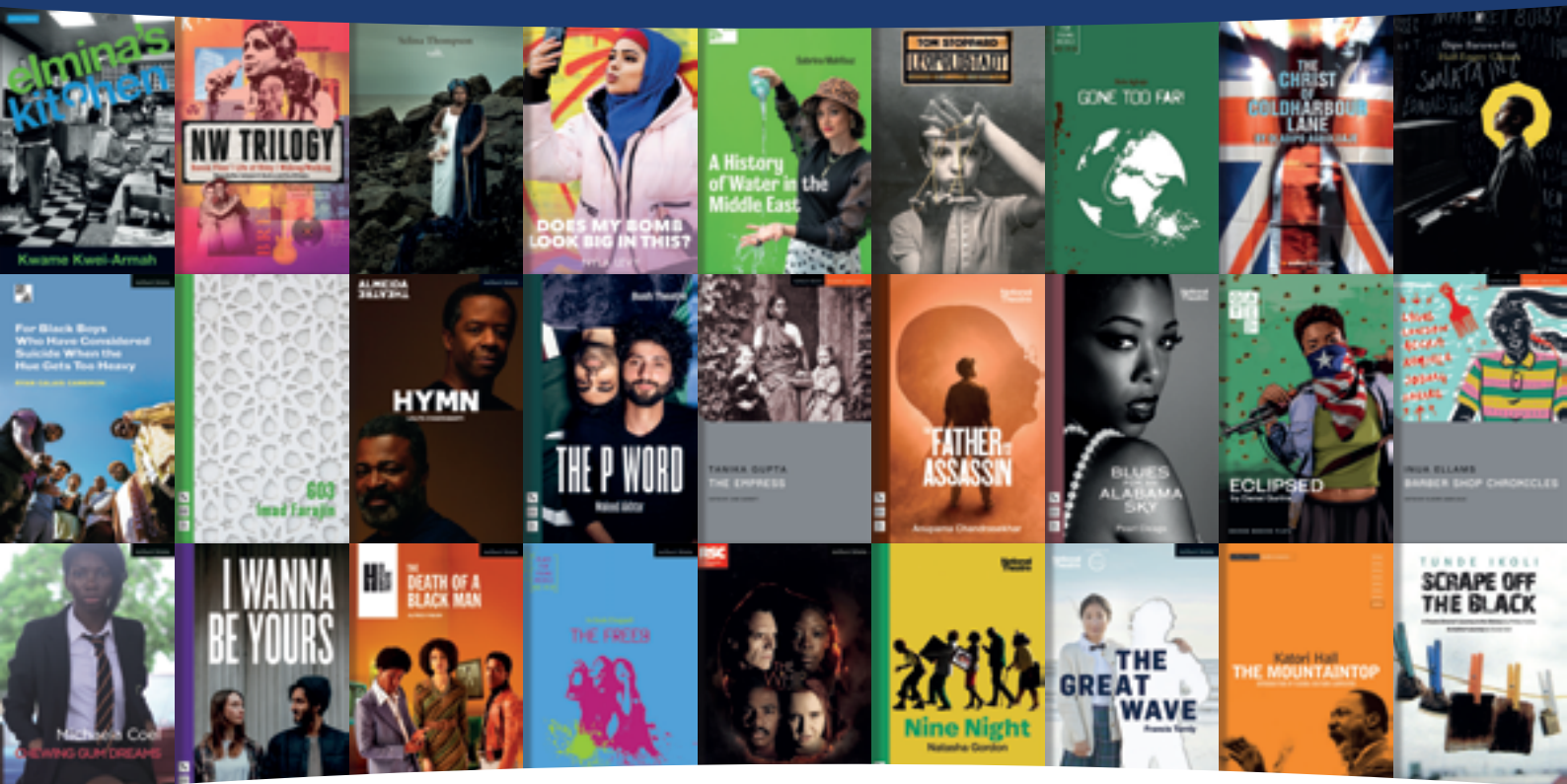
We've also partnered with the Hg Foundation to fund a Teacher Choices trial examining whether ChatGPT-informed lesson and resource preparation is more effective in reducing teacher workload than traditional preparation methods.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS Christine Kelly is the EEF's methodological innovation lead and Faizaan Sami is its evaluation manager; for more information, visit educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk



The (*Incomplete*) Lit in Colour Play List

Plays written by writers of colour for
11-18 year-olds to study and perform



Can you recommend a play by a writer of colour? *Yes, we can*

This was a question asked by a teacher at a webinar looking for plays written by writers of colour that are suitable to teach in the classroom. It became the start of Bloomsbury's Partnership in the Lit in Colour campaign - placing the spotlight on plays and drama, and supporting schools to make the teaching and learning of English Literature and Drama more inclusive.

Bloomsbury's first (*Incomplete*) Lit in Colour Play List features an initial 57 plays written by playwrights of colour from the Methuen Drama portfolio and fellow play publishers, for students to discover, study and perform in the classroom.

With an overview of each play's plot and themes as well as links to additional teaching resources, this Play List is the perfect resource for teachers looking to introduce more diverse plays into their classrooms.





David Voisin is a head of MFL

DICTIONARY DEEP DIVE

Join **David Voisin** on a rich, and sometimes surprising journey through the points at which literacy, language and vocabulary intersect...

PARDON MY FRENCH

Root words of French provenance are so ubiquitous that English speakers are likely to employ French words or expressions daily without even noticing. For example, if you've forgotten the French word for 'day', a little linguistic '*mise à jour*' (update) may be '*de rigueur*' (required). '*Jour*' is contained within '*bonjour*', which literally means 'good day', just as our Australian and German friends would say. *Jour* is also found in 'journalists', who may work for a 'daily' tabloid. Was your meeting ad*jour*ned? Then it was postponed to another day. And then there's *jour*ney – which used to refer to a 'day trip'.



LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

Should standard English prevail in the classroom? Linguistics professor Rob Drummond once (rightly) observed that 'non-standard' doesn't mean 'sub-standard'. SE is, after all, just one facet of the English language. In our diverse society, students may come from backgrounds where other idiolects predominate over SE and represent an integral part of their identity.

In his book *How To Teach: Literacy*, however, Phil Beadle advocates for the sole use of SE by both teachers and students – and as a language teacher, I can relate to his view. The language we choose should respond to a need. If students lack exposure to SE, it's our role to provide that linguistic environment. Giving pupils another register of language is therefore not an imposition, but empowers them with the freedom of choice and ability to adapt their language to given situations – what linguists call 'code switching'.

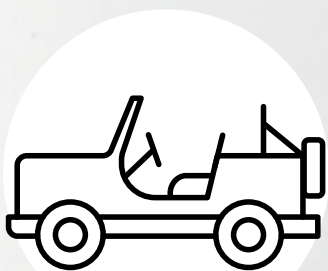
TEACHING TIP: MAKE USE OF THE CONTEXT

The Frayer model is a well-established paradigm for exploring words via visual means, which sees students create examples and non-examples of target vocabulary, before creating illustrations to further drive home the meanings of said vocabulary. There are, however, some alternative approaches that are also worth looking at.

John Sweller, the godfather of cognitive load theory, has previously said that the limitations of working memory that apply to novel information soon disappear when dealing with familiar information already stored in long term memory. Explicit vocabulary instruction is all about helping students establish those links – so here are some tips for encouraging a semantic exploration of new vocabulary:

- Our diurnal brains rely heavily on the visual cortex. To that end, visual stimuli to complement the processing of written words (dual coding) can help cement semantics into our memory.
- One powerful strategy you can deploy is to systematically break up words. This doesn't have to produce meaningful morphological components, such as inflections or root words; a charade-like decoupage can just as effective when it comes to memorisation, and perhaps be more fun! 'Crepuscular', for instance, resembles an amalgamation of 'crêpe' and 'muscular'. I personally memorised the word 'uxoricide' based on the pyramid of Luxor (my own cultural capital) and the suffix 'cide', meaning killing – as in suicide, fratricide, regicide, genocide, infanticide, etc. (morphological knowledge).
- What we're ultimately talking about is 'bouncing off' existing knowledge to facilitate memorisation. This can be achieved through phonetic patterns (like homophones), orthographic ones (as in 'insolence / indolence', 'insidious / invidious', 'arrogate / abrogate' etc.) or indeed both.

SAME ROOT, DIFFERENT WORDS



A **territory** is a piece of land; the **Territorial Army** operates on the ground, sometimes using all-**ter**rain vehicles that can negotiate rugged surfaces



In French, 'La **Terre**' means 'earth' or 'soil'; a sub**ter**restrial lake is situated underground



An extra-**ter**restrial is, literally, an outlandish creature

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STUDYLINKtours

Recent media reports concerning shoddy school dinners speak to far wider issues that relate to outsourcing in schools, general nutrition, and above all, class and educational inequality...

Melissa Benn



“How difficult is it to bake a potato?”

That was the unusual question posed by an angry headteacher on X (formerly Twitter) in March this year, despairing at the ‘completely unacceptable’ quality of school meals served at his secondary school (see bit.ly/ts134-MB1).

In a subsequent letter to parents, Jason Ashley, head of Redbridge Community School in Southampton, criticised the shrinking portions and rising costs of the school dinners served to his students, adding that he had no control whatsoever over the private company, Chartwells, that had been contracted to supply the meals.

In response, Chartwells apologised for what it suggested had been a brief, atypical lapse in its standards of service – to which Ashley expressed his lack of trust in the company to mend its culinary ways.

Stark contrasts

Ultimately, however, Ashley is powerless. Under the terms of the private finance initiative (PFI) contract agreed on the school’s behalf by Southampton Council, a separate management company is responsible for recruiting specialist service providers for a range of needs at the school, including catering.

That wasn’t the end of the story, though. Soon after, it was revealed that the company delivering those unappealing beige meals to Southampton state school students was also supplying top private schools with a very different menu.

According to the *Daily Mail*, Chartwell Independent – a separate wing of the same company – offers an array of nutritious and delicious food to privately educated students, including a ‘soul bowl’ concept that lets students pick *“From a wide array of healthy proteins, fresh vegetables and carbohydrates”* (see bit.ly/ts134-MB2).

At another private school in

Cambridge, the company’s offering extends to *“Southern-fried oyster mushrooms, sushi and moules marinières.”*

Given all this, it’s hard to disagree with food campaigner Andy Jolley, who was quoted in the *Mail*’s coverage as saying *“The gourmet food served to the elites in private schools is in stark contrast to the ultra-processed, mass-produced food that’s cooked to a budget.”* Jolley further observed that given how school lunches could be *“The only hot meal some children will have, it’s simply not good enough.”*

Unbreakable terms

This depressing story highlights several deep problems within our society – not least the seemingly unstoppable rise of cheap, often ultra-processed foods that are easy to buy or assemble and immediately appealing to the palate, but which perpetuate the ongoing issue of childhood obesity, particularly among the poor.

Nearly two decades ago, chef Jamie Oliver tried drawing attention to the issue with his documentary series *Jamie’s School Dinners*, which vividly showed how school really is often the

only chance many children have to experience fresh, well-cooked, truly tasty food.

At the time, Oliver’s crusade made clear the limitations of relying on enlightened entrepreneurs to resolve deep-rooted issues across public services and society at large. They tend to make a big initial splash, and can sometimes bring about a short-lived difference, but will rarely shift the underlying culture.

In this case, we can look to the often overlooked, but seemingly unbreakable terms of PFI contracts which, it would seem, hold a far greater power over children’s diets than the widely-publicised culinary activism of popular media personalities.

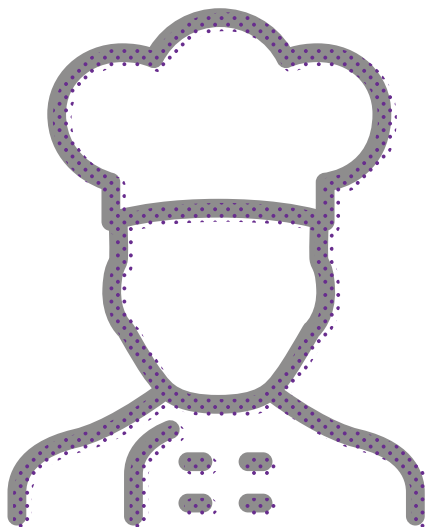
The profit motive

The story also illustrates the many dimensions of educational inequality. Walking through a small Midlands town recently, I noticed an art gallery at the end of a row of Georgian shop fronts. It was a space entirely devoted to the display (and sale) of artworks by children attending the local private school, where fees nudge £30,000 per year.

The rich, it seems, don’t just get more beautiful buildings, smaller classes, greater extracurricular opportunities and chances to market their work – they’re also far better fed.

Understandably, Jason Ashley is in favour of bringing his school’s catering back in-house. He wants to see good, old fashioned catering staff serving up delicious, hand-cooked meals that can whet the appetites – and culinary interests – of those depending on that one daily meal for their nutritional needs.

However, so long as the profit motive sits at the heart of our children’s school dinner experiences, we can expect those who have the least to be fed the least well, thus continuing the spiral of inequality and deprivation that so bedevils our country.





ASK THE EXPERT

Myth-busting online AP

Online alternative provision expert and Headteacher of Academy21, Clare Brokenshire, debunks the misconceptions around online AP and reveals its transformative potential

Myth 1: Online AP students will never return to school

When it's right for the student, reintegration into full-time, mainstream schooling is Academy21's ultimate goal. We work in partnership with schools and local authorities to achieve the best outcomes for each pupil.

Allowing a student with EBSA (Emotionally-Based School Avoidance) to spend time learning in a different environment can often be the best start in helping them back to it, by giving them space to break the pattern of disengagement and work through challenges. As our recent Ofsted report notes (see bit.ly/ts134-A21), "Pupils' attendance improves, and evidence shows that the approaches taken enable pupils to make progress and, in many cases, successfully reintegrate back into their school or other educational placements."

Myth 2: Online learning is not quality approved

Although the sector was once unregulated, Academy21 is now proud to be the first accredited online alternative provision. We have supported the DfE's introduction of the new OEAS (Online Education Accreditation Scheme) for several years, and the rigorous standards they have set will be a helpful validation for schools looking to use online provision for their students. Indeed, the DfE recommends that schools now only use accredited online providers.

Myth 3: The quality of teaching is reduced when online

Online classrooms do not negate quality in the slightest. All Academy21 teachers are fully qualified, highly experienced and well versed in working with vulnerable students. As part of the leading Inspired Online Schools group, we have 20 years of experience and best practices in online education. This means pupils get all the benefits of following a



EXPERT PROFILE

NAME:

Clare Brokenshire

JOB TITLE:

Head of Education

AREA OF EXPERTISE:

Managing staff and ensuring the smooth running of Academy21

BEST PART OF MY JOB:

Having discussions and sharing decision-making with a wide variety of our stakeholders

broad, quality curriculum, plus the interactivity, expertise and personalised attention of small, live virtual classes with their class teacher, and powerful learning technologies that support their progress.

Myth 4: If students don't engage in school, they won't engage online

For many students, the mainstream classroom can be a challenging environment – whether sensorily, socially, or physically. For these pupils, engaging online can actually be far easier. Academy21's classes are also 100% live, so there's always a teacher on hand to make sure each pupil is focused and participating. In our student voice surveys, 9 in 10 students say they feel more confident in their learning since joining Academy21, giving them the perfect springboard to reintegrate or progress.

Myth 5: Online learning is unsafe

Safety is, understandably, a crucial concern for schools, and something we take very seriously at Academy21. Thankfully, with a safeguarding-first approach and the right systems in place, online learning can be robustly safe and secure. In our recent Ofsted report, for example – which found Academy21's safeguarding to be effective – inspectors favourably highlighted our secure learning platform, close pupil supervision, recruitment practices and online student safety training as key factors underpinning our comprehensive, proactive safeguarding process.

ASK ME ABOUT

EBSA – How Academy21 can be used as respite for anxious young people struggling with attendance or engagement

EARLY INTERVENTION – The benefits of implementing online provision before students become completely disengaged with learning

GCSE EXAMS – How our GCSE Rescue programme can help pupils catch up on missed learning and achieve recognised core outcomes
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[MATHS PROBLEM]

INEQUALITY SIGNS TURNING ROUND

When solving inequalities, students are often confused when the inequality sign changes direction, says **Colin Foster**

In this lesson, students make sense of when and why the inequality sign turns around

THE DIFFICULTY

Usha is solving the inequality $11 - 3x > 5$. She writes:

$$\begin{aligned} 11 - 3x &> 5 \\ -3x &> -6 \\ x &> 2 \end{aligned}$$

How can you tell that her answer is **wrong**?
Where did she go wrong?

Students may try substituting a value that satisfies $x > 2$ to see whether it also satisfies the starting inequality. In fact, **every** value that satisfies $x > 2$ **fails** to satisfy $11 - 3x > 5$. For example, if $x = 10$, which is greater than 2, then $11 - 3 \times 10 = -19$, which is **not** greater than 5.

Students may struggle to explain **where** Usha has gone wrong, as her steps seem plausible. They might find, by substituting, that her second line is correct, but her third line is incorrect. If they say 'Because the inequality sign switches around when you divide by a negative number' challenge them to explain **why**.

THE SOLUTION

What Usha does would be correct for an **equality**:

$$\begin{aligned} 11 - 3x &= 5 \\ -3x &= -6 \\ x &= 2 \end{aligned}$$

The solution $x = 2$ **does** satisfy $11 - 3x = 5$, because $11 - 3 \times 2 = 5$. But it does **not** work for an **inequality**.

How else could you solve this **equation**?

An alternative solution method is:

$$\begin{aligned} 11 - 3x &= 5 \\ 11 &= 5 + 3x \\ 6 &= 3x \\ 2 &= x \end{aligned}$$

Try this method with the original **inequality**.

This leads to the **correct** solution:

$$\begin{aligned} 11 - 3x &> 5 \\ 11 &> 5 + 3x \\ 6 &> 3x \\ 2 &> x \end{aligned}$$

Why does this method work and Usha's method doesn't?

The second method **never** multiplies or divides both sides by a **negative number**. Usha's method does, because she divides by -3 . **Dividing or multiplying by negative numbers changes the direction of an inequality**. Students could experiment with a (true) inequality, such as $14 > 10$; dividing both sides by -2 produces $-7 > -5$, which is false.

A further challenge could be to solve this inequality, both correctly and incorrectly, and to explain the difference:

$$\frac{1}{x} > \frac{1}{2}$$

Taking reciprocals of both sides, to obtain $x > 2$, is invalid, since, for example, $\frac{1}{3} > \frac{1}{2}$ is false. Multiplying both sides by $2x$, to obtain $2 > x$ is valid only if $x > 0$. However, we know that if a fraction is greater than $\frac{1}{2}$ then it must be positive, in which case the numerator and the denominator must have the same sign, so $2 > x$ is correct.

Checking for understanding

Make up three inequalities that could catch someone out! Solve each one correctly and incorrectly, explaining why the incorrect solutions are incorrect.



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

What makes pupils ‘DISADVANTAGED’?

Let’s stop seeing ‘disadvantaged pupils’ as a monolithic group and start recognising their very different backgrounds and needs, say **Meena Wood** and **Julie Grimshaw**

The introduction of Pupil Premium funding in 2011 was originally intended to support schools in improving educational outcomes for ‘disadvantaged pupils’ – namely those eligible for free school meals, looked-after children and those with a parent in the armed forces.

13 years on, there seems to be little evidence of it having had overall success, with significant gaps in achievement still remaining – and increasing – between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

Disadvantaged sub-groups

The reasons for this are complex, but one contributing factor is our continued use of ever more inaccurate labels for different pupil groups. Ofsted’s definition of ‘disadvantaged pupils’, for example, is wider than you might think, in that it includes pupils with SEND, as well as pupils receiving support from LAs.

If you were to illustrate some of these groups in a Venn diagram, many ‘free school meals’ pupils would straddle multiple sub-groups, such as ethnicity, special needs and gender. We would quickly see how the umbrella term ‘disadvantaged’ has become so broad that it’s now effectively meaningless.

Delving deeper into the data, we start to notice huge disparities around these disadvantaged sub-groups when they’re broken down

by ethnicity, gender, geographical location and school phase. As noted in the Education Policy Institute’s 2023 Annual Report (see bit.ly/ts134-PP1), Chinese pupils were a full two years ahead of white British pupils and white and Black Caribbean pupils by the end of secondary school, whilst Gypsy Roma pupils were over two-and-a-half years behind.

The available data also points to major differences in the size of gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils across

especially strange move, since it was Ofsted itself that warned against adopting that very approach in 2015.

Perhaps they have latched on to the notion that ‘*A rising tide lifts all boats*’ – which may be true of the economy, but not of children. Every child or young person is, after all, an individual who won’t have arrived in school with a label neatly displayed on his or her forehead!

Within the current inspection framework, there’s very limited use

income families – for example, the notion that such parents and carers are unable or unwilling to help, that their children don’t have clear boundaries at home, or that these parents are somehow insufficiently aspirational for their children.

We’ve seen one trust leader claim that, “*In schools where behaviour standards are high, disadvantaged*

“The umbrella term ‘disadvantaged’ has become so broad that it’s now effectively meaningless”

different regions. The three LAs with the fastest expanding gaps across school phases are Kingston-upon-Hull, Torbay and Blackpool. London and the West Midlands, meanwhile, stand out as those regions with the smallest disadvantage gaps across all school phases – with Newham and Slough especially notable for their successes in consistently achieving the smallest disadvantage gaps at the end of primary and secondary school.

