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 **HODDER**
Education

FROM THE EDITOR

“Welcome...”



What does it mean to leave a ‘lasting legacy’ in the education sector? If you’re a teacher, it could be the many children who go on to gain valuable academic qualifications and/or pursue successful careers as a direct result of your tutelage. For headteachers, it might be effecting a dramatic turnaround in their school’s reputation, or the addition of a new building to the school estate.

If you’re a Secretary of State for Education, the scale is naturally rather different. Their ‘legacies’ will typically stem from a flagship policy (or several) that transforms how the wider profession operates and what it prioritises for years to come.

And yet, of the 10 (yes, 10) Education Secretaries to have held the post over the past 13 years, it’s arguably only Michael Gove who most will point to as having had any kind of lasting impact on the sector as a whole. It would be unfair to describe his successors as mere caretakers, though, given that most could point to a set of ambitions they harboured when in office, and some tangible accomplishments upon stepping down.

From Nicky Morgan’s focus on promoting the virtues of resilience, to Justine Greening’s determination to take action on social mobility, the DfE’s policymaking and overall direction has undeniably changed and evolved as different Ministers have passed through Sanctuary Buildings (though we’ll gently draw a veil over the political machinations that saw the appointment of five different Education Ministers in 2022 alone).

Between his dramatic ramping up of the academies programme, enthusiastic promotion of free schools and reconfiguring of the National Curriculum around more ‘traditional’ forms of knowledge and skills, however, it’s hard to argue that any Education Minister did more to shape the profession over the past decade than Michael Gove – but just how long will his legacy last?

If the House of Lords’ cross-party Education for 11–16 Year Olds Committee has any say in the matter, those Gove-era reforms may fade away sooner than you think. As well as criticising the current concentration on final exams at GCSE and calling for the return of coursework, the Committee has also mooted nothing less than the immediate eradication of Gove’s once cherished English Baccalaureate.

Of course, the Committee’s verdict doesn’t materially change much in the here and now, however robust it might be. But it can certainly plant the thought that some seemingly entrenched pillars of England’s education landscape are ripe for toppling. Whether that will start happening under a new administration this year or next we don’t yet know – but it’s a useful reminder that all legacies are only ever temporary.

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser
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On board this issue:



Meera Chudasama is an English, media and film studies teacher



David Voisin is a head of MFL



Caroline Aldous-Goodge is an art and design teacher



Barry Mansfield is the Director of Halcyon London International School



Charlotte Lander is a teacher of English and psychology



Matt Bromley is an education journalist, author and advisor

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Class conscious

Why schools aren’t a meritocracy – and what we can do about it



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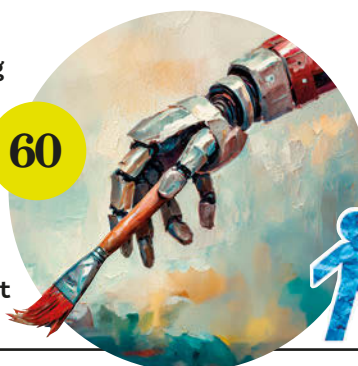
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'STEM' helped raise the profile of technical subjects – could SHAPE do the same for the arts?

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If a student tells us they've created an artwork through clever coding and artificial intelligence prompts, should we dismiss such efforts? And if not, why not? Hannah Day weighs up the arguments...

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Why behaviour needs to be seen as communication; how to get the most out of your classes with KISS lessons; using silence as a tool; advice on smartening up your complaints procedure; and a look at how England fared in PISA 2022

teach SECONDARY

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The newsletter

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

The UNINFORMED teacher's guide to...

RIZZ

It's a ritual at this point. An impenetrable slang word adopted by the nation's youth rides the TikTok wave, catches on among the wider public and before you know it, OUP goes and crowns it their Oxford Word of the Year. The jury's still out on whether 'rizz' has been irredeemably sullied by the olds, and therefore likely to elicit little more than eye-rolls when uttered in the presence of anyone below the age of 19 – but that day's probably not far off.

Etymologically speaking, it was first popularised by Twitch streamer and YouTuber Kai Cenat (pictured), for whom the term had served as a jokey compliment among him and his friends. So what does it mean? Well, according to Kai Cenat himself on a 2022 episode of the No Jumper podcast, it essentially describes success at seduction: "You're so slick with your words and what you're saying, to where the girl is like, 'OK, yeah, who is this?' After shit goes your way, you're like, 'Yeah, I rizzed her up. I've got mad rizz.'"

So yeah, use with caution, folks. Context matters, 'charisma' is still a perfectly valid substitute for grown adults, and there are probably times when we should just let the youth have words of their own without us cramping their rizz style.



DO SAY

"If you tell people you've got rizz, you don't"



DON'T SAY

"A.A. Milne was ahead of his time, you know"

BEAT THE BUDGET



What are we talking about?

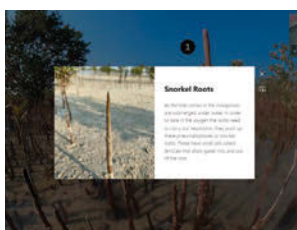
BIFoR Education – a collection of curriculum-linked resources for use in geography and biology lessons produced by the Birmingham Institute for Forest Research.

Who is it for?

KS3-KS5

What's on offer?

A mix of online and print resources, including lesson plans with accompanying presentation slides and teacher's notes, and virtual tours of British woodland and the mangroves of Dubai, UAE.



How might teachers use the resources?

The virtual tours help bring to life BIFoR's research into how a traditional mature oak forest responds to increased CO2 levels, and how different ecosystems are adapting in response to climate change. The classroom activities are based around explaining BIFoR's research methods and encouraging students to carrying out arboreal experiments of their own.

Where is it available?

bit.ly/ts131-bifor

WHAT THEY SAID

"Suicide, contributed to by an Ofsted inspection carried out in November 2022"

Verdict recorded by coroner Heidi Connor, following an inquest into the death of headteacher Ruth Perry in January 2023

Think of a number... £10 billion

The real terms fall in public spending on education across the UK between 2010–11 and 2022–23

Source: Institute for Fiscal Studies

63%

of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's cabinet attended fee-paying schools (compared to 7% of adults among the general population)

Source: The Sutton Trust

38%

of Y10 students feel safe expressing their views on social and political issues while at school

Source: Survey of approximately 3,000 Y10s in mainstream English secondary schools by researchers at the University of Birmingham

ONE FOR THE WALL

"Words ought to be a little wild, for they are the assaults of thoughts on the unthinking"

John Maynard Keynes



Out with the old?

The education system for 11- to 16-year-olds in England presently places too much focus on academic learning and written exams, and isn't doing enough to ensure students get to study a balanced curriculum and develop core skills.

That's the verdict of a report issued by The House of Lords' cross-party Education for 11-16 Year Olds Committee, having heard from a range of witnesses that included pupils, teachers, school leaders, academics and Ministers. The Committee has called for the 'burden' of GCSE exams to be reduced, so that time can be freed up for the teaching of more technical, digital and creative subjects, and perhaps somewhat contentiously, has also urged the government to immediately scrap the English Baccalaureate.

Recommendations detailed in the Committee's 'Requires improvement: urgent change for 11-16 education' report include paring back the use of rote learning in schools and offering a more varied range of learning experiences; providing more opportunities for studying creative, vocational and technical subjects at at KS3/4; and introducing new 'functional literacy and numeracy qualifications' at KS4 equivalent in value to GCSE English and maths.

The Committee's call to abandon the EBacc is sweeping, extending to a rejection of the ambition for 90% of pupils to take said combination of subjects, and for all EBacc references to be expunged from Ofsted's school inspection handbook.

The full report can be downloaded via bit.ly/ts131-N2.

SAVE THE DATE

SPEECHES AND STATEMENTS

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



THE STATEMENT:

[Amanda Spielman issues statement following conclusion of Ruth Perry's inquest](#)

WHO? Amanda Spielman, Ofsted's Chief Inspector

WHEN? 7th December 2023

Ruth Perry's death was a tragedy that deeply affected many people. My thoughts remain with her family, the wider Caversham school community, and everyone else who knew and loved her. On behalf of Ofsted, I would like to say sorry to them for the distress that Mrs Perry undoubtedly experienced as a result of our inspection.

After Mrs Perry's death we made changes to the way we work, to help reduce the pressure felt by school leaders. We will do more. The coroner highlighted a number of areas of concern. We will work hard to address each of these as soon as we can, and we are starting that work straight away.

We have started to develop training for all inspectors on recognising and responding to visible signs of anxiety. As a first step, we will delay our inspections next week by a day so we can bring all our lead school inspectors together ahead of further school inspections. As well as addressing the issue of anxiety, we will be clear with inspectors what to do if a pause is needed.

It's right that we inspect first and foremost in the interests of children, their parents and carers. But in the light of Mrs Perry's sad death, it's also vital that we do all we can to minimise stress and anxiety when we inspect.

THE RESPONSE:

[NASUWT condemns minimum service levels proposal](#)

FROM? Dr Patrick Roach, General Secretary of NASUWT

REGARDING? The government's proposal for education sector workers to be subject to minimum service levels

WHEN? 28th November 2023

NASUWT
The Teachers' Union

"Unions are united in condemning the proposed introduction of politically motivated minimum service levels in education. The government continues to ignore the fact that it is impossible to secure minimum service entitlements for pupils in an education system so neglected and underfunded, instead opting to aggressively quash criticism with this inflammatory policy. The government is once again demonstrating its contempt for teachers, at a time when they should be listening to the concerns of the profession and facing up to the crisis in recruitment and retention they have created."

13 JANUARY 2024 IncludEd 2024 | 24-26 JANUARY 2024 Bett | 15-16 MARCH 2024 Education @ Dyslexia Show 2024

13 JANUARY 2024

IncludEd 2024
UCL Institute of Education, London
the-difference.com/included-2024

Organised by leadership skills and training provider The Difference, IncludEd 2024 is a day-long event aimed at school leaders, teachers and other education professionals with a keen interest in ensuring schools are inclusive and able to deliver for vulnerable students. Expect a packed timetable of keynotes and workshops, covering everything from cultural sensitivity, to contextual safeguarding and closing learning gaps.

24-26 JANUARY 2024

Bett
ExCeL London
uk.bettshow.com

After a brief post-COVID move to March, this long-running showcase of leading education specialists, products and service providers is once again occupying a more familiar January spot on the event calendar. As well as the sizeable exhibition space and packed speaker schedule familiar to Bett regulars, this year sees the return of the Connect @ Bett meetings facility, plus the addition of edtech tutorials and working groups for visiting educators.

15-16 MARCH 2024

Education @ Dyslexia Show 2024
NEC Birmingham
dyslexia.show/education

The Dyslexia Show is a major exhibition dedicated to dyslexia and neurodiversity aimed at individuals, employers, parents and educators. For the latter group, Education @ Dyslexia Show will feature an extensive lineup of CPD seminars led by expert speakers, along with plenty of opportunities for sharing SEND advice and best practice with school leaders and teachers from around the country.



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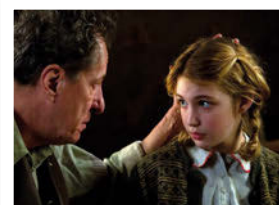
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Get Into Film

THE BOOK THIEF
(2013, 126 MINUTES,
AGES 11+)

CURRICULUM LINKS:
Citizenship, English



A young girl's passion for books helps her and the people she loves find a respite from the horrors of Nazi Germany, in this moving drama that looks at the regime from a child's viewpoint.

Originally illiterate when she was sent to live with foster parents, Hans and Rosa Hubermann, in the late 1930s, spirited 9-year-old Liesel quickly learns to read, thanks to the kindly couple's encouragement.

Soon, she's obsessed with the written word and the escapism it can provide – a situation that intensifies after the Hubermanns take in a Jewish refugee and Liesel starts sharing stories with the increasingly imperilled man. Narrated by Death himself, yet surprisingly life-affirming, the film is based on a bestselling YA novel.

Discussion questions:

- What do you know about the lives of ordinary German families during WWII? What challenges would have been faced by those not supporting Hitler?
- The film is narrated by Death. What is the purpose of his unusual narration?
- How would you describe the Munich neighbourhood that Liesel moves to?
- Why do you think Liesel and Max form such a strong connection?

Head online to intofilm.org to stream this film for free and download the accompanying film guide, complete with Teacher's Notes

You can also visit our Holocaust Memorial Day theme page (see bit.ly/ts131-N1) and read an article by Rachel Century, head of research for the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, on how film can be used effectively to teach this very sensitive subject.



Retweets

Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?

Emma @Miss_Watkins_SF

Yesterday I had an 8am meeting, 5 teaching periods, revision after school and then my in person NPQ seminar from 16:30-18:00. I spent the whole day feeling overwhelmed, flustered and acutely aware of my to do list. Is the issue in education workflow not workload? #edutwitter

Claudia Lewis @MBDscience

We've got police support this evening to try to prevent the unsafe ways parents pick up their kids from school. Cab pulls in to collect me, I get in. Officer asks the driver if he's my father. No, sir, he's not. I'm one of the teachers.

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

TEACHER TALES

True stories from the education chalkface

No, not that way...

It was a cold and frosty morning, during which four cross country lessons were due to take place. The course was within a large scrubland area adjacent to the school, flanked by houses.

The first run didn't quite go to according plan, after a significant number of the Y8 class were extremely late in returning, complaining that they'd got lost. To prevent further problems, it was decided that a member of staff – myself – should be stationed at a central viewing point on the course and direct the runners.

I was kitted up for running, but as I'd be fairly stationary I wore a long green overcoat to keep warm. However, the sight of a man in a mac with apparently no trousers on (I was wearing my shorts) watching young boys and girls running around perhaps understandably alarmed one of the nearby residents.

This individual then phoned the police, who in turn made contact with the school. The

misunderstanding was quickly resolved – but as a result, hastily-made directional arrows were swiftly placed around the course to avoid any further issues...

Amplified qualified

While reading a Y10 student's application to become a Y11 prefect, I came to a huge list below the heading 'What experiences have you had?' This list included past membership of the school council and borough council; prior involvement in school fundraising; participation in speech competitions and playing a part in the school play.

And his last bullet point? 'In Year 7, I was sufficiently trusted to go out of school at lunchtime and get Mr. X his fish and chips.'

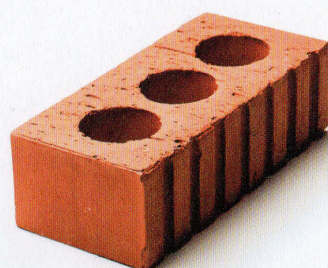
I went to have words with Mr. X.

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

A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

#28 JOINT ENDEAVOUR

A Few Minutes of Design JOINT ENDEAVOR



Explain in a drawing how you would join these objects. You can cut/multiply them if you need to. Label the drawing with instructions and indicate any extra materials you would need to make the joints sound.

It doesn't have to be a product with a recognisable function; you just have to work out how you could join the parts neatly and securely.

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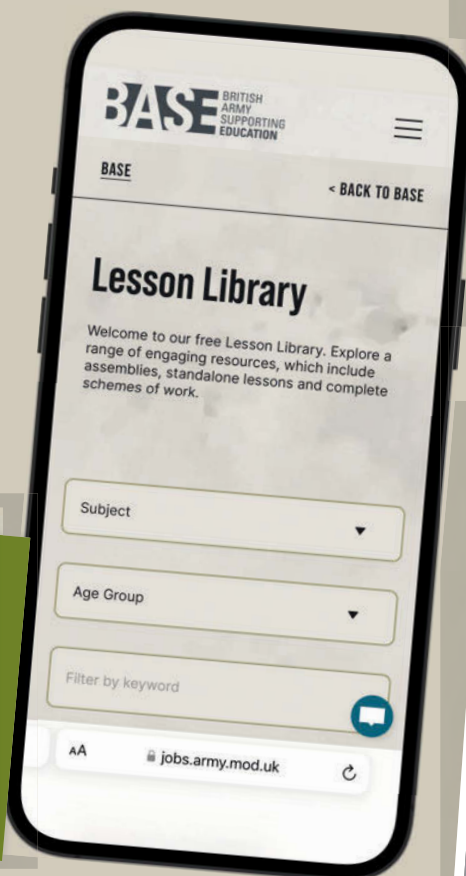
Explore the newly designed **BASE online lesson library**, featuring videos, assemblies and lesson plans that explore leadership, mental wellbeing, future careers and much more!