A ‘data-blind’ approach

Given these clear anomalies, then, why has Ofsted opted to clump all ‘disadvantaged’ pupils together in a single homogenous category since 2019? It seems like an

of the highly nuanced information that’s available on pupil groups and regional differences. This ‘data-blind’ approach to inspection has led to claims being made by individual schools and trusts that their disadvantaged pupils require specific approaches if they’re to succeed. Typical instances of these might include, for instance, ‘clear boundaries’, strict uniform rules, certain expectations regarding equipment and the application of prescribed sanctions for those failing to meet these expectations.

Unreasonable assumptions

Some professionals have been known to make unreasonable assumptions about low-



children do disproportionately well – albeit with no supporting evidence cited. Elsewhere, we’ve seen a headteacher frequently use the term ‘deprived’ as a synonym for disadvantaged. The latter is, at best, patronising to children and their families; at worst, it’s insulting to those who don’t see themselves as ‘deprived’.

On the contrary, many of these pupils come from aspirational families who value education, who have developed a culture of respect for schools and are

thus motivated to see their children succeed.

Aspirational strategies

As can be seen in the data’s variability by ethnicity, gender and region, such assertions are too generalised. The term ‘disadvantaged’ is itself too wide-ranging to use as justification for restricting certain approaches to behaviour – or indeed pedagogies – to pupil groups that will likely have an enormous range of needs, abilities, barriers and individual characteristics.

When designing our curriculum intent, we must surely be cognisant of this, and allow said knowledge to influence how we craft our aspirational and motivational strategies. The days of blindly following that clunky old model – under which the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is closely scrutinised and held up against outcomes for non-disadvantaged pupils – are surely over. There can exist now a matrix of complex interactions between pupils’ ethnicity and gender, as

well as factors relating to their levels of disadvantage and socio-economic status.

A sense of strong motivation and aspiration is what forms the foundations of positive attitudes to learning, and are integral to pupils ultimately achieving successful outcomes.

Reductionist and binary

By keeping in place a reductionist, binary model of reviewing attainment for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils, we’re putting up barriers to meaningful curriculum reform. Presenting accounts of educational achievement that are uniquely framed in relation to one of these factors alone won’t be helpful for those schools wishing to adopt strategies that genuinely address educational inequalities.

A pathways curriculum with greater choice than the current EBacc offering is a necessity, and one which could be implemented alongside revised behaviour policies that serve to foster positive attitudes towards learning, rather than punishing pupils for relatively minor instances of non-compliance.

Terms such as ‘rich diet of knowledge’ may be closely associated with having an aspirational outlook, but unless the curriculum includes content widely regarded as relevant and engaging, then too many pupils – including many from the ‘disadvantaged’ group – will continue to conclude that school simply ‘isn’t for them’.

Nor can we ignore how knowledge is often presented in the school curriculum very selectively. *‘The best that has been thought and said.....to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement’* is what’s being promised – though precisely what this ‘essential knowledge’ is, how it’s

selected and by whom are the key questions here, since not all pupils may perceive it as being meaningful in their context.

An extended curriculum

Other factors to consider include attitudes to learning, and the need for schools to counteract reactive behaviours – especially in the face of learning challenges encountered in lessons and towards authority figures.

Patterns of regular absence, truancy and exclusion will clearly influence the educational prospects of all pupils, and must therefore be taken into account when planning curriculum intent. It’s essential, for instance, to consider the funding of an extended curriculum involving parents and other community stakeholders. We must also look at how we can best draw on a range of meaningful data about particular pupil groups, and use this to devise strategies that support learning and progress for all.

Finally, Ofsted should incorporate effective scrutiny of said data in its inspections, and cross-reference this against schools’ own self-evaluations. There is considerable scope here for school leaders to adopt a more nuanced approach when analysing pupil data, and to implement inclusive strategies that will genuinely help raise achievement for all pupils – regardless of their starting points.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meena Wood is a former principal and HMI, and author of *Secondary Curriculum Transformed - Enabling All to Achieve* (Routledge, £24.99); Julie Grimshaw is a school improvement adviser, external moderator for ITE and a former HMI



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We can respond to the mental health emergency among young people by extolling the merits of ‘resilience’ and ‘stiff upper lips’ – or we can open our eyes, start listening and change our expectations, economics and environment for the better

Natasha Devon



I blame Nicky Morgan.

There’s been approximately 43,000* Education Secretaries since, so you could be forgiven for not remembering, but it was Morgan who introduced a package of measures to ‘instil character’ in young people. After this, the word ‘resilience’ seemed to crop up endlessly in conversations around mental health in schools.

As a mental health campaigner and educator, I was asked at the time ‘What can we do to make kids more resilient?’ ad infinitum – by parents, media interviewers and anyone who I happened to share my job title with in a social situation. Eventually, I got to the stage where I simply refused to answer, because the ensuing conversation would never be fruitful. Victim blaming rarely ever is.

The notorious ‘Gen Z’

According to NHS statistics, 1 in 5 children has a probable mental health disorder (see bit.ly/ts134-ND1). Imagine, for one moment, if 1 in 5 children currently had a broken leg. Would our default stance be to suggest that these children’s bones were somehow built differently from their peers? That they were clumsier, and therefore deserved their fate?

Or would we rather ask, ‘What is it in the environment of these young people that’s causing this outcome for so many, and how can we make it safer?’ I’d like to think we’d opt for the latter – because whether we’re talking about mental or physical health, that’s invariably the correct response.

The teenagers attending school circa 2014 are now the notorious ‘Gen Z’ that everyone seems to be constantly criticising. In April 2024, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Mel Stride, claimed that “Mental health

culture has gone too far,” going on to tell The Telegraph that, “The real risk now is that we are labelling the normal ups and downs of human life as medical conditions, which then actually serves to hold people back, and ultimately, drive up the benefits bill.”

This prompted Sky News to call upon the impeccable expertise of former Apprentice candidate turned media personality Ryan-Mark Parsons, who declared that Gen Z should aspire to emulate the ‘stiff upper lip’ of their Boomer forebears.

The unspoken protocol

There’s more than one screamingly obvious problem with this stance. Firstly, as numerous studies have shown, for a long time the unspoken protocol was to cite a ‘bad back’, ‘migraine’ or ‘stomach bug’ to explain absences from work which were, in fact, mental health-related. Indeed, these common physical symptoms can actually

be a result of ignoring mental health concerns.

Furthermore, for the Boomer generation there’s a measurable point of vulnerability for suicide around retirement age, particularly for men. Around a third of Gen Z don’t drink alcohol, whereas older generations are more likely to use it to manage stress.

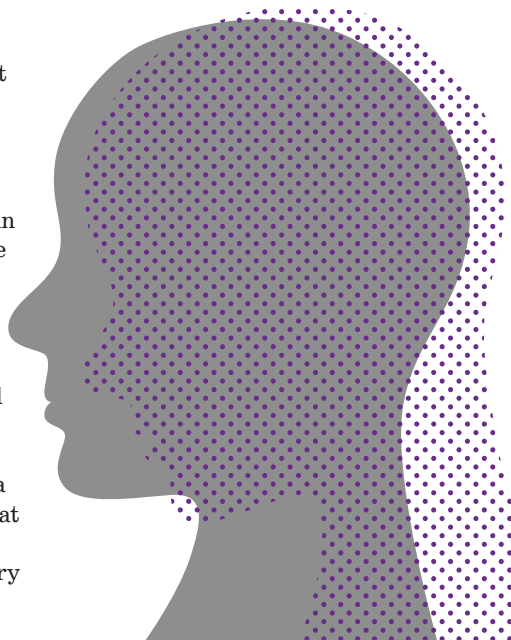
When we instruct young people to employ a ‘stiff upper lip’, what we actually mean is, ‘Could you just self-medicate through your working career, then have a crisis at the point of life when you’re supposed to be enjoying yourself? Ta.’

That’s before we even take into account how much the world has changed. Young people generally have less access to community, exhibit higher rates of loneliness and face greater academic pressures. They’re also more likely to live in poverty, less likely to earn a wage that covers their bills and stand less chance of moving out of their family home and into a place of their own before their 30s.

A terror in knowing

This generation also carries super computers in their pockets that give them access to unlimited information from across the globe – though as Bowie once sang, ‘There’s a terror in knowing what this world is about.’ Oh, and ‘this world’ also happens to be on fire, while the warnings of climate experts go ignored. If anything, I’d say if you don’t feel anxious right now, you probably aren’t paying attention.

Gen Z should be applauded for having the emotional literacy to identify anxiety and low mood, and ask for support. As the philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurty once famously said, ‘It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.’



Natasha Devon is a writer, broadcaster and campaigner on issues relating to education and mental health; to find out more, visit natashadevion.com or follow @NatashaDevon

*actually, 8

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THE TS GUIDE TO... HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Given the high stakes expectations placed on both teachers and students, it's hardly surprising that considerations of general health and wellbeing in schools now require careful monitoring and managing...

IN THIS SECTION

28 BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

Maintaining a good work-life balance can be difficult, concedes Adam Riches – but there are things we can all do to stop the job crowding out our personal space

31 COPING WITH CRUNCH TIME

Abbey Jones takes a look at what's involved in helping students feel relaxed, supported and secure in their wellbeing as exam season unfolds

32 FEELING'S MUTUAL

What kind of daily support are you and your colleagues experiencing from each other, asks Charlotte Lander – and is it enough?



IN FIGURES:

HOW PREVALENT IS MENTAL ILL HEALTH AMONG STUDENTS?

20.3%

The percentage of 8- to 16-year-olds in 2023 with a probable mental disorder

36.9%

The proportion of 11- to 16-year-olds with a probable mental disorder who have been bullied in person (compared to 7.6% of their neurotypical peers)

2.6%

The proportion of all 11- to 16-year-olds identified as having an eating disorder

Source: 'Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023' survey published by NHS England

3 TEACHWIRE
ARTICLES
FROM THE
ARCHIVES

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No more weekend emails, no more triple marking – how one school helped its teachers cope with their workload

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ALL TEACHERS NEED SOME HYGGE IN OUR LIVES

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"SIMPLY TALKING ABOUT WELLBEING WON'T HELP"

Kat Howard explains why wellbeing efforts in school should involve less discussion and more concerted action

bit.ly/134special3

Bringing it ALL BACK HOME

Maintaining a good work-life balance can be difficult, concedes **Adam Riches** – but there are things we can all do to stop the job crowding out our personal space

From the very first day I started training to be a teacher, I realised that working in education was going to be intense.

Although I had, and always have had a good work ethic, it never really made sense to me that teaching entailed so much more than what was stated in the job description. I suppose the irony is that from day one, I knew that the actual teaching bit of being a teacher accounts for only a fraction of the job - the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

Taking over

Striking a work/life balance as a teacher is no mean feat. The sands are always shifting, and it feels like there's never enough time in the day. Be it planning, preparing, building on subject knowledge, sorting and attending CPD and other duties, there's a fine line between what we're able to do at school and what ends up spilling over into our wider lives.

Of course, there are many professions where you can expect to take work home with you at some point – but for many, teaching is a way of life. And if you're not careful, it can *take* over your life.

Key to controlling the impact teaching has on your life is to avoid the creep. Each year, we all start in September with grand promises to ourselves that 'We are only going to so much at home...' Come mid-October, the reality is very different.

The pressure makes us feel

that we need to do that little bit more – engaging in some extra planning, getting that data in, logging those detentions. But what can we do to make sure we're effective and efficient at our jobs, without losing our actual lives?

Strip it back

If we're honest with ourselves, there are some things in schools that we have to do, and some things we think or feel we *should* do.

compare ourselves to others in similar professional roles, but trying to emulate others is something that teachers can often fall into, causing them to internalise a perceived need for perpetual, endlessly cycling self-improvement.

When you look at your practice, you need to ask 'What works for me?' and 'What works for my students?' (or indeed team, if you're in a leadership role). It's important to be self-

evaluative of your own teaching and accept when something isn't working.

One of the biggest contributors to workload is attempting to implement something that simply isn't working for you, which will only end up consuming your time, sapping your energy and creating yet more stress.

Sure, be proactive in instigating change if it's needed, but remember – if things are working well, observe the old phrase, 'If it ain't broke, don't try

“Distinguishing between tasks you have to do and those you don't is a hugely important part of being a teaching professional”

Often, the former can become clouded by the latter, causing our efficiency to take a bit of a hit.

The process of sifting through everything that's landed with you and then simply cancelling out the white noise is a crucial part of workload reduction, which will eventually lead to a much better work/life balance. Just because somebody else is doing something we're not, that doesn't mean we need to change what we're doing.

It's so important to be both self-aware and to not be led by others – whether those happen to be people in your department, school or on social media – because that way, you won't be piling unnecessary pressure on yourself. It's natural to



and fix it'. If you're already getting good results and your students are progressing well, then focus on making those small tweaks. Try to forget about those resources that somebody spent 9,000 hours making and boasting about on X.

Realistic routines

Establishing a routine is crucial to striking a good work/life balance, or re-establishing one if you feel that things have started to slip.

Prioritising those aspects of your life outside school should come first, as well as your wellbeing. Then you can start thinking about how to fit your job and professional responsibilities in around the time you have.

It may be that you go into school earlier, or perhaps stay a bit later a couple of days a week. You might decide to work a set amount of time at home in a specific window. Whatever form your

routine takes, be sure to stick to it and *be realistic*. If you can be honest about how much there is to be done, it's much more likely that the routine will become established and embedded within your day-to-day life.

Part of this may involve factoring in those parts of your day that you need as an actual human being. A ritual of consuming your hot or cold beverage of choice should be in there somewhere. Some time dedicated to simply *decompressing* should feature as well, no matter how busy or chaotic your school day might be.

It's these things that will have the most psychological impact on you over the course of your day (well, those and that particularly wild Y8 class) – so it follows that they will impact upon your time at home as well. Take your wellbeing in

school seriously, and prioritise it. Because doing so will significantly reduce your stress levels once you get home.

Clear expectations

We've touched on it slightly up to now, but distinguishing between those tasks you have to do and those you don't is a hugely important part of being a teaching professional.

There will be some tasks you can't challenge, since you'll be contractually obliged to do them as part of your professional duties or within your set working hours. That said, you can and should issue a challenge if you think that what's being asked of you goes beyond your contract, to the point where it's likely to impact upon your work/life balance.

Much of the time, there can be a degree of vagueness around expectations. I think things have improved a bit in recent years, but

you can still encounter some very specific, yet unwritten rules in certain schools.

Challenging these is important, unless it's directed time, as there should be no restrictions on when you can

come in or leave school.

Being informed doesn't mean you're planning anarchy. Knowing what's part of your job role and what isn't is vital if you're to keep your work/life balance in check. Having this knowledge will help you plan your time and allow you to prepare accordingly – which is surely not too much to ask.

Creating a culture

Your work/life balance can be directly correlated to the culture of the school you work in, but here's the thing – *you are a key part of defining that culture*.

I'm not saying you should be refusing to do things to improve your work/life balance, but equally, it's important that staff don't apply pressure to each other. Whether done intentionally or unintentionally, this can be a real problem that tips the scales.

Being a part of a positive culture that champions wellbeing and challenges inefficient ideas is the dream for all of us – but without action, it's never going to become a reality. At an individual level, it's our own attitude that will define both our own workload and that of our colleagues.

It can be difficult to take a step back when in the heat of the moment – especially when things move at the pace they do in teaching. Addressing your work/life balance and making it sustainable means having to examine the very foundations of what you're doing at school, and asking yourself the question – *'Do I need to do this?'*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Riches is a teacher, education consultant and writer



5 REASONS TO TRY... Outdoor adventure education

Empower your students with life-changing skills at Kingswood's OAE residentials



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Kingswood's 11 UK outdoor activity centres welcome school students of all ages and ability, allowing them to participate in skill-building, memory-making adventures in beautiful natural environments under the supervision of experienced coaches.

1 BACKED BY RESEARCH

The learning objectives threaded throughout Kingswood's programmes are designed to significantly improve resilience, build confidence, and crucially, improve wellbeing.

In the winter of 2023, an in-depth, mixed methods research project was undertaken to measure and evaluate the development of psychological resilience, wellbeing and 21st century skills by diverse groups at 10 Kingswood centres attending 'Live It' – a five-day residential programme specifically intended for young people negatively impacted by the pandemic. Staggeringly, 94% of the young people said they felt more self-confident because of their Kingswood trip – find out more about the research by scanning the QR code opposite.

2 IMPROVEMENTS NOW

Post-pandemic, young people's confidence and resilience levels are at all-time lows, compounded by the image pressures exerted by social media, and a sense of having to live up to unrealistic standards. We can, however, bring about positive changes in their personal growth and wellbeing almost immediately, through outdoor learning. Among the 600 young people taking part in Kingswood's research, 70% felt more confident in their future academic and career prospects following their outdoor adventure experience.



3 LASTING EFFECTS

Kingswood's research further found that when participants were evaluated on the same resilience and wellbeing measures a month later, they were still benefiting from their experiences. The research data speaks to just how sustained and long-lasting the impact can be, with resilience levels up by 24% and wellbeing by 17%.

An overwhelming proportion of these young people perceived their trip as something that had helped them develop their capacity to cope with uncertainty, increase their confidence in meeting individuals from different backgrounds and take a more positive view of education and their future job prospects – thus creating healthier, much more resilient youngsters.



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4 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

Communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking are all attributes widely recognised as being essential in the modern workplace – as well as prerequisites for generating solutions to the critical problems future generations can expect to face.

Kingswood's experiential learning programmes for secondary students hone in on these essential skills, presenting young people with problem solving tasks and employing the outdoor environment as a vehicle for personal growth and development.

5 ACTIVATE CHANGE

The powerful experiences that Kingswood offers provide students with opportunities to try something new and exercise their freedom of choice. Young people leave a Kingswood experience with the capacity to test their newly acquired problem solving skills at home, or indeed in the classroom. Led by experienced coaches, in a safe and controlled environment, they are able to develop profoundly important life skills, with transformational impacts. Kingswood's findings show how teachable behaviours, pedagogies and practices can make young people more adaptable and engaged in learning vocational skills. These intense, authentic, residential-based experiences enable participants to connect with nature and take ownership of their learning.

Key Points

94% of participants said they felt more self-confident because of their Kingswood trip

4 in every 5 students reported being more confident in meeting new people

70% reported feeling more confident about their education or job prospects

80% felt more positive about people from different backgrounds to themselves

Coping with CRUNCH TIME

Abbey Jones takes a look at what's involved in helping students feel relaxed, supported and secure in their wellbeing as exam season unfolds...

As exam season approaches, many schools will see heightened stress levels among their students. That's understandable, of course, given that these young people will have worked hard to get to this point, and be wanting to give the best possible account of themselves throughout their assessments.

At Stephen Perse Cambridge, we take great care in creating an environment during exam season that promotes a positive and optimistic approach. Our ambition is to provide a supportive and relaxed culture during the exam term that helps students feel able to rise to the challenge of the assessments, without experiencing any detrimental impact to their wellbeing.

Cumulative experience

The cornerstone of this work has been the creation of a support system that's made available to every student throughout their school experience, not just during exams.

Every summer during their time at Stephen Perse Cambridge Senior School, students in all year groups get to experience assessments which are conducted with an age-appropriate level of formality, becoming increasingly similar each year to the summer exams they'll eventually sit, culminating in their Y11 GCSE mocks.

These assessments are designed to mirror the experience of the real thing as closely as possible. It's a



"Empower students to revise in a way that suits them"

process that ensures students will be well-practised at preparing for, and working through the exam period, while developing techniques and building resilience to help manage the stress of exams throughout their school careers.

We prioritise open communication with our parent community around mental health to try and reduce any associated stigma. We want parents to feel they can share any concerns about their child's wellbeing with us, so that we can best support their children throughout their whole school experience.

One way in which we do this is by keeping parents informed about our various initiatives in this area – from wellbeing talks, to new PSHE modules. This way, parents can better understand the school's ethos when it comes to wellbeing in general, which sets the tone for our approach to the increased stress of exam periods.

Flexible independence

A flexible study leave period before GCSEs and A Levels is also essential in empowering students to prepare and revise in a way that suits them.

During study leave, our students can choose the learning environment which works best for them – be it a silent study room, group work spaces at school, the family dining table, their bedroom, the local library or a mix of all the above. Staff across all subjects hold optional revision lessons that students on study leave can attend, and are available to answer any emailed questions from students as they revise.

At this time, promoting students' wellbeing is just as important as their revision's content coverage. That's why we deliver workshops on the challenges of exam season, such as what they should expect on the day and how to manage exam anxiety.

Looking ahead

Students are also strongly encouraged to set aside time and space for their hobbies and other interests, plan in adequate breaks and continue socialising with friends and family. One key piece of advice we remind all students of is that no matter how they feel an exam went, once it's done they need to put it behind them and look ahead to the next day.

Staff need to reassure students that feeling anxious ahead of exams is completely normal, and doesn't necessarily constitute an anxiety disorder or similar. These conversations don't have to take the form of a PSHE talk; our pastoral staff and subject teachers all regularly encourage open conversations at all times with students around how they're coping during exam term.

At Stephen Perse Cambridge, we're keen for subject teachers, form tutors and heads of department to be present on exam days, so that students are reminded that we're behind them. Those final words of encouragement really can make all the difference to their mindset as they head into that exam room.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abbey Jones is senior deputy head 11-18 at Stephen Perse Cambridge Senior School; for more information, visit stephenperse.com

FEELING'S MUTUAL

What kind of daily support are you and your colleagues experiencing from each other, asks **Charlotte Lander** – and is it enough?