“

A very good package, small bite sized pieces of information, easy to understand and quickly shows that the Army offers much more than being a ‘soldier’.

”

Sean Connelly,
Teacher, Hill Top School





David Voisin is a head of MFL

DICTIONARY DEEP DIVE

The first instalment of a new column, wherein **David Voisin** takes us on rich, and sometimes surprising journeys through the realm of literacy and vocabulary...

PARDON MY FRENCH

The word 'connoisseur' derives from the old French meaning 'Someone who has a special knowledge or appreciation of a field.' In modern French there are two verbs for the term 'to know' – *connaître* and *savoir*. We find *savoir* in the expression '*Savoir faire*', which is synonymous with 'social know-how'. '*Faire*' (French for 'to do') also appears in the term '*laissez-faire*' which literally means 'let do'.



TEACHING TIP: READING TO THE CLASS

If you're a form tutor and have frequent reading sessions scheduled (as can often be the case with school literacy policies), it's worth bearing in mind some useful pointers.

Firstly, it's not just students who can become prone to cognitive overload. Reading to a whole class while tacitly monitoring and dealing with behaviour – perhaps by making your reading peripatetic and making eye contact with any pupils off-task – makes it easy for teachers to lapse into a mechanical reading mode, where comprehension is likely to get lost.

It's therefore important to do some preparation, which won't require much more beyond reading a single chapter in advance. Even this might sound time-consuming, but knowing the plot of a book is important for checking that students have understood the key points following a reading session. Otherwise, it could take very little for a class to lose the thread of a story, which risks them losing interest in the book, and at worst, coming to see reading itself as being a chore.

Reading in advance also lets teachers highlight interesting vocabulary that might be worth teaching explicitly at the end of a session, without interrupting the flow of the class' reading. To boost pupils' enjoyment, ask your more keen readers to read out loud, and use differentiated questions with proficient readers to boost their confidence, so that you can check everybody's comprehension of what's been read.

Don't forget that rich vocabulary can be used in writing, too. Written feedback is an oft-neglected opportunity for introducing new vocabulary. The use of directive context or recasting can help pupils decipher the meaning of new words independently, particularly when delivered via positive or productive comments.



LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

Much grammatical terminology is relatively little known among most native English speakers. For instance, unless you're studying a foreign language, you're unlikely to use the term 'infinitive'.

Consequently, the saying 'You can't split an infinitive' is gradually dying out.

However, like many so-called rules insisted on by zealous pedants, this phrase has no historical or linguistic validity. The saying stems from a time when grammarians were trying to shoehorn the English language into a Latin mold. In Latin, infinitives (the base form of a verb, bereft of any pronoun or tense marker) are always one word. The same goes for Latin-based languages such as Spanish and French, where the mark of infinitives are endings like those of the French word '*parler*' (to speak), or its Spanish equivalent, '*hablar*'.

SAME ROOT, DIFFERENT WORDS



Gastronomy is the art of cooking sophisticated and nourishing food



A gastric band reduces the capacity of the stomach



Snails, like all gastropods, walk on their stomachs

Ofsted requires IMPROVEMENT

We need a different Ofsted, says **Ian Mitchell** – one that operates not on fear and intimidation, but on mutual support and optimism...

I’ll say one thing for Ofsted inspections – you never forget your first time.

Whenever Ofsted makes the headlines (a regular occurrence at present) I think back to my first experience of the regulator. I’d been qualified for less than a year when, in the first week of January 1999, my new employer announced their imminent arrival.

Though Ofsted were technically independent of the government, that didn’t make it an apolitical organisation. Tony Blair’s rallying cry of ‘*Education, Education, Education*’ had already cast a spotlight on the teaching profession, before then-HMCI Chris Woodhead’s subsequent assertion that 15,000 ‘incompetent teachers’ were to be ‘named and shamed’.

Air of pretense

Back then, every observed lesson was graded. Also, schools were given several weeks’ notice – giving headteachers ample time to send their most dysfunctional Y11s off on a ‘team-building break’ somewhere in the Lake District.

In school, the stress would be palpable, underpinned by an air of pretence. An impending Ofsted inspection was as much an act of immersive theatre as it was an educational formality. It was a week where, ironically, nothing was allowed to run as normal. Teachers wrote

objectives on the board. Corridors were constantly supervised. No one seemed to call in sick, or require use of the toilet during lessons. We were all well-versed in the inspection script; what to say and how to say it. And through all this make-believe, we just got on with things. We were professionals, after all.

Of course, that professionalism didn’t stop a few jaded comments from some colleagues during those

before New Labour’s generous funding dried up. Science and maths teachers, then as now, were hard to find. Remove those ‘incompetent teachers’, sure – but where will their replacements come from?

Woodhead’s ignominious approach to the teaching profession overlooked another problem. It had never occurred to the Chief Inspector that, in the face of Ofsted pressure, it tends to be the most conscientious

achievement-oriented students, and largely continued that way upon becoming qualified teachers.

In the face of Ofsted, however, this kind of mindset is self-defeating. All of a sudden, your ‘success’ depends on servility to a mindless tick-box culture that’s as thankless as it is draining. Teachers want to be associated with the *good* or *excellent*. That’s why they’re so invested in the process of teaching. So rather than let the side down, many will resort to paradoxical extremes – such as concealing from inspectors very poor pupil behaviour that’s become the bane of their lives.

‘Satisfactory’ versus ‘Good’

More recently, Ofsted has put some distance between itself and the kind of practices that once made them so feared under the Blair administration. Individual teacher grades are long gone. Grades for schools have been simplified and streamlined. The inspection notice period is now just a matter of days.

Nevertheless, the inspection-related stress experienced by school communities remains greater than ever – sometimes exacerbated by authoritarian senior managers willing to do whatever it takes to achieve favourable outcomes.

Whether Ofsted has presided over improved educational standards is debatable. The regulator’s own 2021 finding that 88%

long weeks of rehearsal. ‘*It’s already ruined Christmas!*’ complained one. ‘*After this is all over, I’m going to introduce myself to my husband again,*’ said another. The school inspection began to resemble a farce. ‘*As soon as we get this over with, the sooner we can start doing our jobs normally again...*’

Sense of conformity

Even then, the culture of fear that Ofsted created and seemed to nurture struck me as profoundly counter-productive. In ‘naming and shaming incompetent teachers’, Woodhead had apparently overlooked the inconvenient truth of teacher shortages, with recruitment and retention a problem even

colleagues who burn out first.

This makes sense, if you think about it. Why would the few staff room malcontents, determined to do as little as possible, care any more for Ofsted’s wrath than they did for anything else? In the pursuit of ‘regulating educational standards’, highly competent people are liable to become too ill to function. Then eventually, many of them quit.

Yet for all its folly, Ofsted has somehow fostered a remarkable sense of conformity among teachers. Many (though by no means all) enjoy working in schools, because they once enjoyed being at school themselves. They would have been

“In the pursuit of ‘regulating educational standards’, highly competent people are liable to become too ill to function”

of schools are good or excellent appears incompatible with evidence elsewhere of poor staff retention and falling pupil attendance. Would a 'Good' school not be a place where most would want to teach and learn?

In surveys, it seems parents overwhelmingly find Ofsted's four-tier grading system to be 'useful' – but frankly, it's hard to see what use a single word like 'Good' can be to any education stakeholder.

It was Ofsted that opted to abandon its earlier 'Satisfactory' grade, on the grounds that a *Satisfactory* school isn't a *Good* school – because all schools should be excellent.

The statistics are fooling no one, though. Ofsted's survey data as it stands is simply incompatible with reality.

What's a school 'worth'?

Inspection reform is badly needed. I don't blame parents for believing that Ofsted's existing grades can objectively measure a school's value, but I would urge that all inspection grades be regarded with scepticism.

Numerical data, contrary to appearances, simply can't measure a school's real worth. If parents, teacher applicants and prospective students want to find out about a given school, then they should take the time to read full reports. The grading system in its current form should be abandoned.

The written inspection report should then focus on two broad areas. What does the school do well? And what should it prioritise moving forward? Specific areas will naturally differ from school

to school – *which is precisely the point.*

Every school should be evaluated independently and its unique challenges understood in context. It's time to accept that only *qualitative* data can provide a meaningful representation of what a school does.

Redefining 'regulation'

Crucially, the inspection model itself needs redefining, including the question of its own regulation. What exactly should inspectors be responsible for? Should educational regulators not play a role in finding solutions, rather than merely identifying problems?

Every school should have its own attached inspection team that's accountable for the school's development, and which re-visits the school at each inspection. If they've previously identified weaknesses in any of their assigned schools, inspectors should then be obligated to advise on and support the improvement process.

Inspectors would be regulated by virtue of their own investment in the school community. Such reforms needn't make existing inspectors redundant, many of whom bring much to the table. There's still a place for those

who understand that educational standards don't improve when teachers feel intimidated and humiliated.

Perhaps there's also scope for including educational writers and consultants as part of inspections – who might start by asking why so many people leave the classroom in the first place, and how to convince

IN BRIEF

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Despite a number of changes over the years, Ofsted is still a regulator that isn't fulfilling its functions as well as it could be.

WHAT'S BEING SAID?

The data concerning teacher recruitment, retention and wellbeing rates speak for themselves. The profession is driving good people away, and Ofsted's part of the problem. Though parents do seem like Ofsted's grading system.

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING?

High profile media stories and anecdotal experiences alike tell of a culture of fear surrounding Ofsted's engagement with schools that's resulted in a stifling pedagogical orthodoxy and increasingly desperate measures on the part of leaders to secure the best possible outcomes.

THE TAKEAWAY

Ofsted can be improved by giving its inspectors a stake in schools' future success, doing away with simplistic headline grades and basing reports on qualitative data.

growing numbers of graduates that teaching might be a good career for them.

'The name and shame' approach hasn't worked. Would it be too much to ask now that reforms to the system try to inject a little optimism?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ian Mitchell has worked as a teacher of English and psychology across both the state and independent sectors



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THE
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GALLERY

Feel-good feedback

Dr Niki Kaiser explains how the Education Endowment Foundation's evidence-informed feedback recommendations can improve your lessons

I can still remember the time when I had to write a personal statement for a job application and asked a trusted colleague for some feedback on what I'd written. They said, "I'm sorry, Niki – but this reads like an Oscars acceptance speech!"

When I re-read my statement back I realised they were right, but I wasn't sure how to change the style and make it better. Luckily, they went on to also give me some constructive advice for improving it.

Importantly in this instance, I had *trusted my colleague* – which in turn meant that their comments were well-received, and that I was motivated to act on them. All important aspects of effective feedback.

As explained in the EEF guidance "Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning" (see bit.ly/ts131-EEF1), feedback is information given by a teacher to pupil(s) about their performance that aims to improve learning. The guidance contains some sound *principles* for ensuring that feedback is effective, but

it's important to understand that they're not *instructions*, since feedback can look very different depending on the situation, subject, class, topic, day or individual pupil.

There and then

One key recommendation within the guidance is that feedback should be appropriately timed and focused on moving learning forward. In a practical lesson, for example, I would need to provide immediate feedback if I see that a student had left a beaker containing an acidic solution close to the edge of the bench.

However, I might also prompt them to think about the hazards associated with acids, and ask them to articulate how they'd arrange their practical equipment more safely next time. This supports both self-regulation and subject knowledge (as well as preventing potential accidents), thus helping the student to progress.

Another possible reason for immediate feedback

might be to prevent the embedding of incorrect ideas. If, for example, a pupil answers a question in lesson using the word '*burned*' when they actually mean '*melted*' or '*reacted*', I'd try to pick up on it straight away. I could simply correct them, but I might also ask them to think of the correct word themselves, or prompt them to think about the difference between melting and burning at a particle level, so that they're able to differentiate between them in a new context.

Trust teachers

In these examples, decisions around the timing and format of feedback are taken by me, as the class teacher. I respond to each situation and pupil individually, as even the most detailed school feedback policy would struggle to anticipate every possible case and context. This underlines the importance of trusting teachers to understand and enact the principles of effective feedback, rather than demanding adherence at all times to a set of overarching rules.

Immediate verbal feedback, given continuously, can be very effective, but there will be times when written feedback is more appropriate.

However you choose to give feedback, you must weigh the need for responsiveness and a sustained impact with workload considerations. Would your time spent writing feedback be better spent planning next steps for the class...?

Feedback should be tailored to the context, with classes, pupils, subjects and topics all influencing the choices we make. If you understand the principles characterising effective feedback, it will give you the flexibility to make the most of opportunities as they arise.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Niki Kaiser is a secondary science teacher and science specialist at the Education Endowment

Foundation who can be followed at @chemDrK; for more information, visit educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk



KEY PRINCIPLES

How you present feedback matters

This includes practical considerations – such as making time for pupils to act on feedback, or ensuring they can read it – but also awareness of our relationships with pupils. I need to make sure my students trust me, understand that I care about them doing well, and believe in themselves that they can.

Remember your learning intentions

Feedback must also be specific to the learning intentions set during

initial teaching. I'll often use past examiners' reports to anticipate topics and questions students will likely struggle with, and then structure tasks and feedback opportunities around them.

Support feedback with concrete examples

If I'm feeding back on how students ought to set out a calculation, I might talk through the decisions I would make by working through a similar example under a visualiser.

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5 REASONS TO TRY... Academy21

Find out how this online AP provider can help return students to class and get their learning back on track



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Persistent absence rates are at an all-time high, as students struggle with emotionally-based school avoidance – but at Academy21, we can help withdrawn, anxious students re-engage with school.

1 FAST INTERVENTION FROM DAY ONE

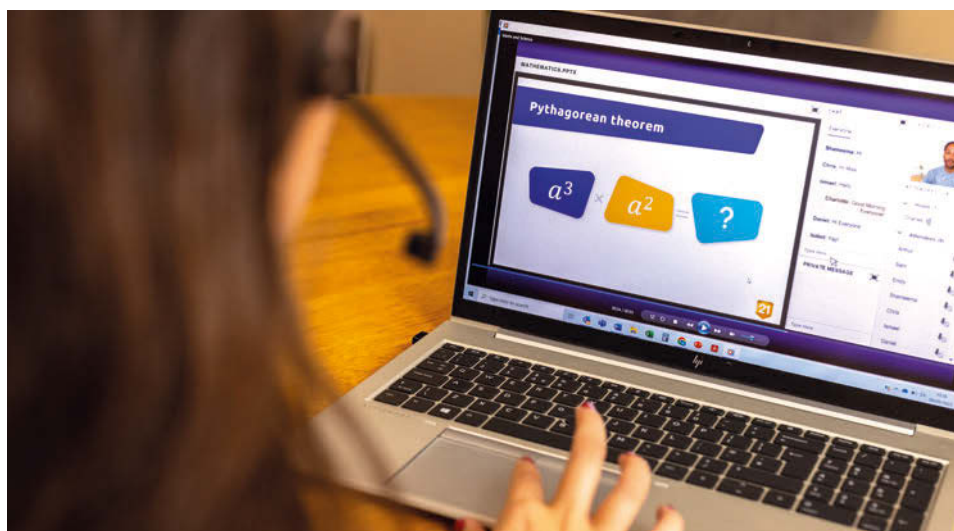
With all school absences, early intervention is key to avoiding learning loss. Online alternative provision can be used to support learners at any time during the academic year, with quick set-up and implementation times. Our rapid enrolment progress can onboard students to timetables suited to their needs within 48 hours.

2 HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING, 100% LIVE ONLINE

Online alternative provision can provide anxious students with an ideal environment in which to rebuild their academic confidence. Under Academy21's strong academic leadership, expert teachers with experience in mental health and complex needs deliver high quality lessons that are taught 100% live and are fully interactive. For students who don't yet feel comfortable leaving their homes for school, Academy21's small online classes can eliminate triggers such as crowded hallways and noisy canteens, and get their learning back on track.

3 FLEXIBILITY FOR SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

With Academy21, pupils' provision can flex up and down as needed, with no long wait times and no additional fees. From the moment students join us, we can create



timetables that gradually expand over time, easing them back into education while keeping them on track to succeed at GCSE. Our online alternative provision is designed to meet a wide range of needs – from sixth-day provision requirements to longer-term support, all tailored to every pupil's individual needs.

4 SUCCESSFUL REINTEGRATION

Ultimately, the goal for us at Academy21 – and for all the schools and local authorities we work with – is to see students reintegrate into the mainstream learning environment whenever it's right for them. By combining a strong academic focus with support for wellbeing in a stable learning environment, we can guide students through the process of gradually

Contact:
0800 208 8210
contact@academy21.co.uk
academy21.co.uk

re-establishing their confidence, routines, and self-belief, getting them back into the physical classroom and working towards securing successful futures.

5 A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

The work we do at Academy21 is made possible through our unique approach to forming partnerships, with our team working closely alongside schools and local authorities across the country to deliver the best possible outcomes. With our commitment to maintaining proactive communication, and providing round-the-clock access to reporting and monitoring (for everything from attendance to engagement data), we'll ensure that you're kept fully up to date and that your students remain firmly on track to succeed.

Case Study

After ill health led to a years-long absence, Lilia's anxieties around school escalated. Academy21 worked with Lilia, her school, and her family to create a long-term plan.

This plan enabled Lilia to gradually catch up with her studies in a comfortable environment, regain her learning confidence and ultimately achieve the GCSE results she needed.

Having successfully achieved five 8s and two 7s in her GCSEs, Lilia is now excited to be studying A Levels at a Sixth Form College (her first choice) in Cambridge.

"I needed a place where I could concentrate in lessons, not feel intimidated by classmates, and teachers that I could communicate with – all of which I received with Academy21" – Lilia

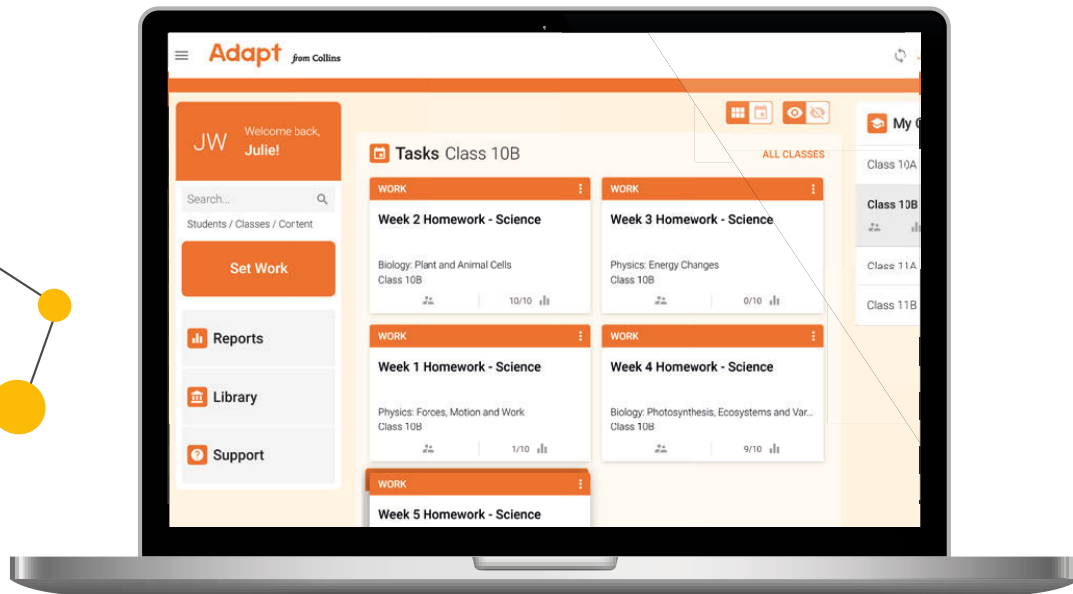


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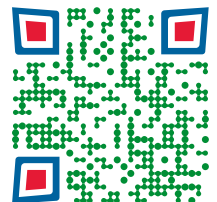
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The government is threatening to impose ‘minimum service levels’ on teaching staff – but those staff would be well within their rights to demand a certain baseline when it comes to funding, recruitment and oversight of safety standards...



Melissa Benn

Never say never in politics. We can’t yet be certain that we’re watching a government in its death throes, but we’re certainly watching an administration forever shapeshifting in order to win public support.

Widely publicised examples of the endless ‘Rishi reset’ include the (dilatory) scrapping of HS2 and the return of David Cameron. Garnering less attention, however, have been the government’s decision to introduce laws enforcing minimum service levels across public services – which will apply to ambulance services, firefighters, hospital staff and now the education profession.

This autumn, Gillian Keegan announced that the government plans to legislate to ensure schools are kept open come what may. Keegan has offered to enter ‘voluntary’ negotiations with the unions, but if these fail – and they will – the Secretary of State will reach for the statute book.

This ‘minimum service levels’ proposal has a superficially appealing, almost Orwellian ring to it. Who wouldn’t agree that keeping basic public services going, whatever the challenges, is an important priority for any government?

The immediate prompt for this was the wave of strikes we saw across the country this year, in the rail industry, the NHS, the civil service and in schools. Dig a little deeper, and it soon becomes clear that the government’s plans are an ill-judged move in response to years of badly thought-out policies directed at the public sector and those working in a range of services.

Framing language

Imagine the frustration of ministers – unable to prevent millions of men and women from exercising their right to withdraw their labour in the face of galloping inflation, unsatisfactory working conditions and steadily crumbling services.

For this government, the framing language came all too easily. Gillian Keegan spoke of millions of days of learning ‘lost’ to the nation’s children due to irresponsible industrial action. The clear intent was to conjure up the age-old image of hatchet-faced, self-serving militants ruining life chances through their selfishness.

But it’s not worked this time, for multiple reasons. The country has lived through the privations of austerity, and the fear, panic and public bungling around COVID, with public disgust further stirred up by the recent revelations of the public inquiry into the latter. Trade unions have also changed considerably over the years, with many now made up of low-paid women.

Public anger

This is why public opinion polling throughout 2023 has remained largely in sympathy with those on strike, with the most consistent support shown for NHS workers. Support for teachers’ industrial action did marginally reduce over 2023, but other polling has shown that a major concern for parents – 71%

of them, according to Ipsos – is that their children are receiving poor quality education ‘*Because not enough money is spent on schools and teachers*’ (see bit.ly/ts131-MB1).

In short, public anger is increasingly being directed at the government, rather than at teachers. It’s therefore little wonder that some opponents of Keegan’s proposals have since turned the tables on her, and called for ‘minimum service levels’ from government. Crumbling buildings? Teachers leaving the profession in droves? Dramatic falls in arts provision?

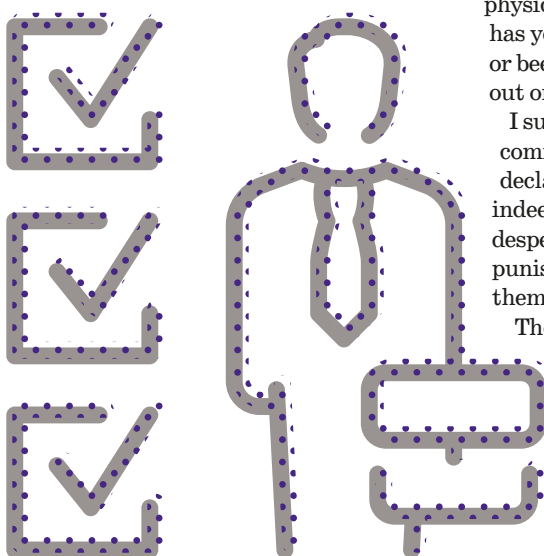
What laws exist to hold the government to account for its failures to provide even a *satisfactory*, let alone high quality state education for the majority of the country’s children? When the RAAC crisis broke, where was the law to punish government failures to keep children and staff safe, or provide a ‘minimum service’ for those who had to rapidly evacuate their classrooms and learn in hastily erected portacabins?

Desperate half measures

For too long, too many schools have been unable to recruit a qualified physics teacher – but no minister has yet been called to account for this, or been directed to sort the issue out once and for all.

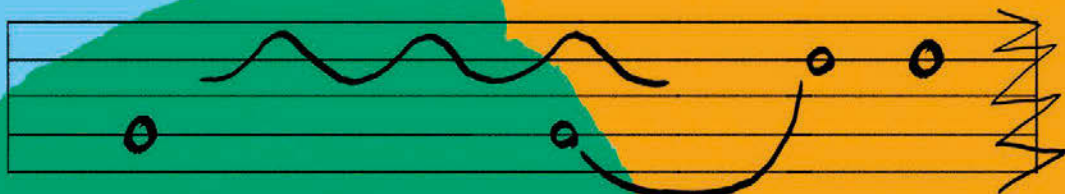
I suspect, as all pollsters and commentators are now confidently declaring, that this government has indeed run its course, and that desperate half measures to restrain and punish public service workers won’t win them back the public’s confidence.

The government’s measures do, however, leave us with a more important question – one that this column has addressed time and time again. Exactly how should we ensure sustainable levels of funding, and genuine support for the nation’s schools and teachers?



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[MATHS PROBLEM]

THE QUADRATIC FORMULA

Students often make errors when using the quadratic formula

In this lesson, students learn to make sense of the quadratic formula by working backwards

THE DIFFICULTY

Use the quadratic formula

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

to solve this equation: $5x^2 - 3x - 2 = 0$.

Now check your answer by substituting back into the original equation.

It is very easy to make mistakes, particularly with the negative signs, and not obtain $x = \frac{-(-3) \pm \sqrt{(-3)^2 - 4 \times 5 \times (-2)}}{2 \times 5}$, which gives $x = 1$ or $x = -\frac{2}{5}$. Many incorrect answers are possible by failing to calculate $-b = 3$ or $b^2 = 9$ for instance.

If students find this too easy, let them try $-5x^2 + 3 - 2x = 0$. The solutions are: $x = -1$ or $x = \frac{3}{5}$.

Here, the terms do not appear in the standard form of $ax^2 + bx + c = 0$, so students may incorrectly take $b = 3$ and $c = -2$, rather than $b = -2$ and $c = 3$. In addition to this, a negative coefficient of x^2 may also be confusing, and one option here is to multiply both sides of the equation by -1 to obtain $5x^2 + 2x - 3 = 0$, with $a = 5$, $b = 2$ and $c = -3$.

THE SOLUTION

These expressions have come from using the quadratic formula.

For each one, write down a possible **simplified** quadratic equation for which they are the solution.

$\frac{-(-3) \pm \sqrt{(-3)^2 - 4 \times 2 \times 1}}{2 \times 2}$	$\frac{-2 \pm \sqrt{4 + 4 \times 3 \times 1}}{2 \times 3}$
$\frac{3 \pm \sqrt{(-3)^2 - 4 \times 2}}{2 \times 1}$	$\frac{-3 \pm \sqrt{9 - 4 \times 2}}{4}$
$\frac{2 \pm \sqrt{4 - 4 \times (-3)}}{2}$	$\frac{-1 \pm \sqrt{1 - 4 \times 3 \times (-2)}}{6}$
$\frac{1 \pm \sqrt{1 - (-24)}}{-4}$	$\frac{-2 \pm \sqrt{16}}{-6}$

A task sheet containing the expressions used in this article is available to download from Teachwire via bit.ly/ts131-QF.

These expressions gradually get harder, as they become increasingly simplified and students need to look harder to find a , b and c within the expressions.

The answers are:

$2x^2 - 3x + 1 = 0$	$3x^2 + 2x - 1 = 0$
$x^2 - 3x + 2 = 0$	$2x^2 + 3x + 1 = 0$
$x^2 - 2x + 3 = 0$	$3x^2 + x - 2 = 0$
$-2x^2 - x + 3 = 0$	$-3x^2 + 2x + 1 = 0$

Any constant multiple of these equations would also be correct.

This task forces students to unpick the method by 'thinking backwards' and noticing small differences in how the signs appear in each of the solutions.

Checking for understanding

Solve this equation using the quadratic formula: $x^2 - x - 1 = 0$

Students should obtain the solution $x = \frac{1 \pm \sqrt{5}}{2}$.

They should now be more confident in correctly using the quadratic formula, and hopefully less easily confused by negative quantities.



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



CLASSROOM LIFE

Giving something back

Y11s reading with 5-year-olds. Learners volunteering in the social care sector. Dan Rosser explains why the spirit of community service is so important at **Wootton Park School**...

We're a standalone, all-through school academy serving ages 4 to 19 with around 1,450 children. We opened in September 2016, with this academic year seeing our first ever primary cohort roll into our secondary phase. A third of our current Y7 are learners who originally started with us in Early Years, back when the school was only just getting started.

Our opening was prompted by Northampton becoming the fastest growing area in the country outside of London, with a significant increase in new housing. When it was identified that the area required an additional school, a local group submitted a successful bid to the DfE's Free Schools programme and that's how we came to be.

That meant that myself and my staff were essentially able to work with a blank canvas, free from any adherence to notions of 'We've always done it like this.' We had the opportunity to create something from scratch, which I think has become something special for our local community.

A key part of our approach, is our willingness and ability to adapt over time, depending on the children's needs. We can be flexible with our staffing because we get to make such decisions at a school level, rather than being beholden to



"THERE CAN BE CHILDREN WHO CONSISTENTLY DO AND SAY ALL THE RIGHT THINGS, BUT ARE STUCK IN THAT MIDDLE BAND OF ACHIEVEMENT, WHERE THEY'RE NEITHER HIGH FLIERS, NOR LOW ABILITY. IN TRADITIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS, IT'S THESE LEARNERS THAT CAN GET MISSED, WHICH IS WHY WE TRY TO DEVELOP INDIVIDUAL ACADEMIC AND PASTORAL STRATEGIES FOR EVERY INDIVIDUAL CHILD."

**- DAN ROSSER
PRINCIPAL**

managers based in London or Manchester telling us how many staff we can or can't have.

Role models

That said, the decisions we've arrived at haven't always been popular. We've certainly had our fair share of critics on social media with regards to us being too strict, after introducing certain policies like our silent corridors. If, however, a learner contravenes our behaviour system, then the sanction they receive typically has to contain an element of community service, such as picking up litter during break or lunch.

Our approach to behaviour is rooted in us being an all-through school. When our children move from the primary to secondary phase, they're not going from being oldest in their school to suddenly being the youngest again, because at Wootton Park there will still be primary children younger than them. This means they assume the responsibility of being role models to the younger children – a role they take very seriously.

We also occupy a single building, which means that

there are interactions in shared spaces between children from different phases. There's a phrase we use in school – '*Little ears are listening.*' Our learners know that they mustn't use poor language in corridors, because there may well be a 4- or 5 year-old not far away who can hear them.

The way the school is designed allows the younger children to be taught in our specialist facilities, including our science labs, food tech room and technology suite, and ensures that our 11- to 16-year-olds therefore have a duty to model positive behaviours in the presence of their younger peers.

Lessons in leadership

Community service is a crucially important part of what we do as a school. We expect all of our children to involve themselves in community service projects of one kind or another, be it in-school or externally. Examples might include assisting at an old people's home, or having KS4 learners carry out paired reading activities with our 5-year-olds.

Core to this is our



ambition to develop well-rounded young people. We know that many young people at the moment are passing through higher education and gaining fantastic qualifications, but are entering the workplace lacking many of the 'softer skills' that employers have said they're looking for.

As such, we place a real emphasis on developing communication, problem-solving, teamwork and leadership skills among our learners. In fact, we expect every child in our secondary phase to assume a leadership role at some stage during their time with us.

We've tried to mirror the school's SLT with a 'Learner Leadership Team', comprising two Head Learners, plus a separate leader who looks at how the school's environment could be improved. The latter oversees their own small team of younger learners that meets monthly to discuss things like recycling projects, sustainability and so forth.

There's also a team of anti-bullying ambassadors made up of Y10 and Y11 learners led by one of our Y12s, who are available for lunchtime drop-in sessions.

We're currently developing a new team of wellbeing support champions, who will act as a supportive ear for children who are anxious or upset, but reluctant to talk to our staff. Those children will know that they can visit our wellbeing room at a pre-arranged time, where they'll be able to talk to an older peer who's trained in listening, supporting them and guiding them in the right direction.

Shared ownership

What unites all this activity is having a sense of *ownership*. Our view has always been that if we can get our learners to take ownership and be proud of their school, they won't want to let the school down through poor behaviour. Our attendance has consistently been 3% to 4% above the national average, which I put down to the children wanting to come to school, wanting to do well and knowing that they can be themselves while they're here.

We've had some children join us who have been permanently excluded from other schools. Within a week or two of being at Wootton Park, they feel little need to indulge in bravado, or put on an act. They can simply be

who they want to be and succeed academically. It's cool to do well at Wootton Park School!

That said, we do operate a broadly traditional behaviour policy with a sliding scale and everything else that comes with it, and endeavour to take a firm line on behaviour. If one child is heard swearing towards another, the first child will be suspended for their infraction.