Working in a school means we're surrounded by others on a day-to-day basis. Yet the proximity of our colleagues, and the familiarity of our pupils, doesn't mean there won't be times when we feel alone.

In whichever capacity we work with students, our roles require an element of performance. As teachers, this is most often in the form of presenting – but there are also times when we must mask our own needs to better serve the students we aim to make a difference for. Given the daily emotional and physical demands involved in running a school, the people best placed to offer support are often those in the trenches alongside us.

Feeling connected

The act of asking for support can be harder than it sounds, though – especially when we've worked in education for many years. We spend our days urging students to ask for help if and when they need it, but then see it as a sign of defeat when we do the same ourselves.

Often, the greatest resource available to us is the team we belong to. Some colleagues will have entered teaching after pursuing careers in completely different fields. Others might have held various roles within education before eventually finding the post that's right for them. The fact is, we all bring something unique to the table.

But with more demands

and less time, those casual reminders you hear regarding the importance of 'wellbeing' and 'finding a good work-life balance' aren't always as helpful as they aim to be. Instead, ask your line manager how they manage their wellbeing, and which techniques have worked well for them.

Then ask your colleagues how they go about compartmentalising and striving for that elusive 'work-life balance'. Ask the teacher in the classroom next door what strategies they use to deal with challenging behaviour, and if you can observe them. They'll feel glad that you asked them.

"We urge students to ask for help if they need it, but see it as a sign of defeat when we do the same ourselves"

Ultimately, the people around us will all, at some point in their careers, have experienced similar feelings. Someone with years of experience under their belt may still be trying to figure it out even now, despite conveying the illusion that they have everything under control.

We know that our colleagues will have tried, tested, succeeded and failed, but still managed to get back up on their feet again. And this is why they can offer us the most relatable, honest and unfiltered advice out there, perhaps more so than any educational book.

Types of support

The types of support we may find ourselves in search of – and equally, feel able to give – will naturally vary. For those in the earlier stages of their career, or who might have recently joined a new school, the support they require will usually be of an informative and practical kind. Be it through a formal feedback process or via a quick question posed in the corridor, they will be on a constant search for answers, wisdom and experience.

They may, for example, be seeking advice on challenging behaviour, or be keen to get a

second pair of eyes on their seating plan from the teacher who taught their class last year. In many cases, support can be more effective when delivered through tangible solutions.

Broadly speaking, there are times when the support we seek will extend beyond the comfort of our workplace. In some ways, the advice we can access online feels easier to take on board because it's depersonalised. In this digital age, social media groups give us a sense of community.



Though our contexts may vary, we can find ourselves brought together with people who are in the same boat as us. Online discussion forums can similarly serve as a valuable source of ideas and reassurance, coupled with a level of anonymity that enables us to take greater risks when asking all those silly questions.

Sometimes, the support we need won't necessarily arrive in the form of an answer. Instead, it can come through recognition and acknowledgement – that which many of us are hesitant to ask for. I'm not saying we all need a pat on the back for every lesson we teach – but it is worth remembering how good it feels to hear someone else tell us, 'You've got this,' or 'I like that idea – I'm going to try that in my lesson.'

We mustn't overlook the power that comes from recognising and validating the skills and talents of those around us. If you hear a good word spoken about a colleague, make sure to tell them.

Sharing best practice

The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2013) found that teachers who participate in collaborative practices have higher job satisfaction and report greater self-efficacy.

As such, many schools and colleges have adopted collaborative approaches to CPD, which can include implementing professional learning communities (PLCs). These allow educators to discuss various teaching and learning strategies, and share feedback on how these have been implemented. This not only helps create opportunities to share best practice on a regular basis, but also fosters a culture of togetherness, where we can all learn from each other.

That said, it's worth additionally reflecting on how we, as professionals, go about utilising such opportunities for collaboration. On-the-job experience is valuable, but if we typically respond to suggestions in development meetings with a 'This has never worked before', or a less than helpful '...but they behave for me,' attitude, we can risk diminishing the willingness of others to openly share or ask for support.

Yes, blunt comments delivered from a place of experience may well bear some truth, but will offer little in the way of empathy. If professional dialogue is to be supportive, then it should seek to understand, advise or offer a solution.

Being mindful

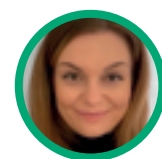
Our days can feel rushed, and any spare minute can feel like gold dust – but that's why it's vital that we check in with those

around us. It can take a little while for new members of staff to fit into an already established team. For trainee and early career teachers, moving to their second teaching placement can feel like starting all over again.

Even when there are plenty of people on hand to offer support in the practical sense, just joining in with the staff room conversations can be tricky to navigate. Irrespective of our individual roles, making a conscious effort to acknowledge the trainees and ECTs in our school – be it a friendly hello in the corridor, or popping your head round their door at lunch to make sure they're taking a break – will ensure they're not left on the outside looking in.

Finally, get involved with the wellbeing activities your school organises. If none are on offer, team up with colleagues who share similar interests and plan an activity that focuses on staff wellness. These needn't be limited to the confines of work, of course – if anything, scheduling these kinds of activities *outside* school can actually make it easier for people to maintain that all-important work/life balance.

Maybe organise a book club and set a new location for each meetup. Get a group of people together and take part in a local weekend park run. Whatever form it ends up taking, a school community should always be grounded in colleagues coming together and rooting for one another.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charlotte Lander is a teacher of English and psychology, and specialist in Talk for Learning



Coach your COLLEAGUES

Anthony David presents an overview of coaching in relation to education settings, looking at how to do it well – and what to avoid...

Coaching in education can deliver a personalised and transformative form of professional development that contrasts sharply with traditional, one-size-fits-all training methods.

It's an approach that's seen some adaptations over the years. I myself have been trained on various models, some quite different from others – so before even attempting any coaching, it's wise to consider first what style of coaching you might want to access.

Four models

I'll start by breaking down the main styles I've encountered and look at what each has to offer.

1. Instructional Coaching

This involves one-on-one coaching for teachers that focuses on teaching strategies and classroom management. Coaches work directly with teachers in classrooms, observing and providing feedback based on actual teaching practices, with the goal of improving instructional methods to enhance student learning.

2. Cognitive Coaching

Developed by Art Costa and Robert Garmston, this coaching model seeks to build autonomous, self-directed learners among teachers. The focus here is on developing teachers' cognitive processes, with the coach guiding teachers through a process of reflective questioning to enhance their metacognitive skills,

decision-making and planning capabilities.

3. Peer Coaching

A less hierarchical model that sees teachers coaching one another within a school. It's built around notions of mutual respect and collaboration, and aims to facilitate the experience of shared professional growth.

Peer coaching can be particularly effective at fostering a supportive community atmosphere, where teachers learn from each other's experiences and strengths. The model saw widespread adoption in

Trust and listening

Each of these distinct coaching models presents a range of growth opportunities. What all have in common is that their impact takes shape over time – the key differentiator coaching and 'one-shot' professional development solutions. Before applying such approaches in your own setting, however, there are some important areas to consider first.

The first of these is that trust forms the cornerstone of effective coaching. A successful coach must

premature advice.

For leaders, this can feel counterintuitive, but it's essential. Take time to pause before you speak – the results can be powerful.

Open-ended questions

The asking of powerful, open-ended questions is a

“Coachees are far more likely to engage openly and honestly in the process if they don't feel judged”

Japan during the late 1990s and was implemented, with some notable success, in the London borough of Barnet during the mid 2010s.

4. Transformational Coaching

Based on theories developed by Elena Aguilar, this model looks beyond the 'mere' enhancement of technical skill, to broader educational values and visions.

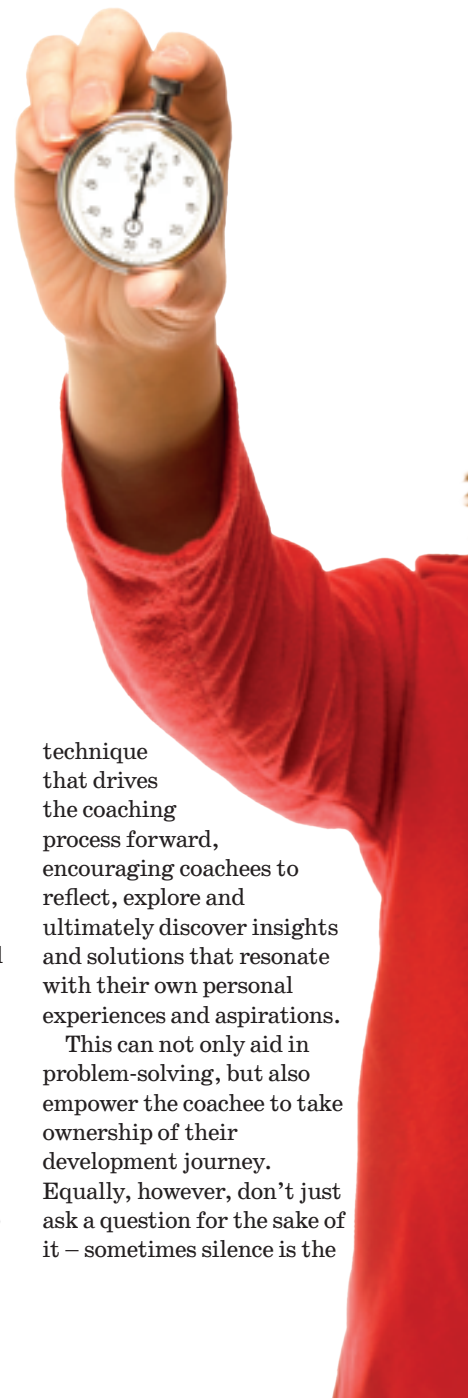
It's a model of coaching that sets out to inspire teachers so that they can envisage new possibilities for themselves and their students, focusing on those emotional and psychological barriers that might be limiting growth.

establish a safe and confidential environment, in which the coachee feels secure enough to openly share their personal thoughts and challenges. This is best achieved through consistent, respectful and honest communication, which will in turn lay the groundwork for a trusting relationship.

Another critical skill you'll need is active listening. Coaches need to *truly hear* what's being said, and understand not just the words, but also the emotions behind them. This can require patience, attentiveness and the discipline to avoid rushing to judgement or offering

technique that drives the coaching process forward, encouraging coachees to reflect, explore and ultimately discover insights and solutions that resonate with their own personal experiences and aspirations.

This can not only aid in problem-solving, but also empower the coachee to take ownership of their development journey. Equally, however, don't just ask a question for the sake of it – sometimes silence is the



best question you can pose.

Self-reflection allows coachees to assess their progress and confront their challenges, thus facilitating a deeper understanding of their professional journey and personal growth. This can then be complemented by the coach providing specific, timely and constructive feedback centred on behaviours and their impacts, rather than personal traits.

If you're to be a successful coach, then appropriate training is essential. As with many new skills, my strong recommendation would be that once you've been trained (in whatever approach you're going to use – which in itself can take time to identify),

you should follow your 'script' as closely as possible during those initial sessions of coaching a colleague. Once you've built up your experience, you can then afford to adjust the process.

Challenges and pitfalls

That said, you should always endeavour to maintain a sense of professionalism throughout the process that supports the growth of a relationship, without crossing boundaries into personal territory. This includes being consistently punctual, prepared and respectful of the coachee's time and efforts.

A good coach will also be sensitive to the value of using resources wisely. These can encompass personality assessments, feedback tools and relevant literature, all of which have the potential to enhance the coaching experience and provide valuable insights.

Celebrating subsequent achievements with the coachee will not only boost their morale, but also reinforce the value of their efforts and the coaching process itself.

Finally, it's essential that a coach commits to ongoing learning by staying abreast of new methodologies, and continuously refining their skills to ensure that the coaching they provide

remains both relevant and effective over time.

As with any influential tool, coaching involves carefully negotiating a series of challenges and potential pitfalls to ensure that the process remains both positive and productive.

Guiding versus directing

At the heart of successful coaching sits the principle of *guiding*, rather than *directing*.

A common misstep some coaches can make is to lapse into a consultancy role, providing direct solutions to problems. This approach can undermine the fundamental aim of coaching, which is to foster independence and self-development among coachees, rather than creating a dependency on the coach for answers.

The maintenance of an open, non-judgmental stance is another cornerstone of effective coaching, since coachees are far more likely to engage openly and honestly in the coaching process if they don't feel that they're being judged.

As previously mentioned, listening plays a crucial role in coaching – even more so than speaking. A coach who dominates conversations may inadvertently stifle a coachee's ability to reflect deeply and articulate their thoughts, thereby hindering their path to self-discovery.

For that reason, it's of paramount importance that confidentiality is observed when coaching. A breach of this trust can irreparably damage the coach-coachee relationship and deter future engagement. Likewise, feedback should be timely, specific and constructive to facilitate actionable insights and growth.

I'll conclude with one final point – which is to ensure that your colleague *wants to be coached*. The process cannot be forced onto someone if they're not willing to be involved (even if

OTHER COACHING MODELS

Successful coaching styles in other professional settings can include:

- **Directive coaching**
Provides specific guidance and immediate feedback that's ideal for urgent skill development

- **Non-directive coaching**
Encourages self-discovery and solutions by asking open-ended questions, while fostering independence and critical thinking

- **Collaborative coaching**
Involves working alongside the coachee as a partner, facilitating mutual learning and joint problem-solving

- **Holistic coaching**
Focuses on the coachee's overall development, integrating aspects of their professional and personal growth

- **Transformational coaching**
Aims to inspire significant changes in behaviour and mindset, and encourage coachees to transcend their current limitations

- **Democratic coaching**
Seeks input from the coachee to guide the coaching process, thus promoting engagement and empowerment

you're surprised, as I sometimes have been, by colleagues' reluctance). In such cases, you may just have to accept that some people find it very difficult to talk about themselves!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Anthony David is an executive headteacher

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A 'prayer ban' win – SO WHAT NOW?

With the High Court finding in favour of Michaela Community School, after a pupil challenged its ban on praying in school, **Philip Wood** looks at the ruling's potential implications for headteachers...

There have arguably been few legal tightrope walks quite as challenging or divisive as the recent High Court case involving London's Michaela Community School.

Centred on a 'prayer ban', the case threw up numerous questions regarding how far schools can go to restrict religious expression in the promotion of strict social and disciplinary values – while at the same time not quite providing the concrete answers that other headteachers might have hoped for.

Expression versus ethos

The case involved a pupil, who is a practising Muslim, and focused on the Duhr or Zuhr prayer, which should be undertaken when the sun is at its highest point. From late September until the end of March, this part of the day overlaps with the school's allocated lunch break. Consequently, the pupil felt she should be able to perform prayer during this 25-minute 'free' period of time. No challenge was made concerning her inability to attend prayers at other times.

The school, however, argued that this contravened its 'disciplinary' and 'team' values, which are both applied in a very strict manner compared to other schools. The school's team ethos is reflected in a 'family lunch', where groups of six pupils lunch together with a teacher or visitor, and the practice of 'guided socialisation' within the school yard.

Under the latter system, teachers ensure no-one is left out of conversations and play activities, in order to foster positive social integration within the context of an inner-city location, where a high percentage of pupils receive free school meals.

Legal arguments

Michaela introduced a formal ban on prayer in March 2023, prompted by a series of troubling incidents that followed pupils praying in the school yard, in view of passers-by. These incidents

included a fake bomb threat, a brick thrown through a window and glass bottles thrown into the school yard.

Despite arguing that the ban breached Article 9 of the European Charter on Human Rights – which allows freedom of thought, conscience and religion – the High Court held that there was no interference, given this was not an absolute right, but a freedom to do so.

Considerable reliance was placed by the court on the fact that the pupil had been enrolled in a secular school that she knew would provide restrictions on her ability to manifest her religion. There was no evidence that she couldn't move to another school which would have allowed her to pray. For similar reasons, the court rejected the claim that the ban amounted to indirect discrimination under the Equality Act.

Although the Court accepted that there was a detriment to the pupil, it ruled that the decision wasn't discriminatory because it was *proportionate to achieving a legitimate aim*. The governing board was further judged to have not breached the public sector equality duty.

Considerations for other schools

Given the nature of Michaela Community School's very specific operation, this case doesn't give carte blanche freedom for schools to restrict their pupils' ability to pray.

Particular merit was

attributed to Michaela's unusually specific ethos and way of working, which meant pupils were not actually as 'free' at lunchtimes as they would be in most schools. Tied in with the practical challenges of having a group of pupils pray separately, the ban was ruled as proportionate.

While some may be surprised that this case wasn't regarded as a detriment under human rights law, it does follow a similar line of school-related cases. The 2006 case, *R/Begum v. Headteacher and Governors of Denbigh High School*, for example, concerned uniform and the wearing of the jilbab. There, it was similarly ruled there was no Article 9 interference if a pupil could move to another school.

Broadly speaking, however, school leaders should be cautious of banning pupils from taking part in prayer unless there are very good reasons to do so. These may include the practical arrangements for prayer not being possible, or being able to demonstrate how such practices aren't co-operative with specific values exercised by the school over a sustained period of time.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Philip Wood is a Senior Associate at the law firm Browne Jacobson; for more information, visit brownejacobson.com or follow @brownejacobson



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Key Points

The patented Guided Window format encourages focused attention and the sequential intake of text, providing students with a reading experience that models effective and fluent silent reading

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– **Golborne High School, Warrington**

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3 INCLUSIVE PROVISION

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– **Argoed High School, Flintshire**

Schools take their students to Conway Centres for exam support courses year after year, confident that these young people will come away with far more than just fantastic memories.

At Conway Centres, every child is supported, regardless of ability, with no child left behind. Schools and teachers love seeing their

students exceed expectations on the courses (and how happy they then are, come results day!)

4 COMPREHENSIVE CONTENT

"Great variety of workshops that expose students to a range of skills"
– **Bishop Heber High School, Cheshire**

Via a jam-packed schedule of workshops and sessions, students will learn, explore and develop a range of techniques. From GCSE art weekends, where students can work on projects for their final portfolio, to GCSE drama courses that enable attendees to develop their practical, creative and performance skills, the assorted workshops and sessions will provide students (and teachers!) with a variety of valuable lessons.

5 NO DISTRACTIONS

"So impressed with the quality of outcomes by the pupils in such a short time frame"
– **Gateways School, Leeds**

Did you know that students who attend exam support courses receive up to an extra half term of learning in just one weekend? We know that the home environment can involve disruptions, so being able to spend dedicated time away from modern distractions gives young people the opportunity to focus. This immersion in a subject over a short space of time can support them in boosting their grades and raising attainment.

Key Points

Conway Centres run Y8 and Y9 Options Weekends to help inspire students when deciding on their GCSE arts subjects

Exam support weekends are typically attended by multiple schools, enabling your students to create new connections and be inspired by like-minded people

It's not just students who have a fantastic time – these weekends have also been described as fantastic CPD for teachers!

What's more creatively inspiring than beautiful natural surroundings? The venue for the Exam Support Courses is Conway Centres, Anglesey, which overlooks the Menai Strait and Snowdonian mountain range

Outside perspectives

Why teaching traditionally desk-bound subjects outdoors can add a tangible and visceral impact to certain topics

Most of the time, school is an interior business.

While there are certain subjects with ‘outdoor’ curriculum components that require some venturing outside of the classroom – most obviously PE, but also science and geography – students can typically expect their studies of English, maths and history to involve being sat at a desk.

Yet here’s the thing – those latter subjects can also benefit from getting students outside on occasion.

Not just ‘A to B’

It can, however, be difficult to justify teaching traditionally desk-based subjects outdoors if we remain fixed on the idea that those subjects must always be learnt while looking at an IWB.

To get the most out of learning outside, it’s important to not simply try moving the lesson from A to B. Being outside should afford learners an *additional level of understanding* of the topic or subject being taught – not just be a mirror of what they would be doing in the classroom, only outside.

Outdoor learning can be an important tool for contextual understanding, especially when it comes to exploring perspectives students may not have previously considered. The lesson needs to involve a certain degree of freedom from the shackles of pens and books, which will demand some confidence on the part of the teacher.

However, with careful planning and consideration, even spending just a few minutes outside can make a whole lot of difference once you’re all back in the classroom again.



“Outdoor learning should always add value”

Contextualising

Analysis of empathy is something we can often struggle to get students to properly engage with. It’s very difficult for them to experience exactly what another person or character or person might have experienced, or to link their own experiences to unfamiliar situations – particularly when they’re sat at a desk.

There’s a certain power in going outside on a cold day and observing mists on fields when learning about the trenches. Sitting in a courtyard on a hot summer’s day (while obviously observing all appropriate safety measures) with the topical focus of the subject at the forefront of students’ minds can give them new perspectives.

Of course, there’s a good chance they’ll have been in such environments before – but by encouraging them to use their senses and engage with lesson material through

a topical lens, their understanding of what events would have been like for others can grow significantly.

By getting learners to consider their environment more carefully, we can build their self-efficacy. By getting students to engage more with context, we can encourage them to use what they see and hear around them to further build on their understanding.

It may seem like a simple exercise, but taking learners outside to experience weather, sounds and smells can be a powerful means of increasing their overall awareness, further building up their cultural capital.

Real life

Taking learning outside of the classroom can may also help learners see how subject content can be translated into the real world. Simple tasks, like identifying the different forms of language used on signage around the school, or applying

mathematical analysis to various structural aspects of the school building, can get young people thinking in more detail about how what they’re learning correlates to real life. It doesn’t take much, but these are the kinds of links that can significantly increase students’ engagement with your subject.