That can seem quite tough in practice, but we aim to replicate elements of the workplace in what we do, because that's what we're preparing our students for. If, in contrast, they experienced

a culture in which acting disrespectfully towards each other is broadly considered okay, we'd only be storing up problems that persist into their adult lives.

Wootton Park School was among the winners at this year's Northamptonshire Education Awards, winning in both the 'Secondary School of the Year' and 'Overall School of the Year' categories. The Awards' nominees were suggested by the public, with winners decided by an independent panel of experts; for more information, visit allthingsbusiness.co.uk/awards

Staff wellbeing

From our opening until now, we've never bought in a single day of cover thanks to our low staff absence rates. Staff enjoy being here – principally because they're not battling the kind of challenges surrounding behaviour they might have experienced elsewhere.

We're currently developing wellbeing support champions for staff, and have had nine colleagues thus far put themselves forward for the role. The plan is for them to be available informally if a member of staff feels they need a friendly and helpful chat, or some form of extra support.

We also hold monthly 'tea and cake' afternoons. One event last October saw around 60 of our staff convene for friendly conversations and to simply catch up. Teaching is a busy job, and it can be nice to take 15 minutes out now and then to talk with somebody in a different department, who you might not normally see, over cake. Because who doesn't like cake...?



5 REASONS TO TRY... Science Museum Group Academy CPD

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30 SECOND BRIEFING

The Science Museum Group Academy provides research-informed training and resources to primary and secondary teachers. All courses are funded for UK-based teachers.

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Thanks to funding from SMG Academy partners, all courses are free to attend for UK teachers. In-person courses include refreshments, as well as learning resources and materials that you'll be able to take away with you. If you're coming along to a full-day course, lunch will also be provided.

3 OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE CONNECTIONS

SMG Academy courses provide the perfect setting for building connections with like-minded educators. The interactive nature of the courses encourages discussion between participants and provides teachers with opportunities to reflect on the academic year so far, share ideas and offer support to



one another. Teachers who previously attended Academy courses have commented on how helpful it's been to talk to other educators about their practice, with some forming group chats afterwards so that they could continue to stay in touch.

Contact:
smgacademy@sciencemuseum.ac.uk
learning.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/academy

4 ENJOY IN-PERSON COURSES NATIONWIDE OR SIGN UP TO AN ONLINE SESSION

The SMG Academy run both in-person and online courses, so that you can choose to attend a course at one of the dedicated training hubs in London, York, Bradford, Shildon (County Durham) and Manchester, or you can sign up

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Key Points

Browse the full list of free courses for this academic year and book your spot now

Explore SMG's free range of classroom resources created by experts. Download at learning.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/learning-resources

Sign up to teacher newsletters and be the first to hear about exciting opportunities for schools at my.sciencemuseum.org.uk/account/create/brief

Enjoy in-person courses at a wide range of venues nationwide, or sign up to an online session

If men and boys are now readily turning to others for help with their mental health, that should be celebrated – but let's not contrast their 'bravery' with girls' and women's 'attention-seeking'...

Natasha Devon



Trigger Warning – the following article contains mentions of suicide

Traditional wisdom states that there's a clear and universal gender divide when it comes to experiences of mental ill health. Where women and girls find it relatively easy to discuss their psychology and emotions, for men and boys stigma often renders them silent.

Statistics around suicide are often used as evidence for this viewpoint, with men up to three times more likely to end their own life than women. There is, of course, some truth in this – yet it doesn't tell the whole story, and it certainly doesn't always apply in the context of young people.

Challenging the 'rules'

The perceived 'rules' around masculinity prohibit the showing of vulnerability. For many men, a reductive interpretation of stoicism – never asking for help, never discussing problems – is seen as being synonymous with 'strength'. Yet increasingly, boys and young men are challenging the social rulebook.

Despite the terrifying popularity of influencers like Andrew Tate, who seem intent on returning to an era of restrictive gender stereotyping, young men often tell me they don't feel any shame in opening up to their peers about their mental health, and would be sympathetic and discreet if approached by others for their advice.

Many teenage boys in my school focus groups say they feel frustrated by the perception that '*Men don't talk about their feelings*'. From their perspective, they *are* talking – just not necessarily in the same way, or in the same environments as their female peers. They're less likely to book an appointment with the school councillor, but will happily open up to a favourite teacher, sports coach or other mentor.

Generational bias

These observations are in line with research findings by the suicide prevention charity CALM, which found that women typically seek out mental health expertise more often than men. As such, the charity has found it more advantageous to provide mental health training to those individuals who men are confiding in already.

The notion that men only ever talk about football and cars is, I believe, a stereotype based on the behaviour of older generations.

This may also explain the responses young people can receive when disclosing mental health struggles. Boys are often lauded as being 'brave' for doing so – and yes, while it's courageous for anyone to publicly show vulnerability, adults will typically apply the context of their own age cohort and assume it's still more difficult for boys than girls.

Conversely, girls will often receive the verbal equivalent of an eyeroll. A YouGov survey conducted in summer 2023 found that 1 in 5 girls and young women seeking help for their mental

health had been told they were being 'dramatic'. A third meanwhile said they had been asked if they were 'overthinking things', while 20% were asked if they were 'on their period'. Unsurprisingly, the survey also found that 22% of participants feared being seen as 'attention-seeking'.

What doesn't help

So, what can school staff do? The simple, yet powerful fact is that we each have the power to recognise and challenge our own inherent biases. The National Institute for Health & Care Research surveyed young women for their thoughts on what they considered to be the least helpful responses to their health disclosures by trusted professionals. Those surveyed highlighted the following:

- Seeing mental illnesses with a strong behavioural element – such as eating disorders and self-harm – as 'self-inflicted', with recovery merely a question of addressing physical symptoms (e.g. patching up wounds or gaining weight)
- Assuming that Black women and girls are inherently 'strong', and therefore have the capacity to cope with more adversity than their peers of other races and genders
- Not being explicit about confidentiality, and therefore destroying trust.

For educators, that last point means being upfront with students from the start as to what would constitute a safeguarding issue the teacher would have to share, while reassuring them that they will otherwise be as discrete as possible. Above all, we should ask ourselves what our own responses would be if we heard similar sentiments expressed by a man or boy.



Natasha Devon is a writer, broadcaster and campaigner on issues relating to education and mental health; to find out more, visit natashadevон.com or follow @NatashaDevon. The Samaritans operates a 24/7 advice and support service that can be contacted via phone on 116 123 or by emailing jo@samaritans.org

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THE TS GUIDE TO... CPD

It can be expensive, time-consuming and difficult to get right – but as every educator knows, it's hard to deny the impact of good CPD on student outcomes, professional practice and staff morale...

IN THIS SECTION

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Everyone has an INSET regret, whether on the delivery or receiving end, says Charlotte Lander – so here's how to make yours count every time



IN FIGURES:

HOW MUCH OF THEIR TIME DO TEACHERS SPEND ON ENGAGING WITH CPD?

98%

of teachers had taken some form of CPD in the year prior to April 2023

46%

of teachers had spent up to 20 hours on formal CPD over the same time period; 12% had spent 51 hours or more

69%

of teachers stated that they had participated in 'in house' CPD delivered by their school, MAT or LA; 12% said they had spent time studying for a National Professional Qualification

Source: 'Working lives of teachers and leaders - wave 1' research report produced by the DfE in April 2023

3

**TEACHWIRE
ARTICLES
FROM THE
ARCHIVES**

8 TIPS FOR DELIVERING KNOCKOUT CPD

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Why does CPD have such an image problem? Possibly, suggests Dougald Tidswell, because teachers aren't necessarily model students...

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SKILL-BUILDING ON A BUDGET

Julia Knight highlights several low-cost ways of delivering CPD with a measurable whole-school impact

bit.ly/131special3

Specialist delivery

Daniel Harvey examines the crucial, yet sometimes overlooked importance of subject-specific CPD...

Continuing professional development is essential for helping schools and teachers to close the disadvantage gap and ensure that the quality of teaching remains high in the service of student outcomes.

There's plenty of evidence to show that teachers' subject knowledge and standard of pedagogy can have a significant positive impact on students' progress, including the findings of a 2014 paper, 'What makes great teaching?' (bit.ly/ts107-exp1). Trust and school leaders at all levels, as well as teachers, therefore need to be made aware of those proven practices and processes that will ensure time invested in professional development and practice improvement pays off.

Subject demands

Of course, there can only be so much time set aside for professional learning and development, which means that any planned work in this area has to justify the time and resource investment. Complicating this are many potential pitfalls and barriers to realising improved classroom practice, with time pressures and assessment demands liable to derail even the most carefully thought through plans.

School leaders must strike a balance between fulfilling school priorities and providing subject leaders and their teams with sufficient time to improve their planned and taught curriculums. If senior leaders are using regular curriculum reviews to support curriculum

investment, then subject leads must be afforded the time and resources needed to address those aspects of teaching that will most directly impact upon students' standards.

If students are to become experts in their school studies, then their teachers will need to be the *very best subject experts*. This won't happen by accident, but rather via a careful understanding of the needs of the taught curriculum, and the teachers who are actually teaching it.

Outside influences

Sometimes, there can be the need for some large-scale

Another external influence can be exam/assessment demands and reforms.

Almost without fail, some detail related to external exams or assessment will bring about the need for staff to have the appropriate knowledge explained to them by an expert source. At the same time, they'll be required to understand precisely what these changes are likely to entail for their teaching and planned curriculum years hence.

Secondary teachers can, and should be ready to expect changes in subject specification (though I'm old enough to remember when we would talk about the

'syllabus') at regular intervals, which will nearly always be accompanied by amendments to the assessment that will require informed changes to the curriculum.

Incoming knowledge

Subjects are always evolving, with new scholarship and developments needing to be learned so that incoming knowledge can be invested into the curriculum, enabling teachers to stay refreshed and connected to their subject. This is how subjects remain relevant.

One subject teacher I know is fond of saying, "*The planned and taught curriculum are never finished.*" Time must be invested in planning and modelling the curriculum, so that students can benefit from the very best teaching provided by teachers who are secure in what they're doing and why (as set out in the

"School leaders must strike a balance between fulfilling school priorities and providing subject leaders with sufficient time to improve their taught curriculums"

curriculum change – perhaps due to the introduction of a new subject topic, or some change in the way that disciplinary knowledge will need to be taught henceforth.

Two illustrative examples from my own subject of science would include, firstly, the introduction of nuclear magnetic resonance in A Level chemistry several years ago. Then there were the changes to how practical work was assessed at GCSE level, and what had previously been called 'How Science Works.'



aforementioned 2014 white paper).

CPD can also assume huge importance when staff take on different roles within the taught curriculum. An example of this might be a Y4 teacher moving up to teach Y6 for the first time, or a secondary teacher stepping up to teach A Level.

When faced with such changes, it's incumbent upon leaders to ensure that the successors in each instance possess sufficient training and prior development to capably model the new taught curriculum, so that students continue to receive the best possible instruction.

External expertise

I've been fortunate enough to benefit from external expertise that my department was able to source. I'm a science teacher, and my main expert area is chemistry, but I've spent time working alongside other chemists and biologists to teach the combined science GCSE.

It's a qualification that requires students to study all three science domains, but there was a point at which

our student outcomes and question level analysis showed weaknesses in students' work in physics.

Working alongside the Institute of Physics for a sustained period on improving both my own knowledge of concepts such as energy and forces, as well as how best to teach the discipline, eventually resulted in confidence boosts for both myself and my colleagues, and a more informed approach to our teaching of models based on practice that had been found to be effective.

The below criteria can help you when deciding whether or not to use an external provider of CPD:

- Is the external provider an expert within their field, and if so, what are their qualifications?
- Can they successfully oversee a process that will apply what they know to the aim of achieving your school's desired outcomes improvements in practice?
- Does the provider have a past track record of success (especially in similar school contexts)?
- Will the provider be able to cite relevant and robust evidence to back up their guidance?
- Can they provide ongoing support throughout the plan's implementation?
- Are there any superior alternatives to what the external provider is offering?

Your annual CPD calendar

The best time to embark on your curriculum development planning for the following year is during the month of June.

Some schools will task heads of department with reviewing existing plans and provisions, before then identifying areas for improvement and devising plans to address these areas. These reviews will then be subsequently shared with school leaders, so that the following year's CPD can be planned in a way that balances whole school objectives with subject priorities.

Needless to say, the exam results the school receives during August will need to be carefully assessed and factored in, since these may necessitate changes to the plan due to emerging academic priorities.

Ultimately, the undertaking of CPD is a hugely important part of what it means to be a good teacher. Aside from the obvious benefits of improved practice and outcomes, it's also the case that teachers can, and do enjoy being engaged by good quality practice that's relevant to their role.

Those colleagues within the school who are tasked with planning and leading on CPD should be mindful that there is an enormous body of evidence out there that supports the

TAKE IT FURTHER

- The EEF has produced a concise evidence summary for teachers and school leaders, explaining what's needed for CPD to result in new and effective practice bit.ly/ts131-SSCPD
- Thomas Guskey has been researching the field of CPD for decades. His essay 'Gauge impact with 5 levels of data' serves as a good introduction to his findings. bit.ly/ts131-SSCPD2
- Philippa Cordingley is one of the UK's leading CPD researchers. You can read her advice on what school leaders should know about leading and implementing effective CPD via the link below. bit.ly/ts131-SSCPD3
- Subject associations can provide cost-effective ways of implementing subject specific CPD, and offer considerable help and expertise to teams that have been tasked with implementing a CPD development plan bit.ly/ts131-SSCPD4

implementation of individual team plans, and shows how CPD leads need to attend to the process throughout. Their role is to set the conditions needed for the CPD to work, and for the progress made by colleagues to be reinforced.



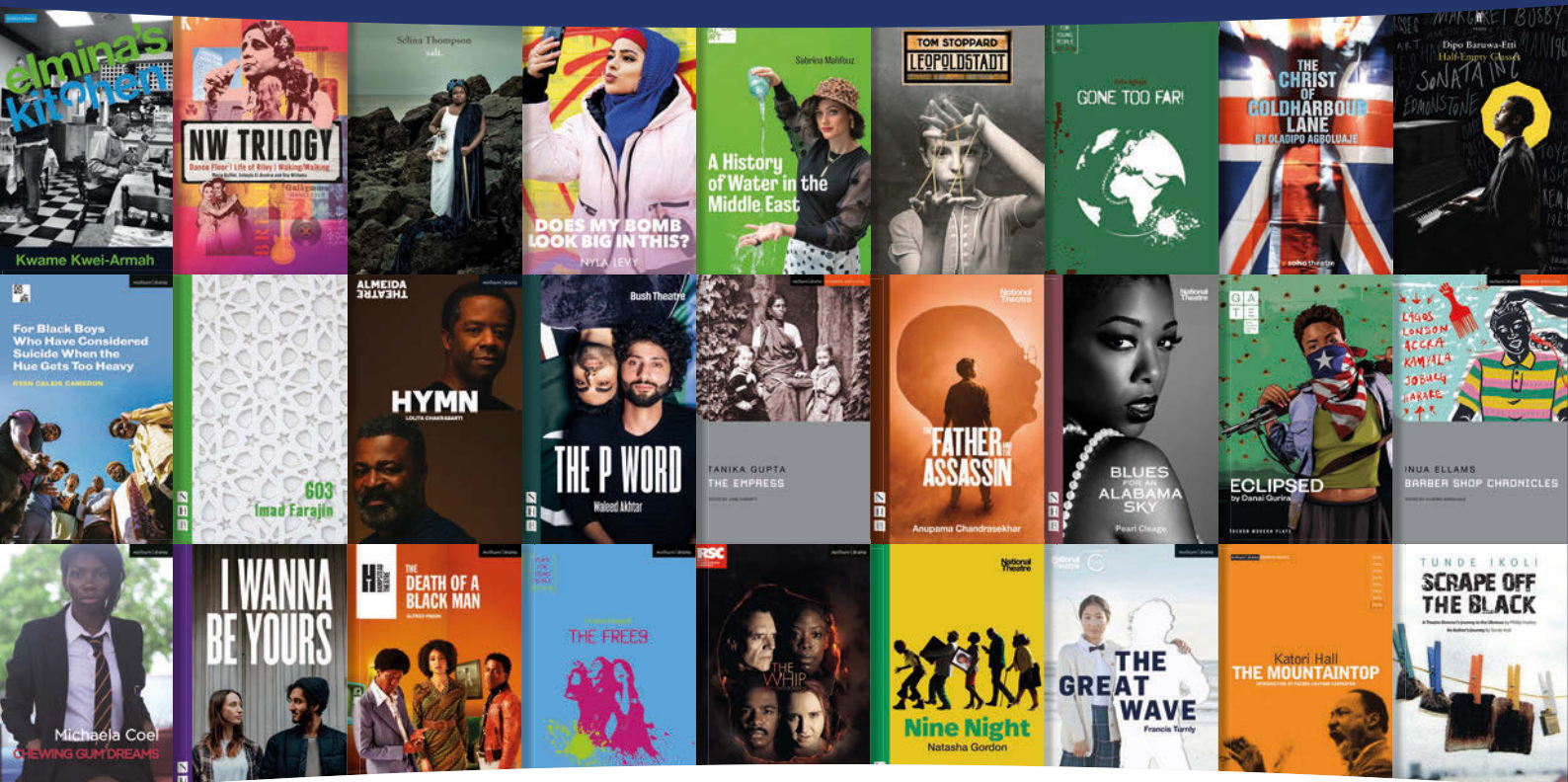
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniel Harvey is a GCSE and A Level science teacher and lead on behaviour, pastoral and school culture at an inner city academy



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.