If a young person is able to better appreciate how their desk-based learning fits into the world, then the learning itself can become much more valuable. As adults, our more extensive lived experience enables us to make such links far more easily. Students can sometimes need our help before making those links themselves.

Before taking the step of moving your lesson outside, however, there needs to be a focus. It can’t just be a tokenistic decision. Consider which of your topics may benefit most from spending time learning outside, and then see if you can apply aspects of contextual learning to those topics.

Outdoor learning should always add value to what you’re already doing in the classroom. It isn’t about prizing one form of learning over the other, but rather helping learners understand that school isn’t *just* about pens and desks.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elissa Riches is an initial teacher training tutor and a former head of media studies.

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A hire PURPOSE

How can we attract more people to the profession – and keep them? **Emma Hollis** puts forward her suggestions...

They may be increasing in regularity, but those headlines around secondary teacher recruitment targets being missed and the worsening retention crisis become no less alarming.

The NFER's latest Teacher Labour Market in England Annual Report (see bit.ly/ts134-RR1) suggests that out of 17 secondary subjects, 10 are likely to under-recruit in 2024-25, based on ITT applications up to February this year.

Overall, secondary recruitment is forecast to be around 61% of target – the only blessing being that this is a slight

improvement compared to 2023-24. So what can we practically do to reverse this decline? Clever marketing campaigns and enticing offers from specific schools plainly aren't enough. What we need is sector-wide change that goes far beyond what secondaries and ITT providers can do.

Here, then, are three solution-focused approaches that could make a genuine difference to recruitment today and retention in the long term...

1. Make ITT more affordable

Teacher pay tends to get the most attention, but it's not the only problem. All ITT candidates must be able to afford the cost of training in the first place – an issue that's already had a critical impact on the talent pipeline and diversity of applicants.

Possible solutions could

include reducing tuition fees for all trainees (through government subsidies for ITT, rather than providers being paid less for the programme), exploring the potential for fee grants during the training year and the introduction of bursaries for all. The latter could prove to be a particularly effective driver for persuading people to enter teaching – especially in high-priority subjects.

At the same time, however, these aren't levered regionally. Schools that fall into opportunity areas, for example, aren't necessarily those areas where we see the most teacher shortages. A more nuanced approach in terms of both region and subject is sorely needed.

We're currently working with partners on modelling the impact and potential benefits of awarding new teachers student loan reimbursements after they've worked in state schools for a certain number of years, and will report the findings later this year.

2. Embrace flexible working

We also need to close the gap between existing approaches to flexible working and growing demands for more innovative approaches.

In a recent NASBTT survey, 89% of ITT providers told us that greater opportunities for flexible working would attract more applicants to the sector. It's also widely known to be an important factor in retention. By focusing our efforts on retention – perhaps even over recruitment, at least for now – we could reduce the need to recruit so many new teachers going forward.

Alongside the team behind

the Flexible Working in Multi-Academy Trusts and Schools (FWAMS) project, we've developed guidance aimed at helping the ITT sector implement flexible working as a starting point. Many organisations now embrace opportunities to work more flexibly, but there remain obvious barriers to schools replicating similar practice. It's vital, however, that the sector feels empowered and confident in pursuing bold, ambitious plans for flexible working environments.

3. Tackle public perceptions

At the heart of all this is a discussion on what we want schools to be and do. Following the closure of other key services, teachers' roles increasingly entail supporting a much wider range of health and social care issues. We know why some people want to become teachers – but we must also understand what discourages young people from considering careers in teaching, and use those insights to inform the next steps we take.

One such step could be for the DfE to commission research into precisely which undergraduates *aren't* choosing teaching as a career option and why, instead of basing their research activities around examining those who do.



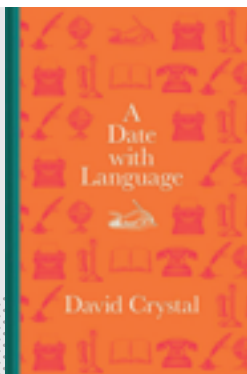
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emma Hollis is Chief Executive of the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers; for more information, visit nasbtt.org.uk



Off the Shelves

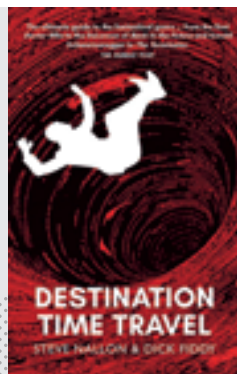
Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore



A Date with Language: Fascinating Facts, Events and Stories for Every Day of the Year (David Crystal, Bodleian, £25)

A fascinating book containing hundreds of concise entries on quirky occasions, literary facts and significant events, which could be used to good effect by teachers (English practitioners especially) to stimulate discussion and suggest activities. In here, for instance, you'll find explanations of National Clerihew Day (July 10th), Great Poetry Reading Day (April 28th) and We Love Memoirs Day (August 31st). There's even an Alien Day (April 26th) – perhaps good for a dual English/science activity, where students are tasked with suggesting ways of communicating with aliens? Also noted is the anniversary of Papua New Guinea gaining its independence (16th September), since the country is home to over 800 languages. Any teachers requiring assembly ideas is bound to benefit from leafing through the book's informative pages...

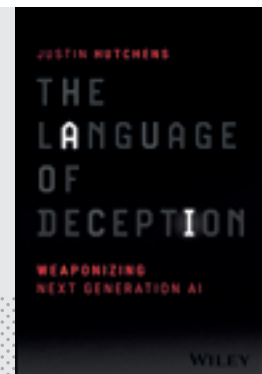
Reviewed by Terry Freedman
(see bit.ly/Eclecticism for more details)



Destination Time Travel (Steve Nallon & Dick Fiddy, Luath, £19.63)

A book on temporal adventures may seem like an odd inclusion here, but it can actually be used in many ways. The physics of time travel, for example, can provide glimpses into relativity and related topics. In any case, the science programme of study aims to cultivate in students 'a sense of excitement and curiosity' – which *Destination Time Travel* certainly does. English teachers could use some of the ideas it presents as writing prompts, while RE teachers may be interested in pursuing class discussions around the implications time travel might have for the 'fate versus free will debate'. History teachers could even use it as a gateway into the alternative history genre. If you've ever entertained the prospect of using time travel somewhere in your scheme of work, then I doubt that you'll find a more comprehensive resource on which to draw than this.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman



The Language of Deception: Weaponizing Next Generation AI (Justin Hutchens, Wiley, £26.99)

It seems to me that an essential component of the modern e-safety toolkit is the ability to spot things that aren't genuine. Of course, this now goes far beyond discerning fake news – important though that is – to, as Hutchens explains, navigating online spaces populated by artificially intelligent bots that are so realistic they can convince people to hand over their social security details. What students therefore need to be taught are strategies to avoid being fooled. Hutchens emphasises that the key component in cybersecurity, at least in the short-term, is individual responsibility, but is also happy to share some useful pointers and warning signs – such as distorted text or deformed hands being giveaways for deep-faked media. *Deception...* is highly readable in its explanations of how AI fakery in its various guises works. AI might not be 'intelligent' in the strictest sense – but it can certainly appear to be, which is almost as worrying.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman

ON THE RADAR

Every Body**(Molly Forbes, Bloomsbury, £14.99)**

It's hard to shake the sense of unease that comes from seeing the growing popularity in recent years of self-help books and lifestyle guides aimed at adolescents. It's a pointed reminder that for many reasons, today's kids really aren't alright – but perhaps we should be grateful that there are informed experts prepared to acknowledge the complex struggles teens now face in the modern world and provide friendly roadmaps.

Body image is an area that Forbes can certainly speak to, as founder of the Body Happy Organisation community interest company and an organiser of body image workshops in schools across the country. *Every Body* sees Forbes provide her teenage readers with a comprehensive, yet approachable overview of the various issues tangled up with body image over the course of nine chapters, touching on matters relating to confidence, bodily autonomy and personal boundaries with an engaging and reassuring authorial voice. Given the potential scope of its subject matter, Forbes does a good job of keeping her advice focused and grounded – even when, as in a chapter titled 'Filtered Body', she ventures into areas relating to technology use and media literacy that could easily form the basis of dedicated volumes aimed at the same audience.



Meet the author

ALEX QUIGLEY**How did you decide on the eight 'learning failures' you discuss in the book?**

I spent a good deal of time exploring what issues were most common in schools and speaking to leaders, teachers, as well as digging into relevant research evidence. In truth, it wasn't too difficult to select the eight most common failures. Pupils struggling with gaps in their background knowledge, not working well independently or lacking motivation are all long-standing problems.

Do you see any indication that attitudes and discussions around failure in schools are improving?

Schools and teachers have always had the scrutiny of accountability looming over them, which means that sharing failures isn't commonly supported or rewarded. And yet, I think everyone now recognises the teacher recruitment and retention crisis, and that we really need to care and support the teachers we have. Being honest and supportive of the challenges of the job, while helping teachers understand how to quickly overcome failures, offers the double bonus of creating more supportive environments for teachers and also increasing the number of pupils succeeding. We are making progress.

Did writing the book cause you to reappraise any aspects of your own practice?

I endlessly consider my past mistakes and failures. I think of pupils I taught over the years a lot – where are they now? What could I have done differently, or better? A big realisation when writing the book was that I didn't have the best understanding of how to develop pupils' motivation.

Crucially, I know now just how unprepared I was to teach high needs pupils. When writing about attention in the book, and exploring issues for pupils with ADHD, for example, I realised just how many small failures I could have prevented, and how many small, but valuable successes I could have supported.

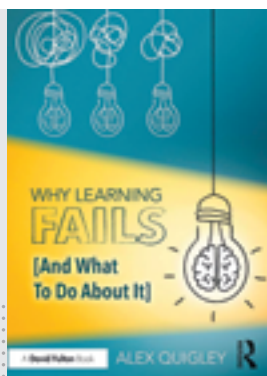
If you could change one aspect of the schools accountability system, what would it be?

Professions like medicine or aeronautics have systems for exploring and fixing failures. After an air accident, you open the 'black box', explore the issues and ultimately learn from them. In education, we don't dare talk about what goes on inside our black boxes. I think we could evolve an accountability system that balances creating safe schools with the equal priority of supporting schools. We should look to improve, and not merely prove.

Alex Quigley is a former teacher, author, education consultant and head of content and engagement at the Education Endowment Foundation; for more information, visit theconfidentteacher.com

**Like a Girl****(Rebecca Westcott, Scholastic, £8.99)**

The pitch might be 'deputy headteacher writes hard-hitting YA novel about the dangers social media presents to teens', but this is no exercise in finger-wagging sermonising over storytelling. Our first-person narrator is taciturn Y9 running enthusiast Eden, who crosses the radar of three of the most popular girls in school and is challenged to perpetrate a series of pranks on her classmates – and if she doesn't? She becomes the target. The book ably conveys the love/hate relationship teens have with social media, the vernacular and back-and-forth rhythms of which Westcott vividly captures in her frequent uses of transcript text. Based in part on a survey of teens' online experiences, it's a novel built around some perennial YA touchstones – severed friendships, personal betrayals, simmering resentments – but which grapples with the messy, complex realities of very online adolescence in a clear-eyed, non-judgemental and thought-provoking way.

**Why Learning Fails (And What To Do About It)****(Alex Quigley, Routledge, £9.99)**

You don't have to go far these days to find people angrily condemning some aspect of the education profession for its failings. These criticisms can span the ideological spectrum, targeting policymakers right down to frontline practitioners, and will often descend into a fruitless railing against wider systems and pressures beyond anyone's control – even the government's. What makes *Why Learning Fails* so appealing is Quigley's determination to cut through the noise and hone in what can be done to repair and strengthen the business of teaching and learning in schools *right now*, through recourse to research evidence and suggested changes in daily practice. Structured around eight chapters, each dedicated to a specific 'learning failure' (including 'Patchy prior knowledge' and 'Faulty planning strategies'), there's an rich array of elegantly presented insights, practical advice and revelatory lightbulb moments packed into its 162 pages.



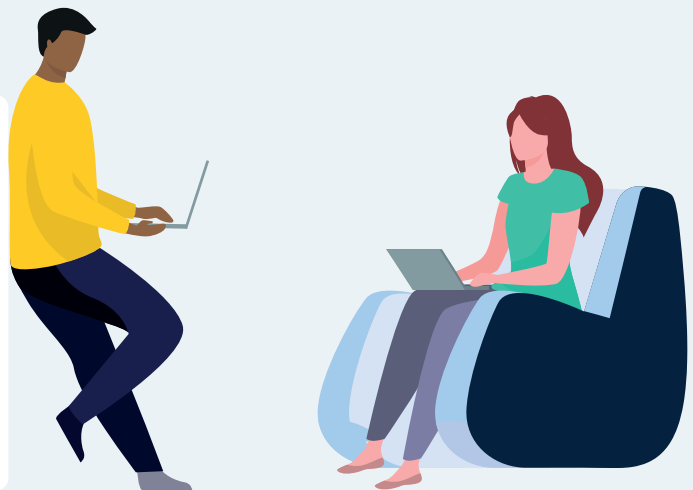
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“We can’t lecture them”

Chemistry teacher and online comedian **Shabaz Ali** reflects on what students are taught about social media at school

I started teaching in 2017, and can still vividly remember the reaction when my new school at the time found out I had an active YouTube presence. Their worry was that the kids would find me and comment on my videos, but I told them that I planned to continue posting; that my social media use had no effect on my teaching, and was eventually able to reassure them.

As it turned out, my YouTube uploads slowed down a lot once I qualified, though my pupils later inspired me to make more, after finding the ones I’d posted previously (which wasn’t hard). These were kids who were hugely talented in many different areas, and would often post their own videos showcasing their respective skills at art, music and all these other practical disciplines – but they rarely seemed to encourage each other in showcasing their talents.

‘Quick fix’ scrolling

When lockdown happened, I could see how hard the situation was on our pupils, especially those from backgrounds where home wasn’t necessarily a nice place to be at times. Seeing that class divide inspired the observations I write about in

my book, *I’m Rich, You’re Poor*. I was seeing these distinct patterns of behaviour and changes in kids’ personalities, which seemed to accelerate during lockdown. My students were becoming even more reliant getting those ‘quick fixes’ of social media scrolling and looking to influencers as role models.

Those influencers weren’t just causing the kids to question how much money they had – they were now comparing nearly every aspect of their lives with what they saw on influencers’ videos. So my response was

“There’s still progress to be made – but we’re getting there”

to make videos mocking influencers, and all the careful filtering, altering and curating that surrounds what they do.

I wanted to avoid simply saying in the book that ‘social media is bad’ – and I’ve always avoided saying that in the themed talks and assemblies I’ve since given on the subject at my school and others in the local area.

That’s partly because I can’t, in good faith, use social media myself while condemning it, but also because social media *isn’t* just bad. It can be good,

brilliant even – but for many people, and especially older generations, it’s an easy scapegoat to point to for explaining why so much has gone wrong across wider society, instead of addressing real problems – like the ongoing austerity measures, and numerous other issues currently affecting education.

Filtered and altered

If we want to meaningfully talk to young people about their social media use, then we can’t lecture them. Before delivering my own assemblies on social media, I’d watch

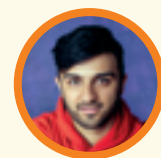
some given by colleagues – who would often go straight in with, ‘Let’s talk about your Facebook privacy settings.’ They’d refer to platforms by the wrong names, and even then, they’d be platforms the kids typically didn’t use anyway. Telling pupils how dangerous Twitter or Facebook could be was never going to work.

When I present on the topic of social media, I’m doing so as someone who’s personally invested in it. I open with, ‘Social media is brilliant. I use it and I love it.’ I’ll start with the positivity, and only then go

into the issues surrounding internet safety, privacy and bullying, and show how we can all stay safe online while helping to make social media *better*.

Today’s kids have grown up in a world where the impacts of the internet and social media are well known. They’ve seen what online negativity looks like, and its implications for bullying – but also how social media can be used to build positive movements and communities.

To be clear, many people aren’t yet using it well enough, and there’s still progress to be made – but we’re getting there. There’s far more awareness now of just how filtered and altered influencers’ lives actually are, which is great. People my age often couldn’t see past how beautiful some personalities looked, and how perfect their lives seemed to be. There’s now a much larger, and growing number of people who know those worlds aren’t real.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shabaz Ali is a secondary school chemistry teacher, comedian and author of the book *I’m Rich, You’re Poor* (Dorling Kindersley, £14.99); he continues to post on Instagram and TikTok as @Shabazsays



4 REASONS TO TRY... Reconnecting through outdoor adventure

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Tried and trusted

Alessandro Capozzi shares his experiences of undergoing the DfE's accreditation process for online schools

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the emergence of online alternative provision has been a game-changer, offering countless students pathways to renewed confidence and success that aligns with their needs and circumstances.

Across the UK, thousands of schools are using providers like Academy21 to support reintegration back into the physical classroom, or to help address various complications students may face – from persistent absence, to behavioural difficulties or mental health challenges.

This has been recognised in the Department for Education's new Online Education Accreditation Scheme (OEAS). The OEAS is an important step in validating online alternative provision as a clear option for learning and student support. Moreover, it gives schools that use accredited alternative provision providers, the security that the education their students receive is of the highest standards.

What is the OEAS?

The DfE now recommends that "Commissioners of full-time online education for school-age pupils in England should only use accredited providers" (see bit.ly/ts134-OEAS1). As such, the OEAS is designed to ensure that online educational providers meet stringent quality standards, so that students can be offered safe, effective and engaging learning environments.

Ofsted acts as the quality assurance body for the OEAS, verifying the suitability of the provider and its leadership. This review includes a two-day



"It was a positive process – one that we would encourage all providers to engage with"

visit from inspectors to judge providers on various fronts.

At Academy21, we found this process to be equally rigorous and engaging. As with Ofsted's school visits, its OEAS reports can be viewed at the Ofsted website, highlighting providers' strengths and signposting any areas for further development.

We sought this accreditation for our clients, and in achieving it, we have been able to underscore the work we do with their students to reconnect them with education, ready for reintegration or transition. It was a positive process – one that we would encourage all providers to engage with.

What does the scheme evaluate?

The OEAS process is a thorough one, covering a range of different areas. These include curriculum and teaching quality; safeguarding measures; student welfare provisions; school leadership; and the overall effectiveness of the education delivered.

For Academy21, participating in the scheme

and successfully achieving accredited status has enabled us to benchmark our services against the highest standards set by the DfE. The process has also allowed us to focus on our capacity for continuous improvement, thus ensuring that we're not just meeting current standards, but are also poised for future growth and development.

Why is the scheme valuable?

In short – confidence. Accreditation is more than just a 'badge of honour'; it sends a clear message to students, their families and partner schools that providers like Academy21 have educational quality and integrity at their core. It validates our commitment to delivering a curriculum that's both comprehensive, and adaptive to the needs of a diverse student body.

For our clients, accreditation guarantees that their investment in our services is a sound one, and that their students are in capable hands. We've often been asked whether we're accredited, so this recent validation, paired with our

students' demonstrable outcomes, helps schools reach the decision to enrol with confidence.

When selecting an online AP provider, schools should consider the best fit for their students. Central to this will be the provider's commitment to live engagement – something that's crucial for fostering a supportive and interactive learning environment, founded on strong teacher-student relationships.

Additionally, a provider's expertise in online pedagogy, support for students' wider welfare, openness to feedback and capacity for growth are all important considerations – and duly signalled via the awarding of accredited status.

What's next?

The introduction of the OEAS scheme is a significant milestone for the sector, in that it sets a benchmark for quality and professionalism. For schools, accreditation offers a reliable framework for selecting between different online AP providers. For the sector, it's raised the bar, further encouraging providers to improve and innovate.

As the educational landscape continues to change, accreditations like these will come to play an ever more crucial role in ensuring that students have access to safe, effective and engaging learning opportunities – regardless of their circumstances.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alessandro Capozzi is Executive Headteacher at Academy21; for more information, visit academy21.co.uk

Read like no one's WATCHING

The way we teach literacy can and should leverage teens' love of stories and narrative, says **Carol Atherton** – but that doesn't mean we need to see their reading logs...

When I started teaching English 28 years ago, teachers had considerably more freedom of choice over the texts we taught – especially at GCSE, owing to the coursework component in place at the time.

The ways in which students could respond to those texts were also much more wide-ranging compared to now. Instead of being limited to traditional literary essays, they were able to engage with texts more creatively, by thinking about the ways in which a character could be acted in a play, or how a scene might have been directed.

There were opportunities for students to write into texts – for example, taking a single character and exploring their background and motivations more deeply. They could even be tasked with writing a follow-up chapter, such as imagining the conversation between Jack and Ralph during their voyage home after the events of *Lord of the Flies*.

The exam room's limitations

In their exams, students are required to produce literary essays and given a very limited range of other forms to write in beyond that. Realistically, though, how many of our students will go on to become literary critics and produce that kind of writing in their working lives? Very few.

There are many more aptitudes we could be asking KS4 students to demonstrate

with the texts we set, even given the limitations of the exam room – many of which would prepare them far better for the types of writing they will find themselves having to do in their lives beyond school.

Things are admittedly different at KS3, where there remains some scope to set students more wide-ranging English activities. In my experience, many will respond to them creatively and articulately up until Y9 – so why don't we channel some of that energy into the exams they'll take at KS4?

changes within the exams themselves. We can't necessarily return to the days of coursework, but nor would I want to see us go back to the models of controlled assessment that used to form part of the GCSE, and which took up huge amounts of teaching time.

If, however, we required students to attempt at least one traditional literary essay and at least one creative task in the exam, maybe then we could restore that sense of breadth to KS4 that's been lost.

Making reading 'available'

These issues are currently being discussed by various groups within the wider English subject community. Robert Eaglestone at Royal Holloway has chaired a working group looking at potential modifications to the curriculum. The English & Media Centre has expressed interest in broadening the range of ways in which students can respond to texts, so that the assessment process can become more than a narrow exercise centred on the

“English at KS4 is now as much about teaching exam craft as it is about teaching the subject itself”

I, and many other English teachers feel strongly that English at KS4 is now as much about teaching exam craft as it is about teaching the subject itself. Students can end up spending more time focused on how to get their answer to a level 5 from a level 4, rather than engaging with the ideas that drive the text; ideas that could fire their imaginations, stay with them and even inform their futures, long after that difference between a level 4 and level 5 has become irrelevant.

Changing things for the better will involve making



ticking off of objectives. There needs to be further discussion around the shape that these initiatives and others should take, but it's a conversation that's starting to be had.

In tandem with the latter-day narrowing of teacher flexibility and the texts pupils are given, we've also seen an urgent pursuit of 'reading for pleasure'. I'd agree that schools need to make reading as 'available' as possible, and that investment in school libraries continues to be crucial.

I also recognise the efforts of some schools – mine included – to embed reading within tutor periods and have students share their reading out loud. It's an approach that's been especially valuable for children who haven't necessarily been read to by their parents, providing an experience that's both educational and emotional.

Many schools are working hard to instil a love of reading in their students, but without any clear parallels in other subjects. We want students to do well in other disciplines, but there somehow isn't the same imperative to give students a 'love' of, say, maths or science. It's a responsibility that seems quite unique to English teachers.

Private and personal

That's partly down to the complexity of reading itself, which can extend into areas of students' lives and experiences well outside of school. At the same time, we have to recognise that they're their own people. There will be texts, works and creations that our students love passionately, which we know nothing about – and which we can't necessarily assume we have the right to access.

I've always struggled with

the idea that students should keep a record of their reading to share with their teachers. I hated being asked to do so as a teenager myself, as there were books I wanted to read, and didn't necessarily want my English teachers to know what they were. Those books were for me. We should always allow our students those areas of their private and personal lives outside of their school experience, unless they specifically want to share them with us.

Because whatever those texts might be, there's a good chance that they'll inform our students' ability to read and follow narratives – and that those narratives won't necessarily be consumed through reading books. We need to start thinking more broadly about 'reading' itself, and what it is we English teachers are trying to do.

Reading for purpose

There are parallels here with PE, in that we want students to exercise outside of school – but we don't expect them to log all the physical activity they undertake outside of PE lessons and share it with their teachers.

I personally like the idea of replacing 'reading for pleasure' with 'reading for purpose' – getting students to think critically about the places they're getting their narrative fixes from, be it graphic novels, film, television, gaming or any other media they happen to be consuming.

Given the many different ways in which they can now consume narratives, students are often capable of producing a highly sophisticated analysis of a film, television show or video game. Many will already possess a set of analytical skills they can then apply to different forms of narrative – if they're given opportunities to do so.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

If we were to replace a school-based 'reading for pleasure' initiative with one centred on 'reading for purpose', what might that look like?

- ▶ A 'reading for purpose' programme would be best delivered via structured reading in form times, underpinned by the notion that every teacher should be a teacher of reading.
- ▶ Embedded in all subjects would be an encouragement for students to think about the type of reading they're engaged in – whether they're seeking information, nuance, or subtext – while being alert to examples of bias.
- ▶ Schools should foster a form of thinking around reading that considers how characters and individuals are represented in texts – be they literary texts, historical sources, or even the kinds of factual writing students might encounter in subjects like geography.
- ▶ There would be broad thinking around different types of reading. Reading for pleasure and the joy of playing with words can be part of that – but so too can reading for the purpose of engaging with the world, via the multitudes of texts they'll encounter in school and the media they'll consume in their personal lives.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carol Atherton is a head of English at a secondary school in Lincolnshire and tweets asj @CarolAtherton8; her book, *Reading Lessons*, is available now (Penguin, £18.99)



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5 REASONS TO TRY... A careers visit to the Science Museum

How a visit to *Technicians: The David Sainsbury Gallery* can focus your students' career ambitions



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Experience a world of careers in *Technicians: The David Sainsbury Gallery* at the Science Museum and introduce your pupils to an array of fascinating and often hidden careers in science, technology, engineering and maths.

1 CAREERS UNCOVERED WORKSHOPS

In this 60-minute session, pupils will meet real life technical professionals from top organisations and experience what it's like to do their jobs. Through hands-on activities, Q&A sessions and conversations with technicians, pupils will learn about entry requirements, salaries and job availability for the sector they're interested in. By the end of the session, pupils will recognise their own skills, identify what they enjoy and understand how they can find a fulfilling career. (Visits must be booked in advance.)



2 A WORLD OF STEM CAREERS

At the *Technicians* gallery, your class will learn how technicians work behind the scenes to save lives, make energy greener, provide entertainment, create everyday items we couldn't live without and much more. Students will have the chance to operate a robotic arm, solve problems on top of a wind turbine and even create lifesaving medicine as a technician for the NHS. They'll also get to try out interactive exhibits that have been created in collaboration with Marvel Studios, the NHS, the National Grid and many more.

Good Career Guidance benchmarks. With a range of industries on show, it will help to address the individual needs of each pupil by encouraging them to reflect on their own interests and skills. These experiences provide opportunities for your pupils to encounter employers and employees, experience different workplaces and consider their further and higher education options.

4 NO NEED TO CREATE RESOURCES

To help you save time in preparation for your visit, the Science Museum has created a gallery guide and activity trail to help you on the day. The guide includes a map of the gallery, key sections to explore and suggested discussion questions to try with your group. The trail will take you through some of the museum's most exciting

SCIENCE MUSEUM

Contact:

sciencemuseum.org.uk/technicians
info@sciencemuseumgroup.ac.uk
03300 580 058

galleries, from *Medicine: The Wellcome Galleries* to *Making the Modern World*, showing how technicians have helped to form the world around us.

5 FREE FOR SCHOOL GROUPS

It's completely free to visit the *Technicians* gallery and book the Careers Uncovered sessions. Plan your visit through the museum's online booking portal, where you can check availability, build an itinerary and book your tickets. You can also use the Science Museum's hazard identification sheet and insurance confirmation letter to help write a risk assessment, and add other free galleries to your itinerary, including *Energy Revolution: The Adani Green Energy Gallery* and *Engineers*.

3 SUPPORTS GATSBY BENCHMARKS

A visit to the *Technicians* gallery and a Careers Uncovered session will support you in meeting Gatsby's

Key Points

For the ultimate experience, book a free Careers Uncovered session where students will meet professionals from top organisations and find out what it's like to do their job

Add a visit to the *Technicians* gallery and introduce your pupils to roles across multiple sectors, from renewable energy to the creative arts

Download the gallery guide and activity trail to help lead your group around the museum, and watch the gallery film in advance to get your class excited for the trip

The Science Museum's education newsletter can keep you updated with details of events for school groups, our latest classroom resources and the support we can provide for teachers

Help your students get the edge



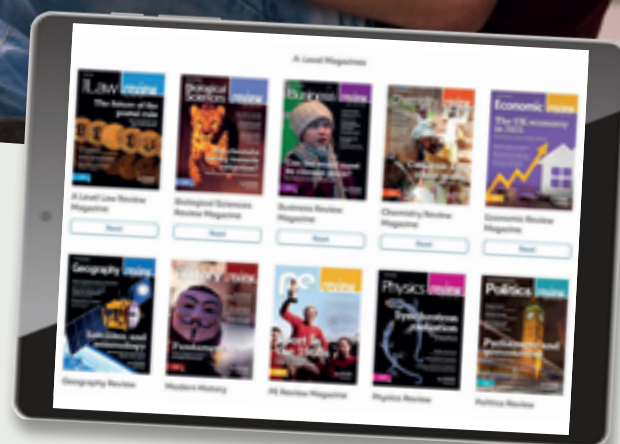
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Our brand-new platform has improved browsing and quick, efficient search. 14 of the eLibraries and eMagazines are aimed at A-level students, with two more titles for History and Geography aimed at GCSE students.

“Students from Year 8 to Year 13 are now able to easily access the magazines and many have been devouring these new research articles. It is so much easier for students to interact with these articles, and I am so happy that we can now gain from all the website development that has gone into this.”

Mr G. Simmons, Wilmington Grammar School for Girls



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Leadership in CHOPPY WATERS

Leadership is a critical aspect of any successful team. The ability to lead and guide a group towards a common goal is invaluable.

Yet leading a team can be especially challenging in high-pressure situations, where uncertainty and stress can cause individuals to falter. In such situations, effective leadership can make all the difference in maintaining a sense of direction, purpose, and focus.

The way leaders present themselves and interact with their teams can have a profound impact on a department's overall culture. Positivity is contagious; those leaders who exude kindness, optimism and empathy will in turn create a positive, productive, and supportive environment for their employees.

Too often, people in leadership positions forget that the role of a leader is to serve both their team and the

mission. Serving as an officer in the British Army, and subsequently helping to train future leaders helped me understand this.

The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst has a motto, 'Serve to Lead'. The message it seeks to convey is that by caring for the wellbeing of their team, leaders not only demonstrate empathy, but also ensure that their team is physically and mentally capable of focusing on their goals.

Empathetic relationships

To build and maintain relationships with junior colleagues, it's necessary to first create a sense of safety. By encouraging open and honest communication, you'll be better placed to fully understand the challenges they're facing.

This can be done via a series of small actions. Make sure informal check-ins take place on neutral ground so that they feel less formal. Ensure your colleagues are going home on time. Set aside times for regular sit downs with a coffee so that you can catch up with them. All this will help build trust and paint a clearer picture of those daily issues you can support them with.

Leaders who succeed in building strong relationships with their team will tend to be those who can effectively motivate and inspire others. That's why it's so important for leaders to create opportunities to connect with their team members and understand their perspectives.

How do you fare under pressure?

Before you can effectively lead others, however, you must understand and control yourself. Effective leaders are self-aware and will work hard at boosting their strengths while addressing or compensating for their

weaknesses. A leader possessing self-awareness and self-control will understand their own emotions and feelings, pay attention to them and be able to discuss them with others.

We recently collaborated with the headteacher of a thriving sixth form college as part of a leadership development programme. He was a kind and thoughtful man, and well-liked by the college's staff – but when under pressure, he would become irritable and tended to blame others for any mistakes.

By getting to understand his reactions in such instances, he soon learned to control the fear of failure that drove his negative responses to pressure, and through that ultimately change his behaviour. By understanding and better appreciating how you typically respond to pressure, you can better control how you react to it.

Positive leadership

If positive behaviour leads to positive results, then at the basic level, being kind, decent, patient and caring will help you develop the kind of strong and supportive relationships that any leadership role will require. I've previously seen several superb examples of positive leadership from Nigel William – a calm, humorous and gentle man, and one of Scotland's most experienced mountain leaders.

He and I have spent weeks together on skis in Norway. Early one year we were with three inexperienced skiers in a mountainous area. Injury had slowed us down, and we were still out after night had fallen. Temperatures were below zero and dropping fast. We could not find the hut where we were to spend the night, and there was no other accommodation for 20 miles.

The mood in the group became uncomfortable. The inexperienced skiers were tired, frustrated and scared at the idea of spending a night outdoors in

HOW TO MAKE TRAINING ROUTINE

Breakfast briefings

Teachers are great collaborators – so why not provide a structure for the professional dialogue in which teachers naturally engage? This could take the form of 'breakfast briefings', or breaktime drop-ins where colleagues can pick up a quick strategy (and a biscuit). Putting out flipcharts or Post-it notes on which colleagues can quickly scribble responses to questions and prompts can be a great way of generating ideas. Collate and scan the responses, and you'll have a ready-made item for your next teaching and learning bulletin. Another option is a termly 'bring and share' lunch, where attendees exchange and discuss interesting blogs or articles.

More focused meetings

Consider also reviewing your use of directed meeting time. Are such sessions used to further staff knowledge and skills, or are they for sharing notices? Meeting time is precious, so look at how operational information can be distributed using email or messaging platforms, allowing staff meetings to focus more on CPD. Be sure to record, share and catalogue your professional learning, so that governors and non-teaching staff can access it too.



Keep it in-house

Try setting yourself the challenge of keeping all of your school's CPD internal for one half term. Invest time in collaborative activities, such as joint lesson planning or instructional coaching, allowing extra time to observe.

Look at ways of providing staff with personalised pathways or a choice of options. If you're concerned about accountability, think creatively about how staff can evidence their learning. An end of year celebratory teachmeet, a 'speed dating' swap and share session or podcast recording can all be more effective and inspiring than requesting written accounts.

Invest carefully

We live in a golden age of online professional learning, spanning Twitter to Mastodon and Slack to Instagram. Yet as great as the internet is, don't forget the brilliant support offer that's available to

you locally, such as Teaching School Hubs and Research Schools. These provide access to high quality, low cost CPD rooted in local context – perfect for when time and money is tight.

Membership of professional organisations can also enhance your school offer, be they individual subject bodies or associations such as the Chartered College of Teaching. Teachers are busy people, so promote your offer with a visual display in the staffroom. Providing QR codes for staff to scan and one-page overviews they can take away will boost engagement.



Nicola Brooks is a professional development co-ordinator for Reach South Academy Trust, and a founding fellow and network lead for the Chartered College of Teaching



“Before you can effectively lead others, you must understand and control yourself”

the Norwegian wilds. The hut was close, but hidden in woodland on the other side of a deep, snow-filled river valley crossed by a single-track bridge.

Without knowing our exact position there was a strong chance we would miss the hut. Our immediate situation, which required precise navigation, could have easily become dangerous – yet amid these hugely demanding circumstances Nigel remained perfectly calm, assiduously looking after and reassuring the group.

Nigel’s attitude and calm positivity, combined with his brilliance as a navigator and experience traversing dangerous ground, is a classic example of positive leadership, and a model demonstration of how to create a sense of safety when it’s needed.

Be aware of slipping into negative leadership

Negative leadership can take many forms, but will often be characterised by behaviour that has a detrimental effect on other people within the team. Arrogance, rudeness and dismissiveness of others diminishes people, reducing their self-worth and willingness to engage. It undermines trust and mutual understanding in the team and makes people more status conscious.

In the Army I worked for a time under a major who would shout at me and other junior officers to make his point. On one occasion, he shouted because a tin of paint had gone missing. Another time it was because of a problem with a radio battery. We junior officers often had no real idea as to what we’d done wrong. I can still remember the time we stood to attention under a barrage of words, trying to grasp why he was so

angry before he became even more annoyed.

He in turn worked for a Lieutenant Colonel who was known for being arrogant and personally ambitious, but everything changed with the arrival of a new commander – a talented and emotionally aware leader whose presence and style transformed the Battalion’s culture. My immediate boss became more relaxed, and the effect was felt across the organisation.

Contagious leadership

Open, honest communication and a readiness to show empathy and kindness, are key elements of positive leadership. This type of leadership style not only inspires and motivates teams, but also gives rise to greater innovation, creativity and problem-solving capabilities.

The impact of a leader’s behaviour is often contagious. If you practice kindness and empathy this will radiate throughout your team, as humans naturally mimic the moods and behaviours of their peers. Understanding this impact and incorporating positive leadership practices is critical to creating a successful and productive team.

By serving their team well, and fostering relationships through open and honest communication, leaders will inspire and motivate their employees to perform at their best and ultimately achieve their collective goals.



Neil Jurd OBE (@JurdNeil) is the author of *The Leadership Book* and founder of the residential training and video learning platform *Leader-Connect*; for more information, visit leader-connect.co.uk



GETTING VALUE FROM SCHOOL VISITS

The intuitive thing to do might be to focus on those centres with the best reputations for things such as results or reforming behaviour, 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.

It’s important to approach any school visit with a clear mission objective in mind. Simply turning up in the hope of seeing something that will help you and your colleagues or students is a risky strategy, to say the least.

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 it’s being taught when you’re there.

School visits can be 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 and then putting into action what you’ve seen. Yes, it may be that there are some techniques and strategies that you can start using straight away – but you need to go in with realistic expectations.

It’s best to see visits to other schools not as solutions in themselves, but as a part of a map that points to where the solution might lie.

A one-off visit is useful. Ongoing two-way dialogues between schools are even more helpful. Regular structured peer support is better still.

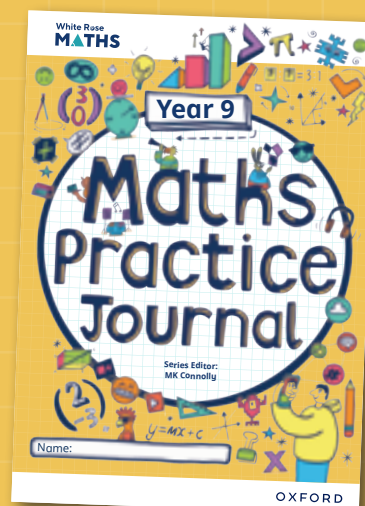
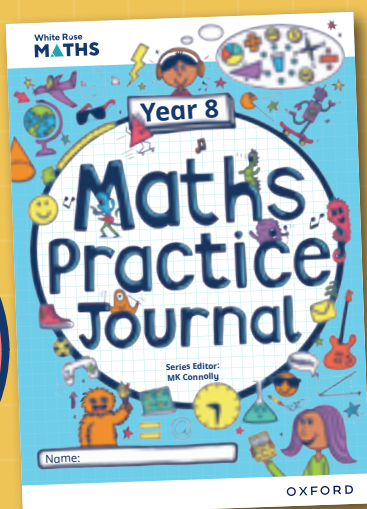
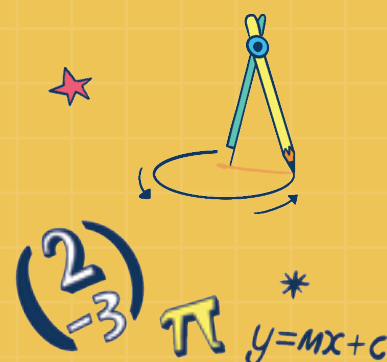
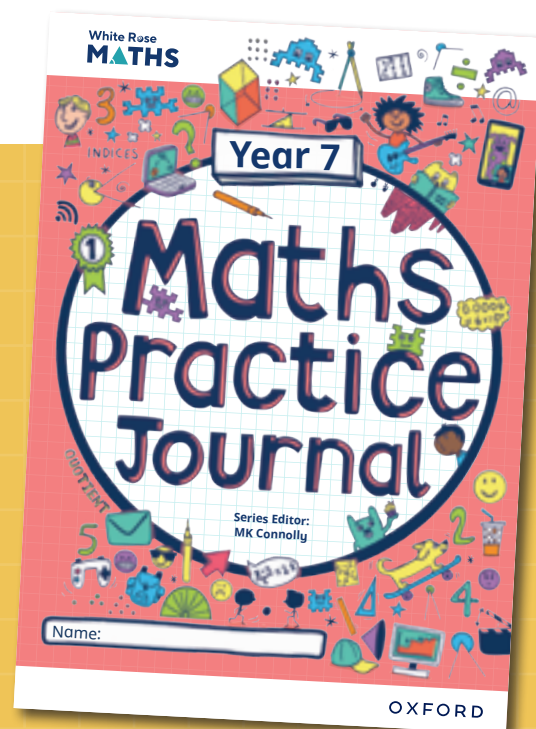
So after your visit, keep those communication channels open. Invite teachers back to your school, and make the most of this newly opened dialogue around teaching. If you get it right, a visit to another school is a game changer.

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).

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FOCUS ON: MATHS

We examine the ‘how’ of teaching maths, including the role of games in class, the ways in which curriculum design can shape teaching and learning – and why maths practitioners should consider teaching their colleagues...

How should maths be taught in order to attain the outcomes we’re aiming for?

THE AGENDA:

60 UNCOVER THE FUN FACTOR

Rebecca Ginger shares some straightforward maths games that can help younger learners sharpen their mental arithmetic skills using just a deck of cards...

63 HELP COLLEAGUES CALCULATE

Ama Dickson explains how the expertise of your maths department could be usefully extended beyond students and out towards co-workers in other subjects...

64 ILLUMINATING MATHS

Tom Francome explains how a new, evidence-informed curriculum is seeking to reimagine the ways in which maths can – and perhaps should – be taught at KS3



Uncover the FUN FACTOR

Rebecca Ginger shares some straightforward maths games that can help younger learners sharpen their mental arithmetic skills using just a deck of cards...

Let's try a thought experiment. Assuming you wanted to get better at playing football, what would be your preferred way of going about it? Sitting in a classroom, listening to the theory of how the game is played, and carefully analysing and memorising all the rules of the game? Or by actually playing the game itself, learning and improving as you go?

Chances are, you'd probably go for the second option – and children are no different. If made to choose between play, or listening to lengthy explanations while having to memorise a series of facts, they'll reliably opt for the former too, whether the task involves sport, or something drier and perhaps less engaging – like maths.

Making studying stick

Research has shown that the process of playing games and laughing can work to melt away anxieties and the resistance some children have towards learning information they might otherwise perceive as 'boring'.

For the past 10 years, I've been finding ways of making maths more fun and enjoyable for children and young teenagers, while ensuring that the information they're studying really sticks. It's incredible how a child's confidence can be transformed once they finally crack the subject.