Mutual BENEFITS

Thomas Forbes looks at what can be gained when teachers and leaders start thinking more creatively about their inter-school partnerships

Whether united by being in the same MAT or not, different schools in the same area can stand to learn a lot from how their counterparts operate.

Sometimes, however, the idea of sharing practice between schools can be contentious. If the benefits are generally widely accepted, why the hesitancy? Well, the reality is that as organisations – and even as individuals – we can be (rightly) wary regarding the ownership of ideas and wider questions concerning intellectual property. The process of inter-school collaboration can itself be logistically daunting. So what would a truly effective method of sharing practice look like?

An ongoing process

Any serious programme of school improvement should involve at least some element of visiting other schools to see how certain things are 'done'. The profession can be broadly accepting of this, especially when seeking to address particular behaviours, or in response to feedback from reviews.

And that's often as far as it goes. Any notions of sharing and disseminating best practice more generally, in a systematic, long-term way, tend to fade once a solution to that specific problem is found. Which is a tremendous shame.

Encouraging teachers to talk to and learn from each other is arguably one of the

most effective and expedient ways there is of developing practice. Inter-school training and collaboration therefore can, and should be a key tenet of the reflective process, both for schools and for individuals.

In fact, there's a strong case to be made for inter-school training to occupy a meaningful place within school/teacher development and ongoing quality assurance – even when there isn't a specific 'problem' to respond to. Sharing best practice through inter-school training can, after all, present opportunities for improvement and development that might not have even occurred to leaders and staff otherwise.

Embracing this 'inter-school training' philosophy can unlock new systems and new ways of thinking – so how can we get there?

Step 1: Personal development days

The operational demands of

school life can frequently result in 'professional development days' becoming less about development and more about administration. One tried and tested way of resolving this is to set aside a dedicated PD day for everyone. One this one day, all staff can have the opportunity to go elsewhere and investigate something they feel is going to really help them.

This does mean *everyone*, from SLT down to support staff. My school scheduled a day like this in the middle of a term, right when most other schools would have been having 'normal' days, to maximise the chances for colleagues to arrange impactful visits to other schools.

Logistically, it will be necessary to allow enough time beforehand for colleagues to arrange school visits that are right for them. In our case, the subsequent value of this for staff was enormous, with

almost everybody returning full of new ideas and solutions for old problems, and having established robust foundations for future inter-school training partnerships.

Step 2: Peer review

Moving away from ad hoc arrangements, we've seen great value in establishing more formalised peer review support networks involving three or more participants. These work from the principal down, and can provide regular opportunities for colleagues in the same roles across different schools to swap their insights and expertise, and act as critical friends.

Some LAs have facilitated area-wide peer review systems, but there's nothing to stop schools (or indeed individuals) from establishing similar networks themselves. The value they offer is in the sharing of strategy and identifying of patterns, and contextualising what's taking place within your own school.

These two initial steps can act as a springboard for establishing a culture of openness and shared reflective practice.

This can then play a pivotal role in improving both your school's CPD provision and student outcomes.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thomas Forbes is a head of history based in the East of England



INSETS *done right*

Everyone has an INSET regret, whether on the delivery or receiving end, says **Charlotte Lander** – so here’s how to make yours count every time

It’s the start of a new year. Christmas is a distant memory, and you find yourself sitting in a cold hall alongside your colleagues, mentally preparing for the term ahead – or rather, January.

For many, this is the image that comes to mind when thinking about INSET days. Naturally, they will vary in structure, since leadership teams have the flexibility to plan and utilise the time in line with the whole school improvement plan. But at their core, INSET days serve as an opportunity to bring staff together – to reflect, reset and regroup.

training, bespoke CPD, a whole staff meeting to reiterate the expectations of the wider school improvement plan, departmental scheme of work planning time and more besides. But how can we ensure that staff leave at the end of the day with a sense of accomplishment?

It can be all too easy to pack the day jam full of training and activities, driven by a desire to utilise every spare second of this precious day you have without students. Yet this can leave staff feeling overwhelmed and overloaded with information – something that we, as

Your INSET days can be like that. After all, staff are a school’s most powerful asset, which means investing in their development is key. Leadership could, for instance, distribute an anonymous survey to all staff ahead of the next INSET day to gather insights into where staff feel those development priorities are – be it wider school initiatives, action on

behaviour or inclusion, or anything else.

This will not only demonstrate to staff how important their development is to you, but also draw attention to any potential blindspots in your existing staff development, giving you the chance to tailor your INSET (and broader CPD activity) so that it addresses areas which may not have

“The goal should be to transform abstract ideas into concrete steps”

INSET’s will most often fall at the beginning or end of a term, and be planned with a clear CPD structure, bespoke training and departmental time in mind. On paper, these days should be purposeful and strategically effective – but how can schools ascertain what impact they’ve actually had?

What, how and why

When planning an INSET day, it’s important to be clear on the knowledge you want staff to leave with, and how you intend to deliver this in the most effective way possible.

The goal should be to transform abstract ideas into concrete steps, while equipping staff with the tools needed to implement those ideas in practice. This might involve mandatory

educators, generally try to be mindful of when it’s our students sitting in front of us.

It’s important to distinguish between information that should be delivered face-to-face and details that can be distributed to staff afterwards via email. Effective INSET days will have had as much thought put into their content as their delivery.

Staff buy-in

The last thing any school wants is their staff heading home after an INSET feeling exhausted by the sheer volume of information they’ve been required to process. Instead, we want staff to leave feeling motivated, appreciated and – most importantly – *valued*.



previously been visible on your radar.

Finally, staff surveys can help ward off the spread of an ‘us and them’ mentality. Giving staff some input into the planning and organisation of INSET days gives them the chance to share potentially valuable suggestions and solutions that may go on to benefit the greater good.

Teacher toolbags

It’s worth remembering that successive INSET days can be more valuable when they take a slightly different approach. Some schools might

opt for getting an external speaker to deliver bespoke CPD, utilising the speaker’s ability to (hopefully) provide worthwhile insight and perspective into teaching and learning in a wider sense. This can sometimes open our eyes to the successes other schools have had with implementing certain strategies, and prompt us to re-evaluate the effectiveness of what we’re doing ourselves.

Another approach many schools might use for a subsequent INSET is to organise a carousel of teaching and learning workshops, whereby several

teachers are able to plan, lead and deliver training with a specific focus. Planning your INSETs in sequence like this will create ideal opportunities for reviewing their subsequent impact. Otherwise, an INSET day can easily end up being tokenistic. If staff are inspired with fresh ideas, but not given any time to actually plan how those ideas could be rolled out, don’t be surprised when those ideas end up being forgotten.

To ensure the day builds further on staff’s existing confidence and skill set, it’s vital that everyone gets to benefit from what’s actually being offered. INSETs provide rare opportunities for all staff to collaborate across different curriculum areas and multiple roles. Installing a shared goal, and giving staff autonomy over its implementation, can help to build a culture of collaborative investment.

When teachers are offered opportunities to work together and share ideas, we can soon find ourselves utilising various talents that have previously gone unnoticed. Setting up a shared ‘teacher toolbox’ folder, for instance – where staff with varying levels of experience can share approaches they’ve successfully used in the classroom – will give other teachers a means of trialling and then possibly adopting those new strategies themselves.

Learning from learners

INSET days can often be led via a top-down approach that sees SLT delivering CPD, or simply talking through policies and key information. Yet many schools are increasingly opting to have staff play a more central role – by exposing ECTs to recent research and grounding their training in evidence-based T&L strategies, for example.

Indeed, our ECTs can be some of the most reflective

practitioners of all, having recently been taught to continuously evaluate their skillset so that they learn and grow as an educator. You could even argue that ECTs are well-suited to the task of delivering CPD, which would give them an early and valuable experience of contributing to the success of the wider school.

If we were to follow this idea through, we could have ECTs (with support from their mentors) deliver a short CPD session in which they share one or more strategies they’re currently using, and their reflections on how it’s been working out so far.

Another approach favoured by many schools is to establish small groups of staff working across different departments and roles that form ‘CPD communities’ with the aim of regularly sharing best practice. When schools learn to recognise hitherto unseen staff talents in their midst, and come to understand how those talents might be best utilised, it can have a transformative impact on the value of their INSET.

That said, there are no ‘one-size fits all’ solutions. Not every approach will succeed for everyone. There are appreciable differences between the activities taking place in more practical and more academic subjects, and big distinctions between what works at KS3 and what’s going to help at KS4.

The needs of school staff are diverse – which is why the key aim of any good INSET day should be to offer something for everyone.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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



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5 REASONS TO TRY... Subject knowledge for Physics Teaching

If your science department is lacking in specialist knowledge, The Ogden Trust may have just the thing...



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Subject Knowledge for Physics Teaching is a FREE blended learning CPD programme from The Ogden Trust that will upskill biology, chemistry and non-specialist teachers of physics at KS3/4.

1 THE TOOLS TO TEACH PHYSICS

Teaching physics out of specialism can be a daunting prospect. School Workforce Census data published in 2023 revealed that more than one in five physics classes were being taught by a teacher without a relevant degree. Subject Knowledge for Physics Teaching (SKPT) provides teachers with the knowledge, tools and confidence they need to bring physics lessons to life. It is easily accessible, grounded in research and provides teaching ideas that can be taken straight into the classroom. Each module builds a teacher's subject knowledge and pedagogy, helping them develop a range of classroom approaches and explore the required practicals.



2 CHALLENGE AND ADDRESS MISCONCEPTIONS

Science education research shows that misconceptions around physics concepts are common, and can be both deep-rooted and resistant to change. The teacher's role in pre-empting and intervening in problems caused by student misconceptions is a core part of good science teaching, but can be particularly challenging for teachers teaching out of specialism. A key feature of our SKPT programme is the time given to exploring misconceptions so that they can be diagnosed and refuted, with expert practitioners modelling how to translate this effectively into classroom practice.

3 MATHS IN PHYSICS

Students can frequently struggle with the maths in physics. This can present non-specialist teachers with significant challenges to overcome if they're to inspire their classes, with non-specialist teachers of physics often possessing less experience and confidence in manipulating equations, using graphs and working with large and small numbers. In each SKPT module we therefore explore mathematical problem solving, and share effective ways of approaching calculations and the real-world significance of numbers and units.



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4 BUILD YOUR PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO

Confident and engaging delivery of physics in the classroom can help inspire and enable young learners to better understand how the world works and how they can contribute to it. There are six SKPT modules available in total – covering electricity, energy, forces, waves, matter and space, and atomic physics – to help teachers develop the breadth and depth of their physics knowledge, secure the pedagogical approaches needed to teach the topics effectively and build their professional portfolio.

5 LEARN AT YOUR LEISURE

Teachers will join a supportive learning network led by experienced physics practitioners. Each module requires 20 hours of learning over eight weeks, and is introduced via a face-to-face CPD day before concluding with a half-day in-person session. Two webinars and supported online study complete the programme, with teachers also able to take part in activities, quizzes and professional reflections at times that suit them. As one participant comments, "without question, I would recommend SKPT. It's a very important offer, and the benefits are wide-ranging. I'm definitely better equipped to be in a classroom teaching physics."

Key Points

Teachers who have taken part have told us that the SKPT delivery has been 'exceptional' and the content 'incredibly useful'

Sessions are FREE, and schools will receive a £200 subsidy upon completion of a module. Teachers can also earn an Institute of Physics Subject Knowledge Award

A three-module (forces, energy and electricity) residential programme is available from Easter 2024; trusts and school science departments can also book bespoke sessions

Book the modules you need to build your professional portfolio and find your physics classroom confidence. Secure your place now by visiting stem.org.uk/skpt

5 REASONS TO APPLY FOR... NPQs with EDT

Unlock your path to high-quality professional development with Education Development Trust



30 SECOND BRIEFING

EDT is a Lead Provider of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) – a suite of DfE-accredited CPD courses to improve your skills, increase your confidence and support your progression.

1 FITS AROUND YOUR DEMANDING ROLE

Most teachers and leaders are surprised to learn that NPQs only require around one hour of study per week, on average. EDT's NPQs are designed to fit around your existing schedule, with a focus placed on accessible, bite-sized online learning that you can pick up anywhere, at any time. Our format encourages you to apply the skills you learn and try out new ideas in your own setting, based on the knowledge you gain each week.

2 NATIONAL NETWORK COLLABORATION

Not all NPQs are designed equally – your NPQ provider matters. As a Lead Provider of NPQs, EDT works alongside a national network of trusted delivery partners and collaborators. Only with EDT can you access a Leadership NPQ developed in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University's Institute of Education, or a Specialist NPQ infused with expertise from the National Literacy Trust. This ensures that our NPQs stay relevant for real education settings, and that our CPD is always evidence-informed.

3 FULLY FUNDED BY THE DfE

High-quality CPD doesn't have to come directly out of your school's budget – or your own pocket. Not only are NPQs accredited by the DfE, but they are also fully funded, for most staff within state-funded



schools and academies. You don't need to apply for funding separately. Simply follow the NPQ application journey with EDT, and the DfE will inform you if you're eligible for funding. Multiple teachers from the same school can receive funding, too.

4 HIGH SATISFACTION RATES

EDT's NPQs have consistently achieved high satisfaction rates, with 99% of Leadership NPQ and 98% of Specialist NPQ participants expressing satisfaction with their courses. Aamir Kohli, Director of Languages at Trafalgar School, recently completed EDT's NPQ for Senior Leadership: "I have found the programme very effective and engaging. The team behind this is



Contact:
NPQSupport@
edt.org
edt.org/NPQs

phenomenal. They all have many years of experience, and they are with you every step of the way with guidance and support."

5 YOU CAN DO MULTIPLE NPQs

Teachers are lifelong learners – so why stop at just one NPQ? If you've already taken advantage of scholarship funding and completed an NPQ, you're still eligible to receive funding for another course. If, for example, you studied for a Specialist NPQ previously, but have recently realised that your ambition lies in senior leadership, you can apply for funding to complete one of EDT's Leadership NPQs. Make sure you seize your opportunity to access high-quality CPD a second time!

Key Points

EDT works with a national network of collaborators to ensure that its NPQs are always relevant, infused with expertise and evidence-informed

EDT's NPQs are built around a teacher's timetable – accessible anywhere, at any time and designed for immediate impact in your current role

Apply by 2 February 2024 to study your chosen NPQ with EDT and secure your fully-funded place on our course



3 things we've learnt about ...

THE STATE OF THE SCHOOL ESTATE

The RAAC controversy made the physical state of school buildings a national talking point – so what are teachers' views on their working environments?

1 School estate 101
It won't come as much surprise to hear that the school estate is in various states of repair. According to a recent survey by Teacher Tapp, 10% of teachers say their school buildings were built pre-1900. A further 12% of teachers were at the other end of the spectrum, working in schools built post-2010.

As you'd expect, staff in the newest buildings were happiest with the condition of their school's physical environment. Overall, around one in three teachers said their school wasn't in a good state, rising to 40% of teachers working in schools built prior to 1960 (which is half of all teachers). So if repairs were to happen, where should they be concentrated? According to a sample of 6,500 teachers, classrooms should be the main focus of any repair work – though coming close second are student bathrooms, described by one in five teachers as not being in good working condition.

2 Leaky roofs
One key school estate issue raised through Teacher Tapp has been the leakiness of some schools' roofs. Around half of teachers say that water leaks into their schools when it rains, and while more common in older schools, newer schools seemingly aren't immune. 30% of teachers in schools where the majority of buildings were constructed post-2010 say they're aware of leaks.

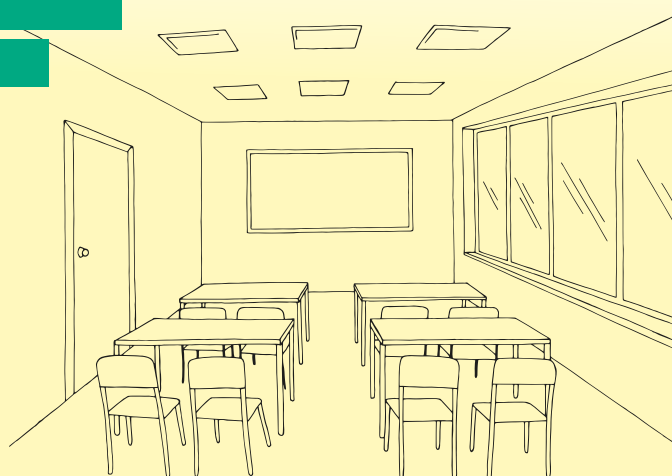
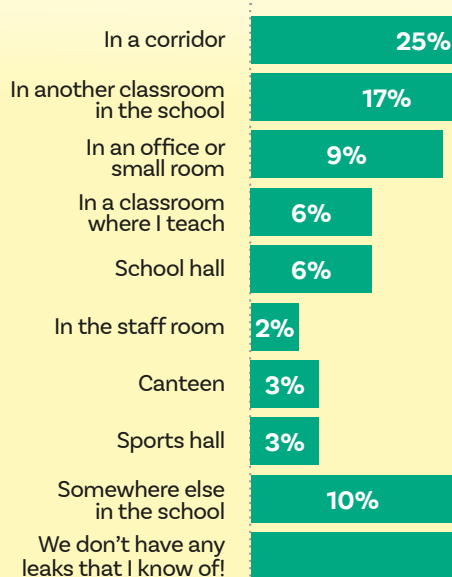
It seems leaks are most often found in corridors, where the issue can at least be partly mitigated, but nearly one in five teachers say that there's at least one classroom in their school that leaks. As such, buckets have become a worryingly familiar sight in schools, with one in three teachers (and almost half of headteachers) confirming their school keeps at least one bucket out for drips. And tight budgets mean that many don't see the situation as likely to improve any time soon...

3 Concrete issues
Leaks aren't the only building-related issues causing schools headaches, of course. 2023 saw a series of headlines concerning the presence of crumbling reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in schools, long after its estimated working lifespan when initially used as a construction material between the 50s and mid-90s. The DfE has since identified around 170 institutions as requiring urgent attention due to RAAC-related building risks.

However, leaders have expressed concerns that some uses of RAAC may have been missed. When polled, one in five senior leaders state being 'not at all' confident in their abilities to identify the presence of RAAC in their buildings, with more than 10% of senior leaders further reporting issues with sending their completed RAAC surveys back to the DfE. Those RAAC headlines may have abated, but it would seem that in some schools, the issue is still some way yet from being fully resolved...

DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE AN ISSUE WITH RAIN LEAKAGE IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS?

Question answered by 8,828 teachers on 08/10/23 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)



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

Event DETAILS

What is Bett?

Bett is the largest edtech exhibition in the world, taking place each year in different locations across the globe, including the UK, Brasil and Asia. From global tech companies, to renowned education brands to startups, you can find solutions for all education settings, challenges and budgets

Where is Bett UK?

■ ExCeL London, Royal Victoria Dock

When is Bett?

■ 24th - 26th January 2024

How do I register?

■ Head over to uk.bettshow.com/visit and select your ticket



MEET, GREET, LEARN

The organisers of **Bett 2024** tell us what visitors can expect from this year's showcase of the technologies set to transform your classroom

Bett is the world's biggest education technology exhibition. Setting the agenda on what's next in learning, it brings together educators, innovators and changemakers – including more than 600 innovative edtech and resource solution providers, showcasing cutting edge and impactful products and services. Bett provides tangible support for educators seeking professional development, as well as guidance on best practice and solutions for assorted challenges.

This year's theme, '*Teaching to thrive in fast-changing times*', promises to deliver three days packed with engaging discussions and workshops on the key issues affecting the profession. Across Bett's seven theatres, we'll be looking at the transformative potential of generative artificial intelligence and hearing from Microsoft Chief Scientist, Jaime Teevan, about its impact on productivity. Also presenting will be leading AI experts Kay Firth-Butterfield and Dan Fitzpatrick, who will be discussing the ethics of AI

and how to thrive in the AI era.

Former children's TV presenter Baroness Floella Benjamin and acclaimed documentary presenter Louis Theroux also feature among this year's exciting lineup of speakers. Jason Arday – a sociologist, and the youngest Black person ever appointed to a Professorial Chair at the University of Cambridge – will deliver a thought-provoking address on supporting inclusivity and SEND in the classroom. Alex Scott MBE, a former member of England's national football team, will meanwhile be discussing the importance of wellbeing and resilience.

Visitors will be able to debate the future of Higher Education in dedicated 'Ahead by Bett' sessions, and find practical solutions for student attendance and reducing operational costs in the Teaching & Learning theatre. For any startups looking to disrupt the EdTech landscape, the Global Futures theatre will be the place to be.

Bett aims to empower educators



to become better users and buyers of technology. With Connect @ Bett, they can swiftly schedule one-to-one meetings with the right exhibitors. We're also introducing Tech User Labs, where attendees can try out the very latest technologies, plus a brand-new programme of TableTalks, which enable educators to connect with peers in roundtable discussions on shared topics of interest.

To be among the first to hear more about our exciting content programme, register your interest now at bettshow.com and follow us on social media via @bett_show at X/Twitter or Instagram.

AI ON THE AGENDA

With AI technologies on course to make a big splash at Bett this year, we look at how visitors can learn about some of the latest developments in this exciting field

Seemingly out of nowhere, the potential implications of artificial intelligence have suddenly started to loom large over a number of different industries and professions – not least education. With teachers, school leaders and students all coming to terms with how the growth of ChatGPT, Midjourney *et al* may transform the nature of learning, visitors can expect AI to be the topic of multiple presentations and discussions at Bett's Arena space.

First up will be 'Thrive with AI: Lead like a scientist' (24/01, 10am-10.30pm) – a keynote delivered by Jaime Teevan, chief scientist at Microsoft (itself an increasingly big player in the AI space).

Teevan's presentation will aim to both 'provide perspective around AI', and look ahead at the ways in which we might be able to collectively shape a 'preferred future' in relation to AI's potential applications for work and learning.

Determined AI scholars can then remain in their seats, as taking place immediately after (24/01, 10.30am-11am) will be 'Inclusive AI requires good governance' – a likely sobering talk by Kay Firth-Butterfield (CEO of Good



Tech Advisory) on the importance of establishing good governance before using AI among vulnerable populations, touching on issues of privacy, data sharing and teacher-child interactions.

The potential impact of AI on children's safety will then be addressed in 'The global impact of AI on learning and children's safety' (25/01, 2.45pm-3.15pm) – a fireside chat between NSPCC chief executive Peter Wanless and Jim Steyner, founder/CEO of the US-based media information non-profit, Common Sense Media. The two will be looking to discuss both AI's promising potential, and the potential threats it could pose for adolescent mental health.



FEATURE RICH

As you make your way around the ExCeL hall hosting Bett 2024, keep your eye out for the following...

Arena

The main presentation theatre, playing host to a series of thought-provoking keynote addresses and talks concerning issues ranging from inclusion and diversity, to wellbeing and sustainability in education

Ahead by Bett

Whether it's generative AI, or concerns around the upskilling of staff, you'll find a host of experts and innovators in the Ahead by Bett area convening debates and interactive workshops that explore the future of Higher Education

Connect @Bett

With this innovative digital tool, education decision-makers can swiftly find the right products and solutions for their learners, and schedule one-to-one meetings with providers.

Table Talks

A brand-new feature enabling educators to connect with peers for roundtable discussions and debate solutions to key issues.

Tech User Labs

At these newly added training sessions, participants will get to try out some of the latest educational technologies under the guidance of world-leading edtech experts.

Esports @ Bett

Attendees will discover the power of esports can have in promoting SEND inclusion and future STEM careers through dynamic talks, demonstrations and a mini *Rocket League* tournament open to students.

Kids Judge Bett

This much-loved competition sees students from primary and secondary schools across the UK invited to choose their favourite products among those on show.

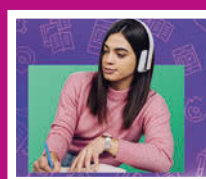
teach RECOMMENDS

All bases covered

BBC Bitesize offers educationally approved, curriculum relevant self-study and home-learning to 4- to 16-year-olds. The website includes thousands of pages of engaging content for secondary pupils, including interactive KS3 activities, adaptive quizzes, revision podcasts and video-rich GCSE self-study modules – plus a careers and support section with advice on career planning,

wellbeing and revision.

BBC Teach, meanwhile, is the gateway to the BBC's best teacher-facing classroom content, via a website packed with short classroom videos that can really bring subjects to life for secondary pupils. Find out more at **Stand SN22**.



Lock and key

LapSafe®, the UK's leading experts in self-service solutions, will be showcasing its innovative storage and charging solutions and smart locker range at this year's Bett Show. LapSafe® has been a preferred supplier to the education market for over 20 years. The seamless process of storing, charging, and managing access without staff interaction has been proven to deliver

a more efficient and cost-effective way of managing devices and/or assets across the education sector.

LapSafe® will be launching its game-changing new Smart Locker, Envoy™, and revealing an exciting rebrand for its ClassBuddy™ range. Visitors can find LapSafe® at stand **NL40**.



bett

● A Hyve Event

ExCeL London
24 - 26 January 2024



**Get
your
ticket!**

Bett UK 2024, the biggest and best education event in the world is back and even better!



100+ hours
of free CPD
content



**World-class
speakers**



30,000+
attendees

Join us at the ExCeL London from 24-26 January 2024.

Bett UK 2024 is a unique and powerful resource empowering educators to build better connections, conversations and collaborations over three days of EdTech excellence. With the global education community all in one place, Bett delivers real impact and makes secondary school education Better Together.

Be inspired by renowned experts, thought leaders and visionaries across EdTech and beyond. You'll hear from the biggest and best speakers including documentary presenter - Louis Theroux, renowned sociologist - Jason Arday, Minecraft Student Ambassador - Namya Joshi, former Lioness turned sports pundit - Alex Scott MBE and so many more! These, of course, are only a few of the incredible names attending Bett UK 2024, explore our agenda to plan your visit.



New for 2024!

bett | **C**onnect

Enhancing the way our community meets and collaborates at the show. Using data and technology we make critical connections between education decision-makers and solution providers, all in a fraction of the time.

by Bett / A Hyve Event **ahead**

Ahead by Bett, the destination for Higher Education professionals, is set to triple in size for 2024. With an amazing lineup of speakers and features dedicated to peer discussion within HE and FE institutions.

bett | *TableTalks*

Brand new for 2024, TableTalks connects individuals from schools, universities and governments for roundtable conversations based on their primary topics of interest.

bett | **TECH USER LABS**

Get the most out of your existing tech with working groups and demos from the top education technology experts in the world.

Get your ticket!

Tickets are now on sale for the biggest EdTech event of the year! As an educator, university or school stakeholder, government personnel, NGO, charity or education association, you will attend Bett UK for free. Make the most of Bett's brand-new programmes

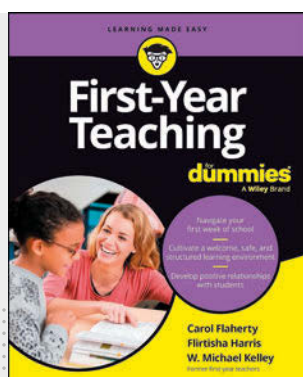


**Scan here
for your
free ticket**



Off the Shelves

Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore



First-Year Teaching for Dummies (Flaherty et al, Wiley, £18.99)

This is the guide I wish I'd had when I started teaching. It's full of practical advice – including 'how to manage your senior management' and instructive teachers' stories, all served up with a good sprinkling of humour. As with all 'Dummies' books, there's a 'Part of Tens' section containing chapters on the experiences and challenges ECTs can expect to face during that first year, the mistakes they're likely to make, and a very useful section about teaching online. The American terminology didn't intrude to the extent I feared it would, though a chapter on grading is perhaps a little too specific to the US education system to be altogether useful, aside from some general points. More positively, however, its advice on exercising professional judgement when using commercially-produced tests is very apposite. A good investment.

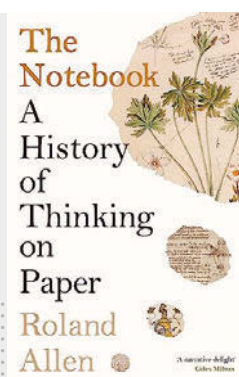
Reviewed by Terry Freedman (see bit.ly/Eclecticism for more details)



Once Upon A Prime: The Wondrous Connections Between Mathematics and Literature (Sarah Hart, Mudlark, £16.99)

As someone who had little in the way of mathematical prowess at school, I initially opened *Prime* with some trepidation. The book focuses on the often hidden mathematical complexity of famous literary works, such as *Alice in Wonderland*, Borges' *Library of Babel* and *Moby Dick* – all analysed here in a way that vastly increased my enjoyment of them. I was even inspired to create my own mathematical 'Easter egg' in one of my recent articles. It's easy to see how an English teacher could make some use of the information presented, if only to provide another avenue for students to explore beneath the surface when reading. Yet while Hart is an engaging writer with a wry sense of humour, her mathematical explanations aren't always crystal clear to the layperson. Nevertheless, the book offers an enjoyable glimpse behind the curtain of some timeless literature.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman



The Notebook: A History of Thinking on Paper (Roland Allen, Profile, £25)

Who would have thought that a material as commonplace as paper could have such a rich history and profound effect on our lives? In *The Notebook* we discover, for instance, that notebooks were used to create the first double-entry bookkeeping system, before later seeing use as climate logs, being used to store recipes and employed in all sorts of ways by different authors. Teachers will find this to be a rich source of information and history that can really resonate with students' modern-day experiences and interests. Some may find it useful to find out how bullet journaling has been used to counteract ADHD; that MRI scans have shown how artists construct pictures; and that writing down traumatic experiences seems to have all kinds of health benefits, besides the obvious. Well-researched and highly readable, it's a compelling collection of facts, findings and ideas.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman

ON THE RADAR

A book that unpacks the importance of asserting your own independence

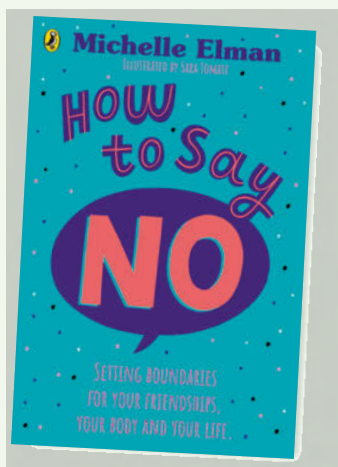
How to Say No

(Michelle Elman, Puffin, £12.99)

A key challenge all of us face as we mature is becoming accustomed to our own sense of agency, learning how to use it, deciding what we want to use it for – and finding out how to protect it. Needless to say, the latter is something many of us can struggle with well into adulthood and later life.

As such, there's something to be said for learning how to think for ourselves and act independently early on – which is where *How to Say No* may well come in useful. Coming across as a self-assertiveness manual combined with a self-help guide (Elman is an experienced life coach), the book is aimed at readers aged 11 and up, and emphasises the importance of clarifying your own needs and wants, while warning of the risks that can accompany being a 'people-pleasing pushover.'

If that sounds like the kind of advice that could potentially encourage self-absorption and arrogance, be advised that any such tendencies are kept in check by the core idea Elman evidently wishes to convey to her young readers – that it's important to establish your own boundaries. Via approachable, unambiguous prose and the bold lines of its appealing illustrations, the book's ultimate message is to be attentive to others' expectations and demands in a way that doesn't entail disregarding your own sense of freedom and self-worth.