It's possible to instil a love of numbers in children using just a humble deck of playing cards. These five maths games that let you do just that with your Y7s – whether it's in class or at home with their families, once they've been shown how the game works. Who knows – you might even be able to improve your own mental arithmetic skills, or those of your colleagues, while having a laugh in the process...

“The process of playing games and laughing works to melt away anxieties”

GAME 1

Adding up to 10

At primary school, students will typically receive instruction around adding up to 10 for a relatively short period of time, with little in the way of later review – yet children can often find storing the processes of adding up to 10 in their long-term memory harder than is commonly thought.

Children can resort to using their fingers to count – which, unless stopped early on, may continue even into their teenage years and greatly reduces a child's processing speed, which can in turn impact upon their later performance in tests and exams. So give this a go...

1 Take a pack of cards and deal out 16 cards face up, in a square formation.

2 Players take it in turns to each pick up 1, 2 or 3 cards which, when their numbered ranks are combined, **add up to 10** (e.g. $6+4$ / $2+3+5$). If a player's cards correctly add up to 10 exactly, they get to add those cards to their personal pile. If not, the cards are returned to the table.

3 When a player adds cards to their pile, replace them in the square formation with new cards drawn from the pack.

4 Cards with a rank of 10 can be chosen on their own, without having to combine them with other cards.

5 All face cards have a value of 12 and all aces have a value of 1. Face cards can be picked up, but only when combined with two aces or a single card valued at 2, whereupon they'll work as subtractor cards: $12 - 2 = 10$.

6 Once all the cards in the formation have been played, and there are no cards left in the deck, the person with the

highest quantity of cards in their pile wins.

GAME 2 Addition Snap

Once you've established that the children can quickly and reliably add up to 10, you can attempt the following:

1 Split a deck of cards into two equal halves. Two players take one half each, and hold it in their hands.

2 On the count of three, both players place any card from their hand face up on the table in front of them.

3 The first player to add the cards together and call out the correct answer gets to add both cards to their personal pile.

4 All face cards are valued at 12; all aces are valued at 1.

5 If an adult is playing against a child, the adult has to internally count to at least 5 in their head before being allowed to call out their answer.



6 One both hands have been played, the player with the highest quantity of cards in their pile is declared the winner.

GAME 3 Subtracting Snap!

Subtracting numbers can be a particular challenge for some children.

1 Split a deck of cards into two equal halves. Two players take one half each, and hold it in their hands.

2 On the count of three, both players place any card from their hand face up on the table in front of them.

3 The first player to successfully subtract the lower card from the higher number and call out the

correct answer gets to add both cards to their personal pile.

4 All face cards are valued at 12; all aces are valued at 1.

5 If an adult is playing against a child, the adult has to internally count to at least 5 in their head before being allowed to call out their answer.

6 One both hands have been played, the player with the highest quantity of cards in their pile is declared the winner.

GAME 4 Times Table Snap

We can use the same starting point for a similar game that can be played in class or at home, and which may be helpful for children struggling with multiplication and recall of their time tables.

1 Split a deck of cards into two equal halves. Two players take one half each, and hold it in their hands.

2 On the count of three, both players place any card from their hand face up on the table in front of them.

3 The first player to successfully *multiply* the two cards together (e.g. $2 \times 5 = 10$, $8 \times 9 = 72$) and shout the answer out wins both cards.

4 Adult players must count to 5 (or more) in their head before being allowed to answer.

5 The winner is the player with the most cards in their pile at the end.

6 As before, all face cards are valued at 12, and all aces are worth 1.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

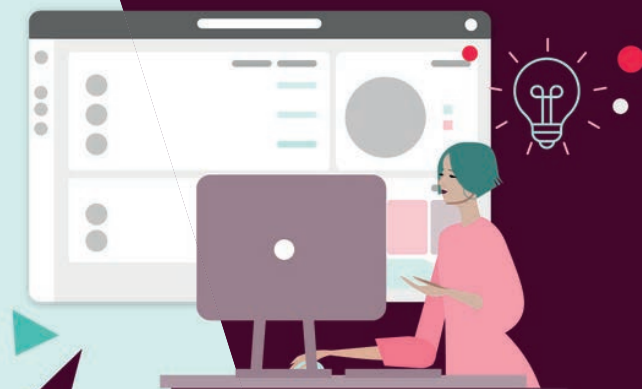
Rebecca Ginger is a television producer and the founder and director of Fables World; for more information, visit fables.world or follow @table_fablesuk

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Counting on colleagues

Ama Dickson explains why the expertise of your maths department could be usefully extended beyond students and out towards co-workers in other subjects...

Teachers will frequently encourage their students to work together and share their ideas – but how often do teachers themselves collaborate in similar ways across departments?

Professional learning communities within a school context can build trust amongst staff, creating safe, open environments in which colleagues are able to exchange advice. These kinds of communities help to develop a shared sense of responsibility, and encourage teachers to fully participate in decision making (see bit.ly/ts134-MFC1).

Efficiency gains

These communities can come into their own when goals are put in place to improve specific aspects of one's practice. According to figures from the DfE, some 52% of UK adults can be classed as having low attainment in numeracy (see bit.ly/ts134-MFC2).

Given the importance of numeracy across various areas of

a teacher's work routine, it may therefore be useful for members of a school's maths department to deliver CPD aimed at improving those everyday, practical maths skills. That might include understanding percentages, for example; the ability to identify a good deal and general budgeting calculations.

Procurement is, after all, a shared task that all department leads will likely have to undertake at some point – though the knowledge informing those purchasing decisions can be just as important when junior teaching staff are sourcing supplies and negotiating terms.

Appropriate CPD delivered by maths teachers could thus potentially help different departments in your school operate more efficiently and cost-effectively

Numerically challenged

It's worth bearing in mind how much more complex and difficult the process of budgeting in schools has

become. It used to be that teaching staff only had to decide how many textbooks and what items of equipment to purchase.

Their considerations now extend to what online subscriptions their class might need, and how many of their students might require additional support.

Managing money, calculating costs, distributing funds and measuring impact accurately all involve the application of maths skills that your school's maths teachers are well-placed to help develop.

Maths teachers can assist their colleagues in other ways, too. One hugely important skill teachers now need to have is being able to quickly and reliably analyse large volumes of data, be it generated from student assessments, or attendance figures tracked over time. Then there's the need to calculate the dimensions of displays, prepare quantities of materials for certain lesson activities and the estimations involved in planning offsite trips.

Offering maths CPD for teacher colleagues could boost understanding of the mathematical processes involved in all of those responsibilities, and thus pave the way for improvements to be made – something that could make a crucial difference when it comes to, say, marks and percentages between grade boundaries.

Cross-curricular value

There could also be some cross-curricular value to be had from helping to improve colleagues' maths skills. Perhaps there are more reliable, less time-consuming ways of plotting coordinates in geography, figuring out the proportions required for recipes in food technology or making the data calculations

needed to reach conclusions in science. Who knows – that 3D objects drawing lesson in art may well benefit from some discussion around basic geometrical concepts.

All students will experience maths in a wide range of different ways across the totality of their school experience – so why not start a conversation and talk about this more openly? Effective collaboration between teachers can ensure that students' experience of maths is consistent, and discussed using a shared language. Approaching certain mathematical concepts in a more holistic, even cross-curricular way can only serve to further deepen students' understanding.

It's been reported that more than 8 million adults possess numeracy skills below those expected of a 9-year-old. The government has recognised how serious the problem is, hence the existence of organisations and specific programmes aimed at reducing that number – and maths teachers can play a role as well.

By equipping your school colleagues with practical, day-to-day maths skills, you won't just be helping them – you'll also be contributing in a meaningful way to the futures of the students they teach.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ama Dickson is a maths teacher, regular contributor to Collins' series of maths revision guides and posts maths instruction videos to TikTok as @mathscrunch

Illuminating maths

Tom Francome explains how a new, evidence-informed curriculum is seeking to reimagine how maths is taught at KS3

The Loughborough University Mathematics Education Network (LUMEN) recently launched a free, evidence-informed and fully resourced mathematics curriculum for KS3. I'd like to set out here some of the principles and challenges involved in this, and why we believe it's an important step towards increasing equity for young people.

Better performance at school will improve pupils' life chances – but what do we actually know about how educational outcomes can be improved? Education policy often tends to focus on improving the *quality of teaching* – yet teaching quality is notoriously difficult to measure, never mind influence.

However, one frequently overlooked area is the *quality of the curriculum* learners are taught. It seems obvious that curriculum considerations should be at the heart of educational practice, but in the interests of maintaining perceived professional autonomy, the 'what' and 'how' of teaching is typically left underspecified.

Instructional design

Research has shown that the use of higher quality curriculum materials over lower-quality materials can have a significant impact on pupil outcomes (see bit.ly/ts134-MC1). Higher quality materials improve student learning via the reduced levels of time, expense and workload they require on the part of teachers.

Narrowing the attainment gap is a complex problem that

can't be easily solved, but greater specificity about content does tend to enhance equity, as shown by the work of Steiner *et al.* (see bit.ly/ts134-MC2). Furthermore, teachers will typically follow the order of curriculum materials, with the instructional design of said materials often influencing those teachers' pedagogical approach.

In the UK, we have a National Curriculum that specifies *what* to teach, but not *how* to teach it, with teachers left to figure out the latter for themselves. Broadly speaking, schools

content – which they're unlikely to be even able to source, given their limited planning time (less than seven minutes per lesson, if using only their allotted PPA time), let alone use effectively after careful planning.

With the bulk of their preparation time taken up with sourcing materials, teachers thus end up resourcing their lessons, rather than planning them. This can often lead to feelings of guilt, or a sense that there's something better out there, if only they had more time to look.

“We have a National Curriculum that specifies what to teach, but not how to teach it”

have two ways in which to proceed – curating the resources available to them in the online curriculum bazaar, or buying into a published scheme.

Resourcing over planning

The first option seems as though it would support teachers' autonomy while providing a tailored experience for learners, but it vastly underestimates the complexities involved in teaching. Designing high-quality resources is difficult, and demands a very different form of expertise to classroom teaching.

We don't expect great doctors to invent the medicines they use, nor great actors to write the scripts they perform. What teachers need is the best available resources to teach the

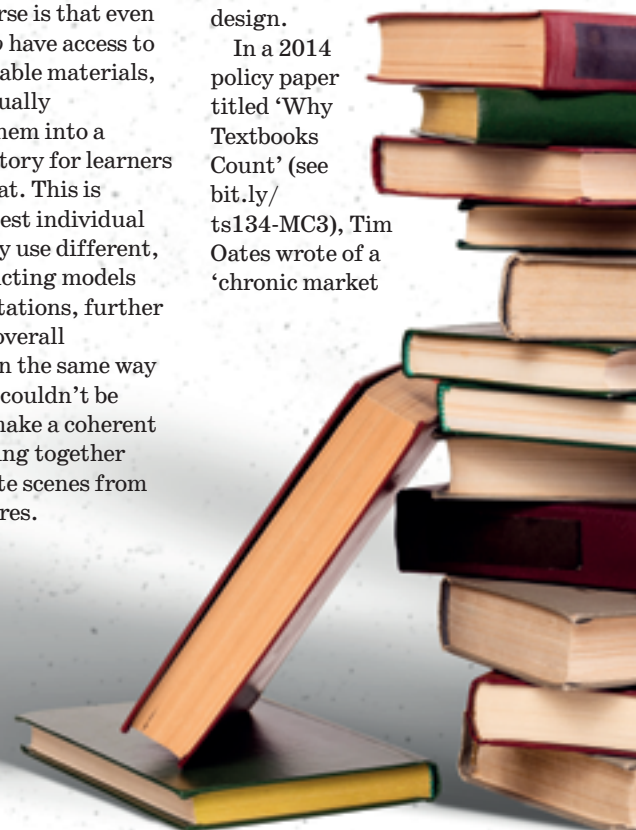
What's worse is that even if teachers *do* have access to the best available materials, the job of actually sequencing them into a meaningful story for learners is no mean feat. This is because the best individual resources may use different, or even conflicting models and representations, further limiting the overall coherence – in the same way that a writer couldn't be expected to make a coherent story by piecing together their favourite scenes from different genres.

Quick and costly decisions

You could be forgiven for seeing the option of using a published scheme as a superior alternative – but published schemes can have inherent design issues of their own. Teachers will naturally expect published resources to be thoroughly thought through, but they differ vastly in terms of quality and coherence.

Busy subject leaders can often be forced into making quick and costly decisions based on just a brief look at the materials in question, with the (understandable) expectation that they'll be of high quality. Only to discover later that they have superficial coherence at best, and aren't informed by mathematics education, cognitive science, and/or educational design.

In a 2014 policy paper titled 'Why Textbooks Count' (see bit.ly/ts134-MC3), Tim Oates wrote of a 'chronic market



failure', in which high-stakes accountability compels teachers to demand exam-centric materials, prompting publishers to meet said demand. The upshot is that the exam specification becomes the de facto KS4 curriculum, while the developmentally important KS3 is left neglected.

A principled approach

It's these issues that the LUMEN curriculum aims to address. Drawing on the expertise of Loughborough's Department for Mathematics Education, it is intended to be a free, evidence-informed and coherent mathematics curriculum that presents a viable alternative to both expensive, often low-quality commercial materials and the time-consuming task of resource curation.

The LUMEN curriculum integrates international research findings within its very design, and remains actively iterated upon via real classroom trials to ensure continual improvement. A particular emphasis is placed on coherence, with the curriculum seeking to unify topics through

consistent representations and contexts, drawing on Leslie Dietiker's notion of the curriculum as a coherent story (see bit.ly/ts134-MC4).

Recognising the pivotal role performed by skilled teachers, LUMEN also stresses the importance of effective collaboration between school leaders and teachers, and acknowledges the need for professional decision-making to be supported by suitable guidance.

Cognitive science is able to provide useful insights into effective learning strategies that can often be overlooked in traditional approaches. We have seen increasingly frequent calls for school mathematics curricula to be informed by robust research evidence, yet teachers often report finding insights from cognitive science difficult to implement (see bit.ly/ts134-MC5).

In designing the LUMEN curriculum, we have examined several of the challenges in applying principles from cognitive science to the design of a school mathematics curriculum and tried to balance them (Foster *et al*, 2024). For example, we have prioritised the use of consistent representations – such as the number line – even where doing so might make things more challenging in the short-term, so that benefits can be reaped in the long-term.

The LUMEN curriculum will hopefully be useful for new and more experienced colleagues alike. It offers a free, editable starting point that teachers can then adapt to the needs of their learners, and could prompt some broader discussions around pedagogy.

We additionally hope that its materials will offer a more compelling story for teachers to begin with, compared to a blank page,

5 KEY PRINCIPLES

As detailed earlier this year by Colin Foster *et al*. in *BERA's Curriculum Journal*, the development of the LUMEN curriculum observed five key design principles, which state that a mathematics curriculum should:

- 1 Harness and develop the skills and expertise of teachers
- 2 Balance the teaching of fluency, reasoning and problem solving
- 3 Give explicit attention to important errors and misconceptions
- 4 Compare and contrast alternative methods
- 5 Engineer coherence through strategic use of consistent representations and contexts

and provide helpful detail on both what to teach and how to teach it.

We've seen how inequalities persist in mathematics education, with students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups regularly facing significant challenges. Access to high-quality teaching materials informed by cognitive science could help to bridge some of those gaps, and offer a more equitable learning experience – regardless of socioeconomic status, gender or race.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Francome is a senior enterprise fellow at the Department of Mathematics Education, Loughborough University; for more information about the LUMEN curriculum and to access its free resources, visit bit.ly/ts134-LUMEN



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AMT was standardised during the 2023/24 academic year, from a representative sample of 10- to 16-year-olds across the country. Teachers can reliably determine where a learner sits in comparison to a representative national sample, and easily identify which learners may need additional support based on strand analysis.

You will have help determining a new student's mathematical strengths and areas of improvement, regardless of their previous learning experiences.

2 TRACK STUDENT PROGRESS

AMT is designed to be a maths progress test suitable for use twice in an academic year, using parallel forms to track how learners have progressed during the school year and how impactful your targeted interventions have been.

Designed to cover Years 7 to 9, you will be able to track how a student is progressing as you and your team begin to prepare them for their GCSEs.

3 MORE EFFECTIVE LESSON PLANNING

With enhanced reporting features and reports on student performance, class performance and year group performance, AMT can provide both gap and strand



analysis. AMT produces a standardised score, raw score, age-standardised score, percentile score and mathematics age to help you identify areas in need of further intervention.

If, for example, your class scores comparatively high on probability, but shows less understanding of fractions, this can serve as a clear indication to spend more time and resource teaching skills related to fractions.



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4 TIME-SAVING INTERVENTIONS

Once your cohort has taken AMT, you can access Shine Interventions* for targeted interventions specific to a student's identified area of struggle. Using the enhanced reporting tool, simply click on the student's profile and the software will present you with the relevant learning sequences and activities.

These can be implemented in group or one-to-one settings, and are accessible for teaching assistants and other support staff. Our leading maths pedagogy experts – researchers and former teachers themselves – have authored learning sequences that tell you exactly what is needed for individual students to progress.

5 IDENTIFY STUDENTS NEEDING SUPPORT

The assessments can also help to more accurately identify those learners who might need additional interventions, such as students with SEN.

You will be able to co-ordinate with your SEN team and TAs to ensure SEN students receive tailored support and better learning experiences. The parallel forms will then empower you to track the impact of these interventions. What's more, if you're using Shine Interventions, your chosen interventions can be delivered by TAs, SENCOs and other support members of staff.

Key Points

All standardised data informing Access Mathematics Tests was gathered from 15,000 test submissions from a representative UK sample in the 2023/24 academic year

Access-enhanced reporting features to help view cohorts at individual, class or group levels, and inform lesson planning and intervention strategies

Three sets of age-appropriate parallel forms enable you to track progress and the impact of interventions as a learner moves between school years

The assessment takes 30 to 45 minutes to complete and can be administered in one lesson. Extra time can be added for students who will benefit from it

*Available to purchase as an additional add-on

Go below the SURFACE

The questions students ask us can sometimes betray some deeper, underlying knowledge gaps that we can't afford to ignore, writes **Colin Foster**...

Often, when a student is stuck and asks a question, I think that the question they're asking is more advanced than the question they *should* be asking.

This isn't their fault. They'll typically be asking about a problem they're experiencing at that moment, which is a perfectly natural thing to do. The teacher's job is a subtle one. It's not necessarily always our role to try and answer the question they're asking us as best as we can.

There may be no such thing as a silly question, but there certainly *is* such a thing as the 'wrong' question. This is because, often, in order to help a student effectively, we have to press 'pause' on the question they've actually asked and *go back to something earlier* – potentially even something much more basic, which they may *think* they already know, but which is actually underpinning the difficulty they're currently experiencing.

Two steps forward

Responding in this way can seem strange to them. They might think we're misunderstanding the difficulty they're having. They might interrupt us: *"No, I already know that – what I'm stuck with is this."*

I think it helps to explain how we're not failing to listen to them, but are rather trying to dig a bit beneath

the surface and come at their question a bit more indirectly. And that we believe this is more likely to address their problem – particularly in the long-term.

In this way, by taking a step back, we can more effectively enable students to take two steps forward.

You can see parallels to this in other professional disciplines. If a dentist were to spot some decay near the surface of a tooth, and rapidly 'drill and fill' there and then, it will likely lead to

present. The deeper problems we must address are likely to be the root causes of many superficial difficulties, meaning that dealing with them has the potential to kill many birds with one stone.

If we can secure those underlying foundations, then we can also ensure that students are less likely to keep coming back to us with more and more little issues.

Amid the busyness of a classroom, it can be hard, if not impossible to find the time needed to deal thoroughly with everything

similar questions again, they'll run into a similar, but slightly different difficulty. And then need our help all over again.

Daring to dig

This is not only inefficient, but will also have a negative impact on the student's self-perception, who will likely conclude that: *"I can do it when the teacher does it with me, but I can't do it on my own"* This common complaint is a reliable indicator that we're addressing the student's difficulties at too superficial a level.

Or, perhaps the student concludes that they're simply not good at the relevant subject. For one reason or another, it just doesn't come naturally to them. Or, they might just think that they're

"The deeper problems we must address are likely to be the root causes of many superficial difficulties"

far worse outcomes later on if, in fact, there are deeper problems out of sight, a little further down below.

The danger of quick fixes

As teachers, we need to similarly drill down and find the deeper underlying causes behind the difficulties our students are experiencing. Failing to do so, in favour of staying with just the surface layer, is unhelpful.

If this sounds time consuming to you, then that's probably because it is – but it's a process built around future-proofing students' learning, rather than only obsessing over the

we're presented with. The temptation can therefore be to try and offer quick fixes instead. If that's all we focus on – helping with those superficial problems presented to us – we'll often manage to come up with a quick fix of some kind.

Yet while the student is quickly satisfied, they're likely to come unstuck again almost immediately. As soon as they're on their own, tackling

generally 'not smart' because they fail to grasp things, despite receiving repeated help from their teacher.

At a certain point, they may even give up on asking us. If their parents can afford it, perhaps they could get a tutor in to help. But



then, there's a good chance that all the tutor ends up doing is diagnosing and 'fixing' the same superficial issues, rather than daring to dig deeper.

Common difficulties

How can a busy teacher with 30 students in their classroom painstakingly address 30 different sets of difficulties? Is this approach not, to state the obvious, completely unfeasible?