Meet the author

SAM CROME



What inspired your interest in teamwork and team dynamics to the extent that you wanted to explore the topic at book length?

I used to work in a school that was amazing, but which made great demands of its staff. You had to prove yourself, so I dedicated myself to always getting the best exam results, the best outcomes, until I eventually reached burnout and lost my passion and enthusiasm for the job.

That led to me doing lots of reading, including books about sport and effective teams. It struck me that I'd rarely experienced that in education, which made me want to understand team dynamics more deeply. I began seeing what research and evidence there was for what makes great teams – not just in sport, but also in business, the military and other sectors – and then looked at applying those lessons to the unique and sometimes wacky world of education.

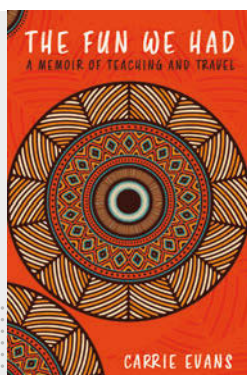
From that research, what discoveries surprised you or stood out the most?

Having a sense of belonging and community at work had always been really important to me, but it felt like more of an instinctive thing. I didn't expect to see much hard evidence of it, but was delighted to find that there's actually a huge body of research on how teams underpinned by belonging, psychological safety and trust perform better.

Something else that stood out was how much research there was into the benefits of teams regularly evaluating their processes – to the point of scheduling debriefs in advance, so that they're not just reactions to outcomes. I found one meta-analysis that showed how carefully curated and structured debriefs could lead to improvements in a team's effectiveness of 20-25%.

Did you encounter any research or practices that could be beneficial to educators, but are fundamentally incompatible with school systems, structures or environments?

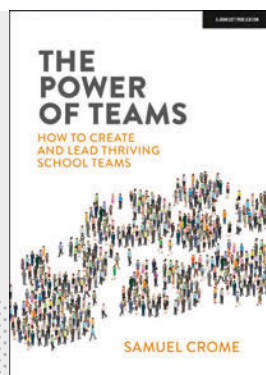
There's lots of evidence from different industries that shows how carefully selecting members based on diverse characteristics, traits and attributes will help you create a really great team. In teaching, we're lucky right now to get more than one person applying for certain roles. I actually wrote a whole chapter on diversity but had to get rid of it, because it didn't feel like something I could meaningfully speak to schools about at the moment. There simply isn't the scope for them to follow what the cross-sector research is saying, which was a bit of a sadness to me.



The Fun We Had

(Carrie Evans, Troubador Publishing, £14.99)

The life of a peripatetic TEFL teacher, with all the frequent travel, regular upheavals and bouts of getting to grips with daily life in unfamiliar environs, would seem to offer lots in the way of material for storytelling – and so it proves, as Evans recalls her experiences of teaching learners young and old during stints in the UAE, Thailand, Taiwan, Spain and elsewhere, and travails with under-resourced settings, recalcitrant learners and difficult colleagues. The writing can 'flit' at times – occasionally mentioning events or individuals in passing that seem intriguing, only to barrel on to the next topic – but is admirably candid and forthright throughout, and does a good job of sketching out the far-flung locales and memorable characters that Evans encounters. Veteran teachers happy to vicariously relive their nomadic 20s and those curious as to what life as an international teacher may have to offer will find plenty to enjoy here.



The Power of Teams

(Sam Crome, John Catt, £16)

Teachers frequently impress upon their pupils the importance of being able to work well in teams, but when was the last time you and your colleagues took stock of your own aptitude for teambuilding? In *The Power of Teams*, Crome embarks on a mission to see what the data says, delving deep into all manner of research into the factors that enable teams to thrive, as well as the problems that can cause them to fall apart. One particularly memorable chapter examines what makes teams dysfunctional, which some readers may well find wearisomely familiar. Crome spends a good chunk of the book distilling his assorted takeaways from numerous academic papers and case studies from the world of business and sport, building up to a final section in which these insights are thoughtfully and convincingly applied to the practice of forming and running staff teams of all kinds within a school context.

The Inside Story

READING PLUS

readingsolutionsuk.co.uk

There's a new name for the best-kept secret in edtech solutions – introducing Dreambox Reading Plus...



dreambox[®]
READING PLUS

2024

Introducing the next transformative chapter in the Reading Plus journey with the unveiling of the new DreamBox Reading Plus logo. Expect the same unique programme – with a new look.



reading  plus[®]

2003 – 2023

Since 2014, Reading Solutions UK has been a trusted provider of Reading Plus under this logo, providing an industry-leading service for schools and educators.

Since 2014, Reading Solutions UK has been a trusted provider of the adaptive, online reading development programme Reading Plus, empowering UK educators to bridge the gap between phonics and reading comprehension.

Our journey began with a chance encounter between Michael Walker – the visionary behind Reading Solutions UK – and the pioneering developers of Reading Plus in the US. Michael was captivated by the programme's adaptive technology and unique ability to address the challenges of low vocabulary levels and disengagement with reading.

Understanding the crucial need for a programme that explicitly focused on reading fluency through enhancing efficiency and automaticity, Michael was determined to bring Reading Plus to the UK. Later joined by a former colleague and fellow edtech expert, Ian Fitzpatrick, the two embarked on a mission to enhance the education of children across the UK.

Now, as MD of Reading Solutions UK, Ian continues to evolve the company to suit the changing conditions of the education sector, with our latest advancements now happening under DreamBox Learning – the leading education technology provider that pioneered intelligent adaptive learning.

In 2021, DreamBox acquired

Reading Plus and became the only dual-discipline solution rated 'Strong' by Johns Hopkins University in both mathematics and reading in the US.

Unlike traditional automated reading programmes, which are often criticised for lacking individualised input, the Reading Plus approach of directly instilling essential reading skills is validated by research.

The programme uniquely targets reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary, ensuring a holistic approach to literacy development. Teachers can pinpoint learners' progress and skills gaps and make informed intervention decisions by accessing Reading Plus' real-time data reports on fluency, accuracy, and comprehension – replacing marking with instant, actionable insights.

Reading Solutions UK will work closely with you to maximise the success of your Reading Plus journey with unlimited free support from dedicated professionals. We aspire to enhance children's life chances through improving educational outcomes – a change that can impact future generations.

Throughout the last academic year, Reading Plus played a pivotal role in the literacy successes of over 1,300 schools across the nation. Together, they achieved an average of 18 months of comprehension gains and an increase of 38 words per minute.

Join us in shaping the future of education with Reading Plus, where literacy isn't just taught – it's transformed.

Contact:

For more information, contact
0191 389 6078 or email
ian@readingsolutionsuk.com

Our Journey

2003

Mark Taylor develops the original web-based version of Reading Plus, based on extensive research conducted by his family since the 1930s

2014

Reading Solutions UK is created. With its first adopting school in London, Reading Plus is now implemented in 1,300+ schools nationwide

2021

DreamBox Learning – a leading education technology provider that pioneered intelligent adaptive learning – acquires Reading Plus

2024

Reading Solutions UK unveils its refreshed DreamBox Reading Plus logo – providing the same unique programme with a new look

Addressing the problem

Problem-solving has become an increasingly important, yet somehow underserved component of maths lessons – and that needs to change, says **Dr Ems Lord**...

Maths teachers will be all too familiar with the three core focuses of the curriculum – fluency, reasoning and problem-solving. They might, however, find themselves struggling over that last one...

At NRICH's many events and workshops, we've repeatedly heard teachers tell us that they're struggling to consistently deliver high quality problem-solving opportunities for their classes. Why?

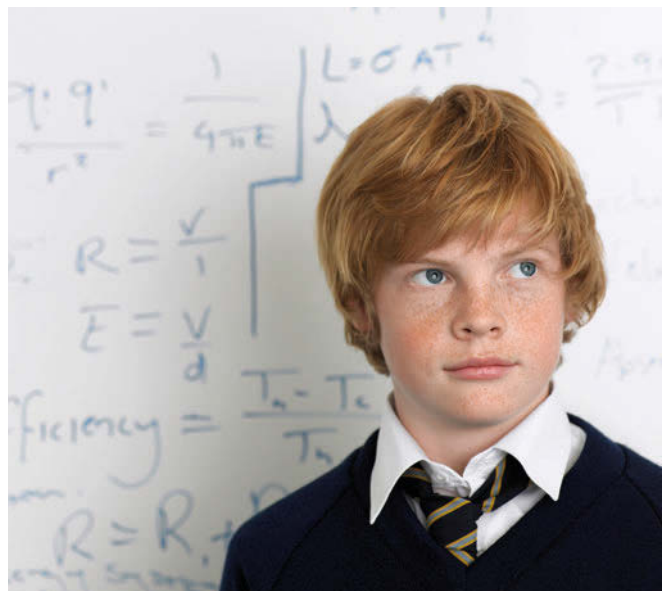
Sometimes it's because they lack the time to prioritise problem-solving within the timetable. They may worry that there's a lack of consistency in approach across their school, or sometimes struggle to afford resources within their limited budget. Yet without problem-solving skills, students will be missing out on what makes maths so exciting for so many.

Why is problem-solving so important?

While exploring numbers can be very fulfilling, possessing amazing number skills isn't always enough on its own. Learners must also be able to consider, choose and draw upon different strategies in order to successfully make decisions and solve problems.

Today's workplaces demand employees who can solve non-routine problems in collaborative environments. To succeed, students will therefore need to develop resilience, be able to work collaboratively, think creatively and flexibly, and perhaps most importantly, be able to solve problems.

Collaborative problem-solving is becoming increasingly recognised as an important 21st century skill, as highlighted in the OECD's



PISA 2015 Collaborative Problem Solving assessment (see bit.ly/ts131-M1). That said, problem-solving doesn't just empower students in the long term, but can also play a crucial role in helping them discover for themselves the joy of mathematics in the present day.

Imagine attending football practice, but only ever learning how to dribble. Or taking piano lessons, but only ever playing scales. Problem-solving can provide those real 'lightbulb moments' for students in maths lessons – it's watching Messi score a goal, or listening to your favourite performer play live.

Problem-solving presents students with a mechanism for connecting the dots, as their maths skills and fluency in the subject become more purposeful and meaningful over time. They get to really see the value in what they're doing, and once that value is better understood, they'll become ever more engaged and motivated to learn.

Highlighted by Ofsted

Problem-solving is an area frequently picked up on by Ofsted, and was highlighted

in the regulator's July 2023 maths subject report. Said report called for schools to not just spend more time teaching specific problem-solving strategies, but for students to be given more opportunities to actually put those strategies into practice.

But where can schools turn to for support in implementing these recommendations, given their limited budgets and resources? One avenue is the nationwide Problem-Solving Schools programme recently launched by NRICH – part of the University of Cambridge, and one of the world's largest maths outreach projects.

Problem-Solving Schools aims to ensure all schools are equipped to nurture students' problem-solving skills through self-assessments of their existing provision, implementing whole-class problem-solving activities and rolling out dedicated teacher support – all provided entirely free of charge.

The programme begins with the Problem-Solving Schools Charter (see bit.ly/ts131-M2), which hundreds of schools have already signed up to. The Charter presents a framework

to help you reflect on your current practice and identify areas for development, while highlighting five key areas:

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NRICH believes that every child can become a better problem-solver, and invites readers to sign up to that ambition as part of Problem-Solving Schools.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Ems Lord is the Director of NRICH, current Chair of The Mathematical Association, a Fellow of The Institute of Mathematics and its Applications and a Founding Fellow of the Chartered College of Teachers

The road to BIBLIOPHILIA

School librarian **Lucas Maxwell** recounts his experiences of being a school librarian tasked with getting students at Glenthorne High School to fall in love with reading...

Here at Glenthorne High School we have a huge mix of over 1,700 students spanning ages 11 to 19 – which to me, as someone originally from rural Canada, seems massive.

I previously worked over there in a public library when my British wife and I both opted to relocate to the UK. I started working at the school 10 years ago, and they've been super supportive ever since – to an extent that I'd say is quite rare. When budgets are tight, the school library will often be one of the first things to be cut, but not here.

Complete freedom

I can still clearly remember how the headteacher introduced me to the rest of the staff when I first started: *"This is Lucas Maxwell, our new librarian, and he's going to make everybody in this school fall in love with reading."*

He and the rest of the school leadership had a very clear idea of what they wanted my role to involve, and were prepared to grant me complete freedom in how I went about fulfilling what

they expected of me.

Initially, the library provision occupied just one relatively small room, but two years after I joined, the school embarked on building a brand new library, which was amazing. My colleague and I were even able to play a part in planning it.

Our library is one of the first things visitors notice when they first enter the school. It's a large, fully open space with plenty of natural light and bookshelves lining the walls, but with lots of movable shelves and other furniture towards the centre. That's because from day one, I wanted the space to be used for other activities in addition to reading and studying – such as open mic performances, which we put on in partnership with the music department.

These kinds of external activities can be good for bringing in students who might traditionally have never thought to use the school library. We prefer to think of it as more than a traditional library space – as a space our students can feel some ownership over.



ANATOMY OF AN AUTHOR VISIT

1. Promotion

Leading up to the author event, I'll drop in on one of the Y7 assemblies and deliver a short address with the help of a single presentation slide. I'll go out of my way to be as enthusiastic and animated as possible, letting students know that they can borrow the book for free, or buy a copy of their own and have it signed.

2. Reiteration

I'll then pass form tutors a copy of the presentation slide I used in the assembly, along with a short accompanying speech I've written that they can then deliver. I'll always aim to make the process of reminding students as easy as possible, in a way that hopefully no one finds condescending.

3. Messaging

The week before, I'll be sure to outline the details of the visit and what the arrangements will be to parents in an email, and bring the event up again during any library lessons in the run-up to the event. The PowerPoint slide will now be displayed on several large presentation screens around the school.

Welcoming and engaging

From my own investigations, I've found that the national proportion of students who say they enjoy reading for pleasure outside of school hovers around 3 in 10. The sample sizes were admittedly smaller, and didn't include every student in the school, but from carrying out some anonymised internal surveys of our students' attitudes towards reading, I've found their 'reading for pleasure' rate to be much higher, at around 7 or 8 out of 10.

That's in large part due to the importance the school's senior leadership attaches to literacy. KS3 groups attend fortnightly library lessons,

which effectively deliver me a ready audience to whom I can promote the benefits of reading. That translates into consistently high rates of borrowing, with boys actually borrowing books more often than girls

– though I'd concede that's mostly due to the huge popularity of our Manga and comic books collection.

We've worked hard to make the library a welcoming and engaging space. There's plenty of soft seating, plus beanbag chairs in our dedicated Manga area that regularly plays host to small crowds.

Somewhat selfishly, I've always kept in mind the kind of things that 11-year-old me would have wanted to see and do in my school's library

space – musical performances, a film club, a *Dungeons & Dragons* club, just lots of *stuff*.

On a more serious note, my role also includes an element of teaching students research skills, aspects of digital citizenship, how to identify disinformation and similar topics.

Those are all areas I've actively volunteered to assist with – essentially based on my own fears as to how the future is currently looking in terms of our media and communications landscape.

“Our boys actually borrow books more often than girls”

Kids are often much more savvy than we give them credit for, but can still be quite naive in some other important ways.

Reliving the pressure

The latest Ofsted framework talks about reading for pleasure, and the need to establish cultures of reading within school classrooms. Yet without even knowing the half of it, I'm very conscious of just how difficult the workload is for teachers right now.

Much of the work we do in Glenthorne High School's library are duties that my colleague and I have created for ourselves, which is a good thing – we *want* to do this stuff, and our teaching colleagues want us to as well. If Ofsted and the wider DfE mean what they say in relation to wanting schools to hit literacy targets and

observe frameworks, then the best way of ensuring that is to let schools hire individuals like me.

Yes, that will mean putting money aside – but I see part of my role as helping to relive some of that pressure. We have this beautiful space, freedom to try things out, and the time and space needed to create a sustainable culture of reading – which is what the DfE has said it wants.

Demanding that function from teachers runs the risk of it becoming a 'tick box'

exercise – not because building a culture of reading is something teachers don't care about, but more because they simply lack the time and mental capacity to take on any more.

Creating moments

A key way in which we've encouraged students' interest in wider reading is to arrange in-school author visits. For over 10 years, I've curated a social media presence for the school's library that promotes reading for pleasure, while regularly tagging authors and publishers and building something of an audience in the process. It took a while, but our social media interactions ultimately got me on some publishers' radars.