Indeed, in a typical classroom the teacher will have extremely limited time

for performing any one-to-one teaching. But the benefit of looking for deeper, underlying difficulties is that you'll generally come across far fewer of them.

On the surface, it can seem as if every student has their hand up in relation to a different specific issue. Looked at from a different perspective, however, you may well find that really, there are only two or three different fundamental misunderstandings buried beneath the surface, serving as the root cause of almost all these problems.

If the teacher finds the time to identify what these

common difficulties might be, and then addresses them in small groups, or perhaps with the whole class, then considerably more progress might be made.

Smarter, not harder

Teachers can often be found rushing round their classrooms, travelling from 'hand up' to hand up', overwhelmed with the sheer number of requests for help; desperately trying to manage behaviour, while also attending to students' innumerable questions.

This can be exhausting and stressful for everyone. The teacher wishes they had another pair of hands to help them, or even that they could speak more quickly, so that they could assist more students in the same time. It can feel like rearranging deck chairs on the *Titanic* while the ship is going down, instead of doing something about that iceberg.

So instead, let's start asking what lies *behind* those questions that are being asked. What do these questions seem to have in common? In what ways are these seemingly different questions in some sense the same?

students are asking. What do these questions have in common?

- ▶ Avoid feeling that you must immediately answer the question posed. Pause and consider whether there might be a 'question behind the question'.
- ▶ Attempt a quick 'root cause analysis' on the student's question. What might cause a student to be asking that question at this moment?
- ▶ Look for commonalities across superficially different questions that
- ▶ Consider addressing these common issues in groups or with the whole class, rather than individually.
- ▶ Develop a culture whereby students check in books and with peers before asking you.
- ▶ Turn common or similar questions into whole-class activities for all students to think about.

If there were some underlying factor responsible for 90% of these questions being asked, what might it be? Maybe a crucially important, yet missing piece of knowledge? A connection between two things that hasn't been made sufficiently explicit? Or perhaps a fundamental misunderstanding that's caused students to get the wrong end of the stick?

Or, might it have something to do with students' approach to studying – such as failing to 'Ask three (peers) before you ask me'? Whatever it may be, focusing on those deeper issues will be much more efficient than dealing with numerous immediate and salient questions as they present themselves.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colin Foster (@colinfoster77) is a Reader in Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics Education at Loughborough University, and has written many books and articles for teachers; find out more at foster77.co.uk

The silent *struggle*

Ed Carlin shares his thoughts on the perpetual struggle to deliver effective behaviour management with dignity and grace

There's a peculiar dance that teachers can often find themselves performing in the classroom – one requiring a delicate balance between authority and empathy, discipline and understanding.

It's a dance fraught with challenges, where any missteps can lead to chaos, frustration and sometimes even a loss of faith in the very system meant to nurture young minds.

Understanding versus challenging

One of the most contentious points in this dance is the question of *how to deal with other people's children*. Should you raise your voice? Should you get 'cross,' as the British say?

It's a dilemma teachers face daily, one which cuts to the very heart of classroom management and the dynamics of authority. Here's the thing, though – you shouldn't have to shout or get 'cross' with other people's children. In an ideal world, respect and cooperation will flow naturally, but as we know, reality often proves otherwise.

Resorting to anger or aggression is seldom the answer. It only breeds resentment, creates distance and rarely solves the underlying issues at hand. Our unsung teacher heroes of the education system thus find themselves too often torn between understanding behaviours and effectively challenging them.

It's a tightrope walk between compassion and

discipline, where each step must be carefully calculated so that you can maintain order, without sacrificing empathy.

Choppy waters

Imagine working in a school where you lack the authority to remove a disruptive student from your classroom. The burden of maintaining order is squarely on your shoulders, yet your hands are tied. Should you still be held responsible for classroom management under such circumstances? It's a question that remains hotly debated among teachers and school leaders.

“Teachers can be limited in the sanctions they're able to impose.”

If teachers ultimately don't have the option to remove someone from their classroom, why should the classroom management buck stop with them? It seems unjust to expect teaching staff to navigate choppy behavioural waters without access to the full complement of necessary tools or authority required to do so. How can one be held accountable for a ship they have little control over?

Even in less pressing situations, teachers can experience moments when they're limited in the sanctions they're able to impose. Is it ever acceptable to simply ignore certain kinds of behaviours when recourse to certain sanctions isn't available? Or does doing that simply paint a target on your back?

It's a Catch-22.

Intervening as you feel necessary may invite backlash, while simply turning a blind eye feels like a betrayal of duty.

The power of presence

Worryingly, there are some schools in which teachers are now advised to only intervene with respect to high-level disruption or urgent safety issues. There will arguably be more options available to you in such instances, but what about the grey areas? All those low-level disruptions that steadily chip away at the fabric of learning, slowly

swearing and shouting in and out of classrooms? All too often, there's an absence of any wider behaviour policy that grants teachers the freedom and flexibility to issue appropriate sanctions in response.

The middle ground

We should strive wherever possible for learning environments that are free from hostility and disrespect. So, where *do* we draw the line between tolerance and tacit approval?

In the end, the answer perhaps lies in finding a middle ground – an equilibrium where authority, empathy, discipline and understanding can coexist harmoniously.

It's a journey fraught with challenges, to be sure, but one that holds the promise of growth, resilience, and ultimately, transformation.

eroding morale and focus over time?

Then there's challenge of managing behaviour outside of class. Here too, debate rages over whether 'over-supervision' is counterproductive, and if behavioural monitoring should be of a 'light touch' variety where possible.

However, we shouldn't underestimate the power of presence. The subtle influence of a watchful eye can work wonders in steering a wayward ship back on course. Even then, though, the easy option can be to keep quiet, appear agreeable and simply go about your own business.

What about the power of voice? The importance of setting expectations and holding firm to standards, even in the face of adversity?

And what, indeed, of



EXAMPLE 1 – The power of presence

In the busy corridors of St. Francis High School, veteran English teacher Mrs. Garcia held sway with a quiet authority that commanded respect.

One day, as she supervised

the crowded lunch period, she noticed a group of students growing increasingly rowdy near the canteen entrance. Instead of raising her voice or rushing to intervene, however, Mrs. Garcia maintained a calm demeanour and simply positioned herself within earshot of the unruly group.

Within moments, the students, sensing her watchful gaze,

gradually quieted down, their boisterous laughter tapering off into hushed conversations.

Without a word spoken, Mrs. Garcia had effectively diffused a potentially volatile situation, demonstrating the power of presence and the importance of quiet, steady leadership in managing the dynamics of a school's shared spaces.

EXAMPLE 2 – Setting expectations

At the same school, Mr. Johnson found himself facing a daily battle against the pervasive influence of a local gang culture.

Despite encountering numerous challenges in his classroom, he remained steadfast in his commitment to creating a safe and nurturing environment for his students.

One afternoon, during a heated discussion relating to *Romeo and Juliet*, tempers started to flare between two

students, each from rival neighbourhood factions. Sensing the imminent danger, Mr. Johnson calmly intervened, his voice firm but measured as he reminded both students of the classroom rules and expectations.

Rather than escalating the confrontation or resorting to punitive measures, Mr. Johnson addressed the underlying issues with empathy and understanding – using the incident as a teachable moment to foster better dialogue and promote conflict resolution skills among his students.

THE TAKEAWAY



Wherever possible, teachers should exemplify the principles of effective classroom management, the power of presence, the importance of setting expectations and the need for empathy and understanding in navigating the complex dynamics of student behaviour.



Remember that the silent struggle of classroom management isn't just about maintaining order – it's as much about fostering growth, resilience and ultimately transformation in the hearts and minds of our students.



When you next find yourself in the classroom, don't lose sight of the fact that you are responsible for clarifying and repeating expectations when they're not met.



Remember that you're expected to navigate the stormy seas of classroom management with grace and dignity at all times. Above all, you'll be expected to lead by example – inspiring those in your care to rise above the tumult, and embrace the endless possibilities that lie ahead.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

What's New?

Our pick of the latest solutions and innovations for secondary education

1 Accredited online alternative provision

Did you know that the DfE has created an accreditation scheme for online education providers? In fact, the DfE now suggests that schools *only* choose DfE-approved providers when commissioning their online alternative provision.

Academy21 is proud to be the first online alternative provision to be accredited by the DfE. This accreditation is an important recognition of the quality of our provision, and unwavering commitment to delivering unparalleled online education. The quality assurance visit, covering 92 standards, confirmed that the high quality of our teaching and support improves attendance and progress, leading to positive reintegration. Academy21 is a provision that has already enhanced the educational journey of thousands of students from across England and Wales, and is pleased to continue this mission. For more information, visit academy21.co.uk



2 Put your people first access Education People

With teacher shortages on the rise, schools are searching for solutions to help them manage their biggest asset – their people.

Access Education HR and Payroll can provide a powerful solution for schools and MATs. More than just software, it offers a comprehensive suite that streamlines recruitment, promotes wellbeing initiatives and empowers staff with mobile access to vital HR information. This cloud-based platform can tackle complex tasks like pensions and benefits, freeing up valuable time and resources. Over 9,000 UK learning institutions trust Access Education. Invest in a platform that puts your people first. Learn more at theaccessgroup.com/education

3 Embracing independence

Moving On is a groundbreaking course from the educational charity ASDAN that equips young people with the knowledge and skills they need to live independently for the first time. Developed in partnership with care providers and practitioners, the course modules are closely linked to care leaver pathway plans – ‘Building a home’, ‘Being healthy’, ‘Starting your career’, ‘Managing money’ and ‘Relating to people’.

Positive feedback from pilot member Jamie Diwell highlights the course's user-friendliness and efficacy. ASDAN's operations director, James Foyle, meanwhile anticipates Moving On as having broad impact beyond care leavers, with the potential to benefit all young people on the path to independence. For more information, visit asdan.org.uk/moving-on



4

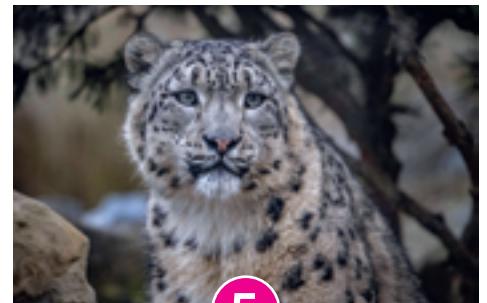
Bring reading to life

As a children's reading charity, BookTrust's aim is to help schools bring reading to life.

That's why it's developed the Bookbuzz programme, giving students aged 11 to 13 the chance to choose and keep a book they'll love from a collection of 16 titles, all newly selected each year by an expert panel of school librarians, teachers and children's reading advocates.

Priced at just £3.45 per student, Bookbuzz is a great value way to develop reading for pleasure in your school. Find out more at

booktrust.org.uk/bookbuzz



5

Iconic species

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As a not-for-profit conservation charity, every visit to Chester Zoo helps fund vital conservation work across the globe – so consider supporting wildlife on your next school trip! Book your visit today at

chesterzoo.org



6

Diabetes support

The InDependent Diabetes Trust offers support and information to people with diabetes, their families and health professionals on the issues that are important to them. Its helpline offers a friendly, understanding ear when the going gets tough. IDDT supplies information packs to parents and teachers so they

understand the needs of children with diabetes in school, and provides much-needed aid to children with diabetes in developing countries.

Diabetes can cause serious long-term complications, with a cure still elusive, which is why IDDT also funds essential research. As a registered charity, IDDT relies entirely on voluntary donations. For more information or to join, visit iddtinternational.org

7 Adaptive literacy

Reading Solutions UK is the home of DreamBox Reading Plus – the adaptive online reading programme that develops pupils' fluency, vocabulary and comprehension skills, improving outcomes for pupils and schools. Aimed at pupils in KS2 through to KS4, Reading Plus has a readability range from Y2 to beyond GCSE.



Every pupil has different needs, and it can be challenging to implement a reading intervention strategy that benefits the whole class. With Reading Plus, each pupil is placed on a personalised learning path based on their strengths and skills gaps. When starting the programme, pupils complete a baseline assessment that measures their reading speed, motivation, comprehension and vocabulary levels. Based on these results, Reading Plus then adapts its content and support to maximise every pupil's progress.

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8

Technicians: The David Sainsbury Gallery

Visit the Science Museum in London and step into the fascinating world of STEM careers at *Technicians: The David Sainsbury Gallery*. Recreating the workplaces of technicians across multiple sectors – health science, creative arts, manufacturing, and

renewable energy – your group will get hands-on with interactive exhibits that simulate job-related tasks.

Students will experience what it's like to be a lighting technician on the *Black Panther* film set from Marvel Studios, explore the problems faced by wind turbine technicians, and discover how NHS pharmacy technicians make life-saving medicines. Groups can also book free 'Meet an Employee' workshops, where they will participate in activities and Q&A sessions with real-life technicians. Book your free visit at sciencemuseum.org.uk/groups.



9

Transform with creativity

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10

Innovative coding workshops

JCA's new School of Coding workshops offer students a unique opportunity to build critical skills for the future. At Condover Hall in Shropshire, these tech-focused sessions combine coding, robotics and drones with residential trips and outdoor activities.

Launching this summer, these fun workshops aim to inspire the next generation of tech leaders. For more details, visit jca-adventure.co.uk/school-of-coding

Help your learners BLOSSOM

Kit Betts-Masters unpacks the reasons as to why Bloom's Taxonomy is a classic learning theory that can still spark innovation

Ask your class which is the harder task – memorising a list of forces and their definitions, or coming up with a design for a paper glider? Almost always, they'll pick the memorisation task. Why? Because they conflate 'time spent' with 'difficulty'.

It is, in fact, a much more demanding thing to design a paper glider. You have to get the dimensions right, choose the materials, consider the aerodynamics. As Leonardo da Vinci or the Wright brothers could tell you, it's far from easy.

Kids need to be told that memorising things can take a long time, but that doing so is ultimately easy. It's a process that works by simple repetition. In contrast, the act of designing requires you to bring into being something *which wasn't there before*.

This is the central idea of Bloom's Taxonomy and its application within education – that you can categorise different tasks according to their level of cognitive complexity.

Educational goals

I love exploring where theories originated from, so that I can better evaluate how practical and relevant they are for application today; so if you'll indulge me a brief history lesson...

Benjamin Bloom was someone with curriculum reform very much on his mind. In 1956, he led a group of educational psychologists who published their ideas in

a framework they called the 'Taxonomy of Educational Objectives'

It was an attempt at classifying educational goals, in a similar way to how organisms are classified in biological science. The original text covered six major classes: **knowledge, comprehension, application,**

analysis, synthesis and **evaluation**, which were ordered from simple to complex respectively – though not necessarily presented in order of *cognitive difficulty*. Even then, Bloom already knew there would be issues with perceiving these educational goals as a strict hierarchy.

45 years later we then saw the emergence of the 'Revised Taxonomy' – a modified form of the original classification system more directly applicable to the education system. It's here that we see verbs such as 'describe', 'explain', 'compare' and 'justify' being linked to levels in the cognitive pyramid, which continue to act as command words in our assessments to this day.

Synthesis versus creation

This revised version was set out in the 2001 book *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching and Assessing* by Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl, though beware – you'll be entering a rabbit hole that goes very deep indeed...

places the act of creativity higher than the process of evaluation. I could write at length about the special place of creativity in cognition, and how it's largely misrepresented in schools – but not here.

Moreover, the original taxonomy's 'synthesis' is replaced with the similar, but really quite different 'create'. Bringing two things together to make something new is arguably not quite as demanding as bringing something truly innovative into being.

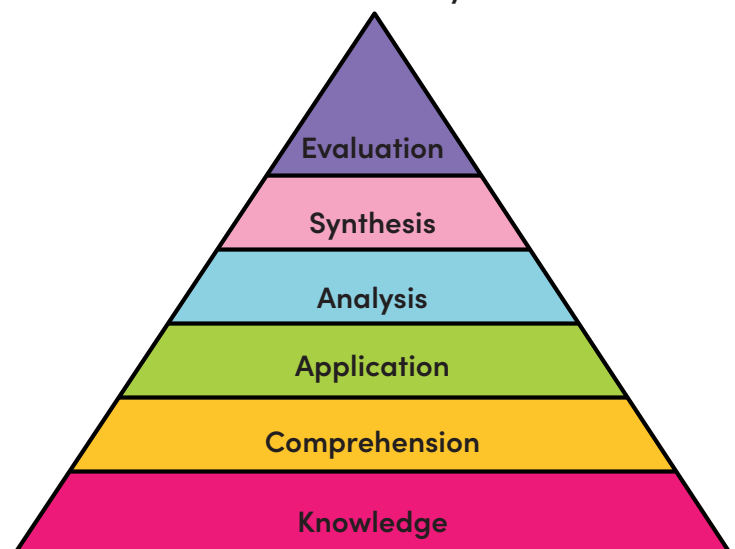
It's also worth noting that 'remember' replaces 'knowledge' – which gives us a useful insight into how some of the key drivers of current discourse around what constitutes good teaching and learning in classrooms may have first risen to prominence.

"An application of Bloom's has underpinned virtually all of what I do in schools"

As a creative teacher and something of a deep thinker, I've always been interested in the relative positions of the top two levels in the original Bloom's taxonomy compared to the revised version. The latter notably

Lower to higher order thinking skills

Bloom's Taxonomy 1956



Noun

More 'brain space'

Bloom's Taxonomy still has a place in our teaching, even amid the current vogue for cognitive load theory. It's helpful for students to know that practising the quick and accurate recall of facts will gift them increased 'brain space' with which to tackle more difficult challenges. Rapid recall can, for example, reduce the cognitive load of exam questions that involve evaluation or determination.

The integration of spaced, interleaved retrieval practice in lessons is largely based on a 2013 meta study by Dunlosky *et al.* (see bit.ly/ts-dunlosky). Yet while this practice caters well for the bottom two tiers of Bloom's Taxonomy, there's still a need for further innovation around developing higher order teaching strategies.

Happily, however, Dunlosky *et al.* points the way there too. Their study highlights two potentially effective solutions – Elaborative Interrogation (a method of explaining why we know a thing to be true), and Self Explanation (a method of explaining to oneself the cognitive route we took to

solving a problem).

Bloom's Taxonomy has been the single most influential theory of my classroom career. I've used it to adapt activities and questions in my lessons to the objectives of each group. It's enabled my students to better discern between one lesson element and another, and it's helped them feel more comfortable with tackling those bits of the curriculum they find more challenging. Some questions are meant to be harder! They're designed that way!

The more opportunities students have to *work at* this higher level, the quicker they can switch into actively and regularly *working at* this level. That's incredibly important, given that within even the same exam question, students may have to constantly shift between describing, explaining, applying, evaluating and suggesting.

A hallmark of excellence

An application of Bloom's has underpinned virtually all of what I do in schools. It's a subtle hallmark of an excellent lesson, but

conspicuous by its absence to trained observers.

As a leader, I'll always include a Bloom's scale of challenge in any lesson objectives I give candidates at interview. When planning, I'll always try to think at the evaluative and creative level of the taxonomy.

In meetings, I'll try to make myself more useful by working at the highest level of the taxonomy. And in my writing, I'm always trying to give the reader my high level thinking, as that's the stuff that's the most valuable.

An understanding of Bloom's is a high utility form of knowledge, whatever stage of the teaching journey you're at. If you're a trainee just starting out, and feeling overwhelmed by the barrage of well-meant advice you're receiving, let me assure you this is one of the most important pieces of advice you'll hear.

Perhaps you're in a TLR post, busily quality assuring a set of resources. Look at your lessons through the lens of Bloom's Taxonomy – rest assured, your students will thank you for their eventual grades if you do.

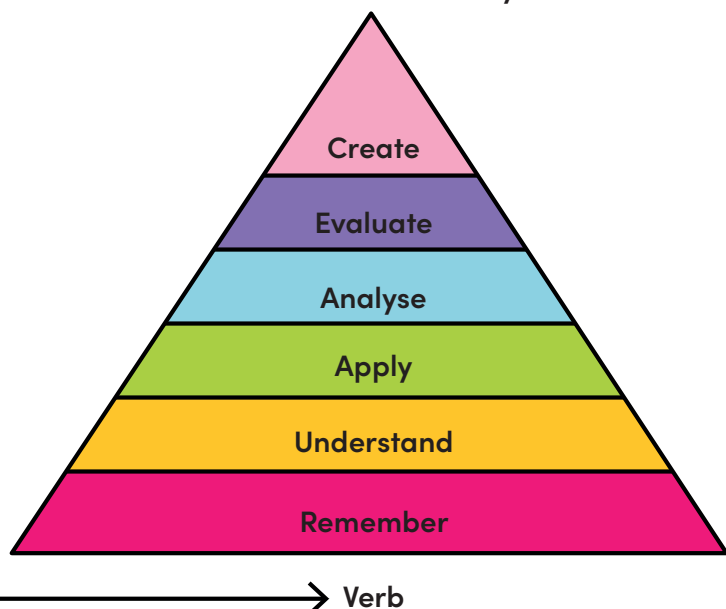
Or you might be a senior leader, planning out a new term of CPD and learning across your school or trust. Make Bloom's a priority, and make it clear to your staff how fundamental a concept it is in teaching, learning and assessment.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kit Betts-Masters is a lead practitioner for science, a former head of physics and of science; he is also the author of several physics education books, and produces physics, education and technology videos for YouTube under the username @KitBetts-Masters. For more information, visit evaluateeverything.co.uk

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy 2021



READY FOR ACTION

Five ways in which you can start using Bloom's Taxonomy in school tomorrow...

- ▶ Match command words to assessment objectives, and notice how they fit within Bloom's Taxonomy structure. Then explicitly teach Bloom's Taxonomy in relation to assessments.
- ▶ Use mark schemes to analyse which Bloom's level each mark is assessing. Use this to help students match their test performance against assessment objectives in a spreadsheet.
- ▶ Structure lesson questions using command words from the exam board, in ascending order of Bloom's Taxonomy levels.
- ▶ Analyse lesson elements as you plan, then consider if the balance of Bloom's levels is right for your class and content. Allow more independent learners to learn facts on their own for homework, and reserve their classroom time for the practice of higher order skills.
- ▶ Collaborate on paired observations focused on Bloom's Taxonomy. Analyse how much time each class spends working at each Bloom's level, then check whether this was appropriate for the target level of the group.

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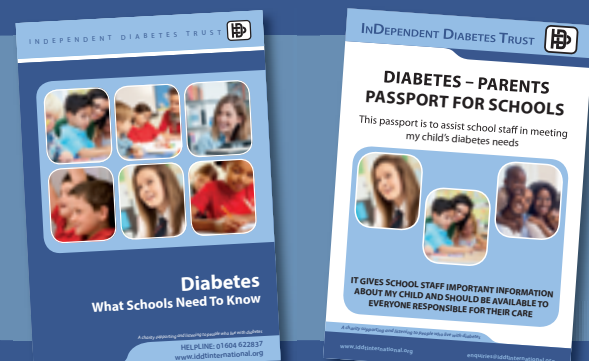
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LEARNING LAB

IN THIS ISSUE

- + What teachers can learn from sea sponges
- + The importance of holding high expectations
- + A vindication for Sure Start?
- + The pivotal role played by recall
- + How does your MAT measure up?
- + Why your students need lessons in misinformation and bias
- + The revision essentials every student should know

CONTRIBUTORS

PHIL MATHE

PE teacher, researcher, speaker and author

ALAN DUNSTAN

Deputy Headteacher, British International School, Riyadh

ROBIN LAUNDER

Behaviour management consultant and speaker

ADAM RICHES

Teacher, education consultant and writer

ANDREW SWANSON

Executive producer, BBC

ZEPH BENNETT

PE teacher and school achievement leader



Thinking about...

ADHD

Research has shown that 5% of the global population has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). With the average state-funded secondary attended by just under a thousand pupils, there could be at least 50 children with ADHD in any given school, with diagnostic figures likely to be unrepresentative of the true number.

Many myths and misconceptions exist around ADHD. When we think of students with ADHD, we may imagine loud, unruly individuals intent on disrupting lessons, with little interest in learning. In reality, students with ADHD will typically try their absolute best to focus and engage, and be desperate to please, but can find themselves unable to focus on the task at hand due to both internal and external distractions.

I also believe the term 'ADHD' to be inaccurate. As an adult with ADHD myself, I don't have a 'deficit' of attention, but rather the opposite – I have *too much* attention that I, like others with ADHD, simply find hard to apply correctly. Those of us with the condition can, at times, 'hyperfocus' on things we find interesting and stimulating – but when tasks lack that interest or stimulation, our focus will easily wander, which can make staying on task incredibly difficult.

When delivering training on ADHD, I'll ask teachers and support staff to consider the characteristics of a 'good student.' They usually suggest characteristics such as 'attentiveness', a 'willingness to engage', 'punctuality' and 'being

organised' – all of which students with ADHD are likely to find difficult, making the learning environment challenging for them if their needs aren't understood.

In a 2016 paper, the psychiatrist and author William W. Dodson MD observed that by the age of 12, children with ADHD will have received 20,000 more negative messages from parents, teachers and other adults than their peers without ADHD. Constant negative comments on behaviours that can't be helped may establish a cycle of anxiety, low self-esteem and behaviour, which can be challenging for adults to subsequently manage. Students with ADHD can easily fall behind in their learning and homework, and are liable to play the role of 'class clown' to try and deflect from their difficulties (and acquire those crucial dopamine fixes).

Yet if we can understand the needs of learners with ADHD, and provide suitably stimulating learning opportunities, they can thrive. Reasonable adjustments in this area might therefore include:

- Using visual planners, now/next boards and lists to assist with the planning and completion of work
- Making allowances for quiet fiddling, doodling or use of headphones to help support their concentration levels
- Breaking classroom tasks and homework assignments down into smaller, more manageable chunks.
- Not giving too many instructions at once, and allowing time for processing



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laura Kerbey is an author, public speaker and trainer, the founder of Positive Assessments Support and Training (p-ast.co.uk) and co-founder of KITE Therapeutic Learning (kitetls.co.uk)

CLOSE-UP ON... THE 'SEA SPONGE ANALOGY'



Sea sponges are the most quirky of ocean life forms. Like that laid-back friend you love but can't help chuckling at, they simply float around, soaking up the 'vibes' while everyone else gets themselves caught up in underwater drama.

However, sea sponges are also fascinating for how they feed. As water flows through the sponge, choanocytes trap food particles and filter everything back into the water. The more they take in, the more they filter.

In his 2023 book *Hidden Potential*, psychology professor Adam Grant discusses the 'sea sponge analogy', emphasising the importance of letting ideas mature over time, akin to how sponges absorb water. Instead of striving for immediate perfection, Grant argues, individuals should let their ideas soak in experiences, feedback and iterations.

Similarly, by encouraging students to develop their ideas iteratively, we can promote deeper learning, critical thinking and creativity. Here are some ways in

which we've tried applying this approach at my school:

1 REFLECTIVE PRACTICES

It's always beneficial to regularly reflect upon our students' learning experiences. When educators provide students with opportunities to revisit previous lessons, projects and assignments to reflect on what worked well and what could be improved, they can soak in those experiences and incorporate their reflections into future iterations.

2 SPACED LEARNING

Instead of cramming information for exams, we've found that a gradual distribution of learning activities over time has proven much more effective for us.

Revisiting key concepts periodically throughout the school year – via review sessions, quizzes and other interactive activities – has helped our students retain information more effectively and reinforced their long-term learning.

3 ITERATIVE THINKING

When we have a classroom culture that values experimentation and iteration, students can generate multiple iterations of their ideas, refine them based on feedback and experience, and thus continuously evolve their thinking. Peer collaboration, constructive criticism and self-assessment opportunities can all help to support this iterative process.

4 FAILURE AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Creating safe and supportive environments, in which our students feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes, has been essential for us. When educators teach that failure is a natural part of the learning process and an opportunity for growth, students are encouraged to be resilient and persevere. We've found that celebrating efforts and resilience, rather than simply focusing on outcomes and grades, has been hugely motivating.

DO THIS HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Exercise better class control with these tips from Robin Launder...

As a teacher, you should want to harbour three types of high expectations – academic, behavioural and social (the latter referring to how the students interact with you and with each other).

High expectations tell your students that you fully believe they have what it takes to achieve the things that you want them to achieve. After all, if you didn't, why would you have such high expectations in the first place? Low expectations convey the precise opposite. They effectively signal to your students that they can't achieve, can't behave and can't get along with each other.

Now, here's the thing about expectations – they tend to be met. Whether high or low, you can expect students' behaviour to move in the direction of the expectations placed upon them – which makes sense, given that an expectation is one half of a self-fulfilling prophecy; the active ingredient that pushes performance into a virtuous or vicious cycle.

So make sure your academic, behavioural and social expectations are high – the higher the better – and stay that way.

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

PHIL MATHE IS A PETE TEACHER, RESEARCHER, SPEAKER AND AUTHOR; ALAN DUNSTAN IS THE DEPUTY HEADTEACHER OF THE SENIOR SCHOOL, DIPLOMATIC QUARTER CAMPUS, AT BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, RIYADH

Source: National Behaviour Survey
produced by the DfE

The full report, titled 'Short- and medium-term impacts of Sure Start on educational outcomes', can be downloaded via bit.ly/ts134-LL2

Using recall tasks is a quick and easy way to ensure that your learners are remembering what they're being taught, and more importantly, will show them how to learn independently. Recall tasks might be a low stakes activity, but they can have huge value in the classroom.



64%

of secondary teachers agree with the statement 'My line manager helps me to do my job better'

Source: Teacher Tapp survey dated April 2024

Need to know

The Education Policy Institute has embarked on a wide-ranging project to facilitate meaningful comparisons between the different school groups making up England's educational landscape.

The project aims to go beyond traditional measures of progress and attainment, by taking account of school groups' performance in terms of inclusion, workforce health and financial efficiency. The EPI has therefore unveiled an online tool that can now be used to compare the inclusion and attainment outcomes of different MATs, LAs, dioceses and federations, with 'financial health' and 'workforce indicators' promised in future updates.

The data is pulled from the 2016/17 and 2018/19 academic years, covering groups operating at least two schools since 2015.

Accompanying the launch is the first in a series of EPI-produced reports that will highlight key comparisons and trends across different school groups over time. This initial report (see bit.ly/ts134-LL3) finds that larger MATs with 10 or more schools report higher rates of persistent absence, suspension and unexplained exits than smaller MATs and LAs.

It also notes that the median LA sees fewer suspensions than the median MAT – though the median MAT sees higher progress scores for disadvantaged and previously low attaining pupils than the median LA.

The EPI's online comparison tool can be accessed via bit.ly/ts134-LL4



TEACH THEM ABOUT... MISINFORMATION AND BIAS

In an increasingly polarised world, young people need to be able to navigate the fine line between fact and fiction. We want to help them to tackle what is an incredibly challenging news environment.

When launching its 'Other Side of the Story' media literacy initiative, BBC Education carried out research which revealed that 80% of secondary school students believe it's important to know about what's going on in the world. Yet at the same time, nearly two thirds don't know where to go, or whom to trust, when trying to find out.

How can you even begin to address the power of misinformation in the classroom? A useful starting point could be to focus on making students aware of just how quickly their view of the world can change, depending on bias, debate, algorithms and other factors they may be exposed to every day.

Students need to grasp how bias feeds into how people think and feel about different issues. They should be taught to understand the power of a reasoned and rational debate, and the value to be had in 'disagreeing agreeably'. Most students will also need to better understand how algorithms can skew views and opinions, creating echo chambers and social bubbles.

Teachers keen to help young people navigate our increasingly complex media landscape can try making use of the following three suggested activities:

1. UNDERSTANDING BIAS

Split your students into three groups, give each group an envelope containing information on a specific topic (such as 'AI and the future') and ask them to prepare a one-minute news report. Each group must adopt a different assigned angle – or bias – for their report, which could amount to 'AI is bad', 'AI is good' and 'AI has pros and

cons'. Once the groups have presented their reports (which should differ widely, based on their bias), let them know that the provided source material was exactly the same for each group.

2. INFORMED OPINIONS

Divide the classroom into three distinct areas – 'agree', 'disagree' and 'not sure' – and then give your students an opening statement on a topical issue, such as 'Social media firms should be banned from storing your personal data'. Ask your students to stand in the classroom area that best reflects their starting opinion on the issue. Then reveal two or three further items of information and views regarding the issue and give your students the opportunity to move. Point out that our starting points can change considerably once we acquire more facts or hear differing opinions.

3. POLARISED VIEWS

Present your students with a flippant or funny opening statement, such as 'School dinners are brilliant.' Then ask them to line up across the classroom. Find out which students seem to hold the most reasonable views on the issue and ask them to stand in the middle of the line. Proceed to then line up the remaining students extending outwards in both directions, so that those with the most extreme views on either side are furthest from the middle. Beginning in the centre, have the students each express one brief comment on the topic until you reach either end of the line. If all goes well, you'll have two students voicing completely opposed and seemingly irreconcilable views. The aim here is to demonstrate how quickly opinions and arguments can become more extreme, and have the students consider whether those extreme positions serve to perpetuate or de-escalate certain points of view.

ANDREW SWANSON IS EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY; FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [BBC.CO.UK/TEACH](https://bbc.co.uk/teach)



On the radar

Belonging on Stage: Student Competition

Readers may be familiar with Bloomsbury Publishing's 'Lit in Colour' campaign, which seeks to support UK schools in making the teaching and learning of English and drama more inclusive. As part of those efforts, the publisher is currently running a competition, whereby English Literature students aged between 13 and 19 are being invited to write an original, short theatrical scene on the theme of 'Belonging'.

The judging panel is formed of four award-winning playwrights – Lucian

Msamati, Dipo Agboluaje, Tonderai Munyevu and Sudha Bhuchar – who will be looking for scenes that demonstrate creativity and imagination, and writing that portrays the importance of sharing stories on stage.

Three winning entrants will receive hundreds of pounds worth of Bloomsbury books for their class or school, plus a bundle of the Methuen Drama plays comprising the 2023 Lit in Colour Play List. The winning scenes will be published on Bloomsbury's Lit in Colour webpages, and

then be performed at both the Lit in Colour Pioneers student day in July, and at Bloomsbury's Lit in Colour 2024 launch event taking place later this year.

The closing date for entries is **31st May 2024**, so why not get your students started on writing this week? The entry brief is well-suited for assignment as homework, or could make an engaging class activity.

For more information and to download an entry pack, visit bloomsbury.com/LitInColour

TRENDING

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

INCLUSIVE RSHE

The Down's syndrome charity Learn and Thrive has launched a series of free online video lessons and other resources under the banner of 'The Changing Adolescent Body'. The resources in question contain targeted guidance and advice on puberty, personal hygiene and the process of growing up aimed at learners with SEND aged 7 to 25.

bit.ly/ts134-LL5

LEARN ABOUT LOGISTICS

Teachers and career advisors may be interested in a new online information resource that aims to raise awareness of the logistics sector among KS3 to KS5 learners. The Generation Logistics Education Hub features an extensive library of downloadable, curriculum-mapped resources and activities for use in business, careers and maths lessons.

educationhub.generationlogistics.org

1-MINUTE STUDENT CPD

5 REVISION ESSENTIALS

SOME QUICK TIPS FOR HELPING STUDENTS DEVELOP BETTER DAILY ROUTINES...



1

EXPERIENCE FAILURE

When answering questions, it's important that you fail, learn from your mistakes and repeat the process – because it's failure that allows us to work on our weaknesses



2

SEEK OUT THE ANSWERS

When you fail, find out where you went wrong, process the information and try again – seeking out those reasons will build your knowledge base and help you plug the missing information



3

PRACTICE UNTIL YOU GET IT RIGHT

Repeatedly practice answering the exact style of questioning you'll meet in the exam – the more you do, the more fluent your responses will be



4

PEER QUESTIONING

Have a classmate or friend test you with questions to which you can respond verbally and do the same for them – talking through answers strengthens recall and highlights areas for focus



5

TAKE A BREAK

This is essential when revising, as doing so improves concentration and accuracy – even a modest 10-minute walk can make you feel more positive when resuming your studies

ZEPH BENNETT IS A PE TEACHER AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT LEADER WITH 25 YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE; YOU CAN FIND MORE OF HIS EDUCATIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY FOLLOWING @PEGEEKSCORNER

Got a great learning idea? Email editor@teachsecondary.com or tweet us at [@teachsecondary](https://twitter.com/teachsecondary)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Lawson is a former secondary teacher, now serving as a foundation governor while running a tutoring service, and author of the book **The Successful (Less Stressful) Student** (Outskirts Press, £11.95); find out more at prep4successnow.wordpress.com or follow @johninpompano



THE LAST WORD

"He deftly transcended the double entendres"



John Lawson reflects on how the best teachers turn us into better people, via values and philosophies that are still applicable decades on...

42 years ago, on a balmy September evening, I embarked on a barmy 7-year quest to become a Roman Catholic priest.

I remember sitting in a chapel, clutching a battered breviary bedecked with ribbons, listening to the red-necked rector ranting about academic and spiritual commitment, and the reckless challenge of celibacy.

He was in full drill sergeant mode: *"It's my job to turn you pond scum into real disciples of Christ... Only one in eight of you whippersnappers will be ordained..."* I quietly prayed for the forlorn souls who wouldn't be collared.

Alongside me were 61 other youngish hopefuls not considered smart enough to study 'ologies' at major seminaries. Bishops had dispatched us here to get our O and A Levels. So could these infamous Jesuit scholastics turn us 'school loathers' on to holiness and academia?

A seminary legend

The following Monday morning, I found myself in a classroom that reeked of garlic with 30 other gagging greenhorns. Enter Fr 'Jacko' Hughes to teach us Latin. Everybody stood. Jacko was a seminary legend.

An hour later, I'd translated my first story from *Ecce Romani* – in which Marcus memorably tells his younger brother, *'Look at me, Sextus, I'm a big boy mounting my horse.'* Fr. Hughes deftly transcended the smutty double entendres that so tickled our funny bones. He was oblivious to differentiated worksheets, mind maps, group learning, metacognition, or any other trending academic strategies. If he ever composed his lesson plans, he was careful to never let it show.

While Fr. Jacko desperately hung on to his own life (he chewed raw garlic for his dodgy ticker), he changed mine. So what made him so memorable? First off, he signposted respect as a two-way street. We were never made to feel like empty-headed dummies into which knowledge needed to be poured.

He also possessed another stellar skill that too many teachers lack – being able to really *listen*. Some teachers can be so busy in their telling that they become impaired listeners. As I nervously prepared to attend Confession, he said to me, *"Please don't confess your sins. God forgives when you are truly penitent and prepared to forgive yourself."* I'd apparently wasted hours on carefully crafting my Confession, but I'd also learned a priceless lesson.

Consistent application

Fr. Hughes liked to keep things simple. He insisted that we learn five new Latin words daily, and no more. One of his sharpest insights into academic success was *"Behave yourself and apply yourself. Look, listen, and learn."* How many students now are still yet to learn these game-changing skills?

Over time, he shared other priceless secrets of success that subsequently transformed me. *'Know thyself'; 'Want it'; 'Show up every day'; 'Work hard, never quit'; 'Trust the process'; and 'Be ready when Lady Luck calls, because she rarely does callbacks'.*

Jacko believed that sensible and consistent application carried greater clout than silver spoons. He was horrified when I once told him how late into the night I'd been studying. *"Stop that,"* he said. *"Study in 15-minute blocks and briefly jot down five things you've learned. This will halve your study time and double your effectiveness. Parum et saepe (little and often) gets the job done."*

Eloquent noises

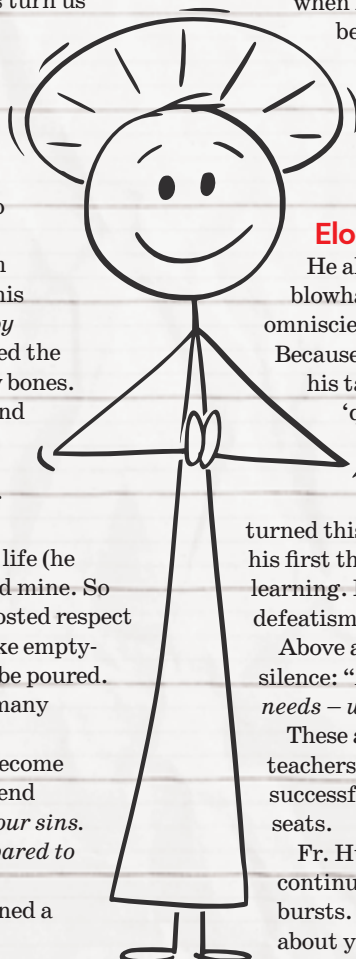
He also taught me how to identify and tackle blowhards and braggarts peddling fake omniscience. Why did students believe in him? Because he exuded wisdom, confidence and walked his talk. When teachers consistently deliver 'quality edutainment', students learn to listen.

Jacko may well have not passed many of today's teacher training courses – yet he turned this secondary school dunce who scored 4/40 on his first theology exam into a passionate lover of book learning. He understood the malign power of defeatism, and instilled in us the art of resilience.

Above all, Jacko venerated the value of elected silence: *"It is in silence that we find what everyone needs – wisdom, intelligence, and love,"* he told us.

These are hallmarks of genius. Like all champion teachers, he made eloquent noises on a daily basis that successfully engaged us 'numb bums' in the cheap seats.

Fr. Hughes died 40 years ago, but his holy spirit continues teaching. I still study in silent, 15-minute bursts. What do you hope students will remember about you, 40 years from now?



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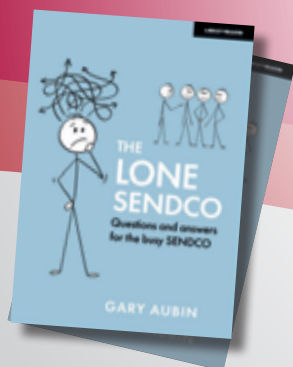
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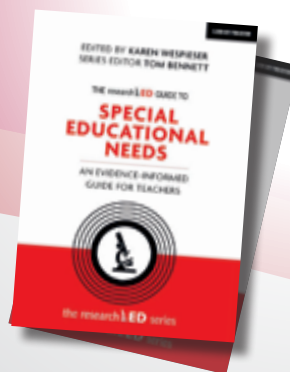
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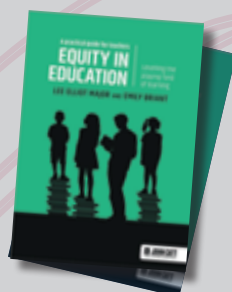


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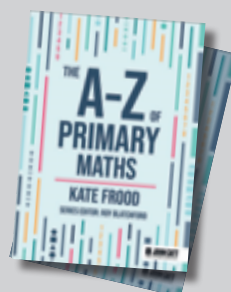
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