We also have a website where students can read reviews of books we have in

the library and submit reviews of their own via the school's VLE. Just publishing those short, single-paragraph book reviews of books led to publishers getting in touch and offering us review copies of books. That then gave way to approaches along the lines of *'We have an author who'd like to promote their book, would you like them to visit your school?'*

Many of the author visits we have now will stem from me having DMed them on social media with an invitation to visit us, and if they say yes, the arrangements then proceed through their official channels.

That said, I'm not sure I'd recommend that others follow this somewhat scattershot and improvised approach, even though it has worked. It helps a lot that I'm now in the position of being able to draw on a large pool of contacts built up over time.

Arranging those author visits, opening up the library space, the lessons that take place here – it's all about creating moments in which everybody can get involved and become invested. What we've tried to do is make reading, and all the activities that surround it, a whole school concern.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lucas Maxerll is the librarian at Glenthorne High School

4. Organisation

When the day itself finally arrives, all teachers and parents will receive a final email reminder from me before I start to assemble the year group in the main hall. Much as we might like to host author visits in the library, there isn't the space in there to accommodate all the numbers.

5. Logistics

I'll carefully time the duration of the event so that the start of that day's morning break or lunchtime falls directly afterwards. Students will enter the hall and proceed to have a full hour's audience with the author, with teachers present at all times to their supervise behaviour and maintain calm.

6. Recap

If we find ourselves with 20 minutes or more spare at the end, I'll try to gather the Y8s that make up our small podcasting team and help them interview the author for a future podcast, before then sharing said podcast around the school afterwards.

Beguile the time

As perhaps the ultimate English set text, the teaching of *Macbeth* can easily become stale – so with apologies to Shakespeare, allow **Meera Chudasama** to show how ‘*Unnatural teaching does breed unnatural lessons*’...

Before you start to discuss the context, teach tragedy conventions or even the life of Shakespeare, try taking a line and building a lesson focused on reading for meaning.

Taking a line from *Macbeth* and exploring it with students will enable them to practise how to inquire independently; to focus on language analysis more naturally, and become familiar with lines before they read them in the play. It will also allow you to better understand the types of knowledge students already have, and give them the opportunity to showcase the links they’re making to their own pools of knowledge.

Test out this approach with these three famous lines from the play:

- ‘*Fair is foul and foul is fair*’
- ‘*What’s done cannot be undone*’
- ‘*There are scorpions in my mind dear wife*’

Encourage reading, reading again and reading once more. Repeating the reading in different voices, at different paces and with emphasis on different words, can spark related thoughts and ideas. Consider a movement away from what Hywel Roberts in his 2012 book *Oops* calls the ‘passive imagination’: “*The passive imagination is reinforced by traditional teaching models where questions are asked in order to measure learning, test attentiveness and act as tentpoles to a previous lesson.*”

Try to ask questions for

inquiry and develop students’ imaginative conception of both the characters who speak these lines, and the characters being addressed.

Get questioning, either verbally or via a written task – or perhaps through a mixture of both. Here are some questions you could start the students off with:

- What does this line make you feel?
- What do you learn about the person speaking this line?
- Which word in the line feels the most important and why?
- What could have happened to this character?
- How do you think this character would say this line?
- What do you think will happen later in the play, after this line is said?

If you’re one of those teachers that’s fond of bringing a little drama into the classroom, try printing the lines out and getting the students to deliver them in multiple ways – loudly, quietly, quickly, slowly, or emphasising certain words.

The students could work in pairs, in groups of three to four, or you could even use them to play musical statues – when the music pauses, the line has to be delivered.

Murder trial

The ‘Macbeth murder trial’ is a great lesson to teach between reading Acts 4 and 5. Before the final death of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, put Macbeth himself on the stand. Assign roles to each

student, and then join in as they place Macbeth under the scrutiny of courtroom.

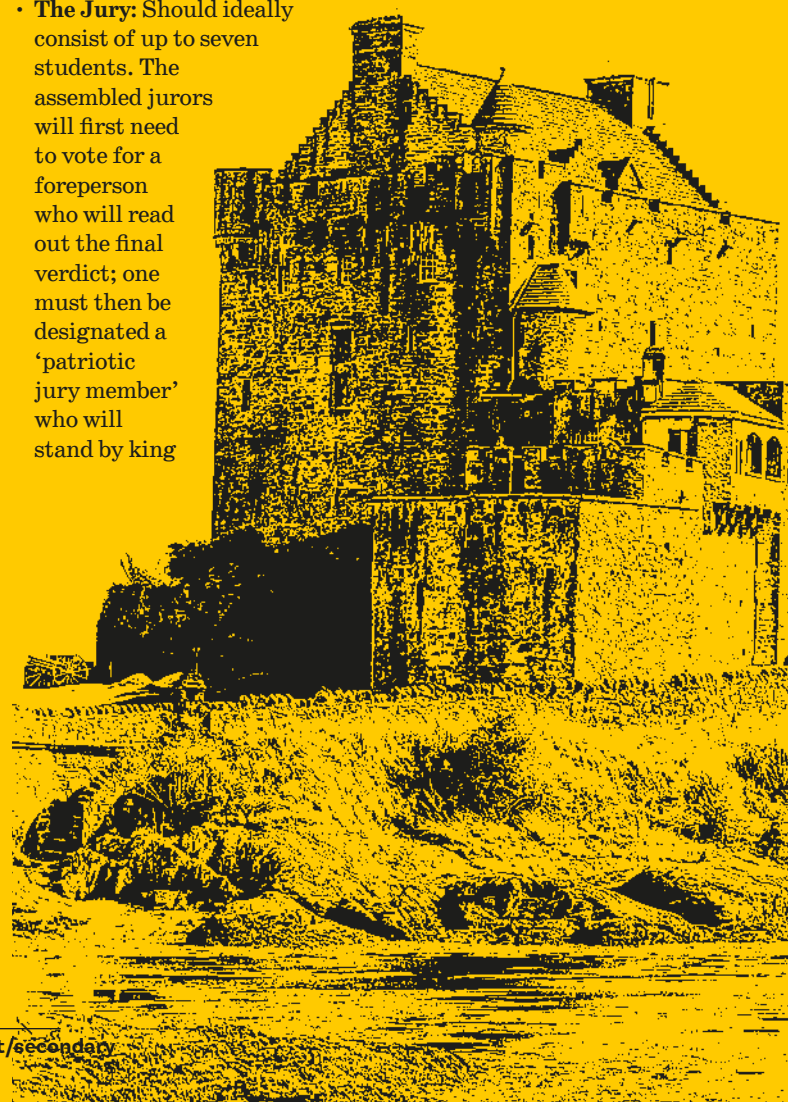
Hosting a mock murder trial enables you to assess students’ learning while encouraging exploratory talk that will show you how well they’re able to make links between characters and context, and form connections to their prior knowledge.

Step 1: Assign roles

- **The Judge:** This role is best played by yourself, or by a student who has a good rapport with most in the class
- **The Jury:** Should ideally consist of up to seven students. The assembled jurors will first need to vote for a foreperson who will read out the final verdict; one must then be designated a ‘patriotic jury member’ who will stand by king

and country, regardless of what the evidence says. Of the rest, up to three will be convinced Macbeth is guilty, while the remainder will be unsure

- **The Prosecution:** Up to three students will be looking to find evidence to convict Macbeth of his crimes. They will need to prove that Macbeth was in his right state of mind when killing King Duncan, and later Banquo.
- **The Defence:** Up to three students who will defend Macbeth by drawing on the Witches’ prophecy and the



influence of Lady Macbeth

- **Macbeth:** He is pleading guilty, *but* claims that he wasn't in a right state of mind, having been influenced by the three witches and his wife.
- **Witnesses:** These include the Three Witches, Lady Macbeth, the servant working for King Duncan and Banquo

Step Two: Information gathering

Students take a lesson to familiarise themselves with their roles and go through the evidence. The evidence can be drawn from the play itself and any available props, and will be shown in court during the trial.

Step Three: Preparation

The students in the 'Prosecution' and 'Defence' roles write down what they intend to say upon taking the stand.

Step Four: The verdict

Speeches should be written by the head Juror and the Judge, which will each take around 5 to 10 minutes to deliver.

You can adjust these lessons to be as long or as short as you'd like, depending on the time

available to you for reading and analysis.

A letter to Lady Macbeth

Here's a separate activity you can do in addition to, or instead of the full trial activity. Before reading Act 1 Scene 5 of *Macbeth*, present a creative writing opportunity in which students get the chance to write in character as Macbeth himself, penning a letter to Lady Macbeth. The topic of the letter might include:

"Encourage reading, reading again and reading once more"

- The killing of the traitor
- His feelings about becoming Thane of Cawdor
- His meeting with the three witches
- Banquo's prophecy

You could set an additional challenge of including a line from the play in the letter. Each letter topic can be planned together in student pairs, with both using their existing knowledge of the play as well as some

contextual knowledge.

At this point in the students' learning, you can assess what the students have learnt about *Macbeth*, its collision of the supernatural world with the heroic world, and students' overall understanding of the play as a whole.

To take this activity further still, fetch some envelopes and label them with your students' names. Inside each will be a short message for students to read aloud and peer assess against a criteria suited to your next major assessment point.

These might consist of optional sentence starters, such as:

- *'I thought it would be important for you to know...'*
- *'During my meeting with...'*
- *'From speaking to... I heard ...'*
- *'It is unclear that... therefore, I was hoping you would help me better understand...'*
- *'I feel that ...'*
- *'I truly believe that...'*

Alternatively, if you've read Act 1 Scene 5, get the students to write an unexpected letter from the Witches to Lady Macbeth. The challenge will be to ensure rhyming couplets are used throughout – remind students that it's a rhyme scheme considered to create a spellbinding effect, and that by simply reading their letters aloud, it could cause the things they describe to happen for real!

GAME ON

Try injecting some life into your revision sessions with the help of these short games and activities

Guess Who?

Print pictures representing a range of characters from *Macbeth*, display them at the front of the classroom and have the students describe out loud who each character is.

What are we asking?

A low-stakes quiz never fails to gauge students' knowledge, but try playing with the formula by getting students to write quiz questions to a list of 'answers' you've prepared on the board.

Visual storytelling

Pass the students storyboard templates consisting of six to eight frames. Their task will be to capture the essence of each Act in a single frame, supported by a line from the play.

Snake it!

Each student has to say out loud ONE adjective about a chosen character. Go round the room as quickly as you can – any repetition, and that student is out!

20 questions

Your students have the chance to conduct an interview with *Macbeth*. Have the students write down 20 questions they would ask, what his responses might be and how he would deliver them.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meera Chudasama is an English, media and film studies teacher with a passion for design and research, and has developed course content for the Chartered College of Teaching

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THE RIGHT STUFF?

As the profession prepares to welcome the arrival of a new HMCI at Ofsted, **Adrian Lyons** ponders what essential qualifications and characteristics they'll need to thrive in the role...

In the complex landscape of England's education system, His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) holds a pivotal role in setting Ofsted's policies and priorities.

Importantly, while most Ofsted employees are considered civil servants, HMCI is not. Instead, HMCI holds the unique position of being a 'Crown appointment.' This makes it very difficult to remove an HMCI once they're appointed for their 5-year term – something which has previously been, and could well be again, problematic when governments change.

Checks and balances

As the former HMI senior manager Frank Norris has argued, an updated inspection framework is generally much more effective at delivering change across the education system than any Act of Parliament – yet a change in the inspection framework happens entirely at the whim of HMCI, with no checks or balances in place.

In this sense, Ofsted operates more as an autocracy than a collective of professional experts. And within Ofsted itself, there tend to be few opportunities for speaking truth to power.

During my tenure as an HMI, I served initially under Sir David Bell, who began his career as a primary school teacher before later becoming a headteacher. He was subsequently appointed as a director of education and libraries within a large LA, and then chief executive of Bedfordshire County Council.

He was succeeded as HMCI by Dame Christine Gilbert, who had previously been a secondary history teacher and headteacher, then a successful



director of children's services in Tower Hamlets and latterly that borough's chief executive. As HMIs, both possessed extensive experience of school leadership, combined with high level skills at running an extensive bureaucracy. Prior to being appointed as HMCIs, both also had connections to the governing Labour party of the time.

Standards and behaviour

Following the Conservative-led coalition victory in 2010, incoming Education Secretary Michael Gove was keen to remove Christine Gilbert. Her inspection framework was steeped in the 'Every Child Matters' agenda, which he detested. I remember encouraging her to stay in post, but by 2012 her time was up, and she was replaced by someone else with a successful record as a headteacher – Sir Michael Wilshaw.

Sir Michael had gained his knighthood for the impact he'd had in improving a London secondary school, then went on to establish a

school in Hackney where he stayed as leader for seven years, witnessing pupils from his original Y7 graduate Year 13 and enter some of the country's most prestigious universities.

He had a reputation for firm discipline, and became known as 'the Sergeant Major'. Gove concluded that this was precisely the skill set needed to be HMCI. The new HMCI thus emphasised 'standards' and 'behaviour' during his tenure, just as the government had hoped – but he also turned out to be fiercely independent.

Gove's special advisor at the time – one Dominic Cummings – even briefed against HMCI, leading to a public showdown that Sir Michael eventually won. Yet despite bringing considerable educational expertise to the role, Sir Michael's comparative lack of high-level experience in local government or administration proved frustrating.

Gaps in experience

Sir Michael Wilshaw's term came to an end in late 2015, much to the DfE's relief, whereupon Ministers resolved

to not make the same mistakes again. So it was that the then Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, appointed Amanda Spielman to the role, whose professional background was in accountancy and finance.

At the time, the Conservative-dominated Education Select Committee voiced 'significant concerns' over her suitability for the job – chief among them, her lack of teaching experience and failure to demonstrate understanding of the 'complex role'.

The appointment of Sir Martin Oliver as HMCI, who assumes the role in January 2024, will thus see a return to Ofsted being run by an individual with considerable school leadership experience – though like his predecessors, he will be leading an inspectorate without having had any personal inspection experience.

The Education Select Committee heard during his pre-appointment hearing that he was keen for his own school leaders to be part-time inspectors, but that he himself had been 'Too busy improving schools'.

In common with my former HMI colleagues, I believe that if there's one key gap in the CVs of Ofsted's last few HMCIs, a lack of inspection experience would be it.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

The diversity CLOCK IS TICKING

Jessica Tacon explains why it's not enough to cite a lack of time when it comes to giving students a more diverse selection of books to read and learn from

The meaning of 'knee-jerk' is 'A quick reaction that does not allow you time to consider something carefully'.

When a particular topic or issue assumes public prominence – despite often having always been of paramount importance, as with diversity and inclusion in education – or acquires a sense of urgency, people can often feel pressure to react, or even actively resist.

The pressure I'm referring to here comes from the shared expectation that education should be diverse and inclusive – something which has failed to be fully addressed over decades. The pressure point is the realisation of this failing; the point at which organisations feel the need to respond in order to be seen as 'doing the right thing'.

Making time, not taking time

The bottom line, however, is that schools absolutely shouldn't engage in knee-jerk reactions or quick-fix solutions to improving diversity and inclusion within education. We *should*, however, make it a priority to locate that beautiful balance between speed and effective solutions – because the first organisation to make changes in the name of diversity and inclusion won't necessarily be one that's done the work properly.

Expressing support for a cause without taking concrete action can be a good thing – note, *can*. Too many

organisations, schools included, have used the excuse of wanting to '*take their time*' to disguise the reality that diversity and inclusion aren't really their priorities.

For inclusion work to be successful, time must be carved out at a systemic level for the required planning and implementation. So what might that look like?

Here, I'd like to present some examples of what *all*

Darren Chetty puts it, into their work might best be achieved by expert-led workshops, or skills-based resources that can be employed in a variety of writing tasks.

3. How do you intend to measure the resulting impact? The feedback or assessment measures method you use will likely depend on the setting you're in and the type of initiative you have in mind.

Pillars of work

Let's now look at the different pillars of work. Are the materials you're offering diverse and inclusive in the truest sense? Who wrote them, and what sources or authorities do they cite?

Consider also whether any 'diversity training' you offer is diverse and inclusive in the truest sense. How often will the training be given, how

"The first organisation to make changes in the name of diversity won't necessarily be one that's done the work"

schools, not just secondaries, should consider when reflecting on whether their current approach(es) to diversity and inclusion are meaningfully purposeful.

1. Are any of the initiatives you're planning primarily aimed at *showing* that you're prioritising diversity and inclusion, rather than being motivated by a genuine drive for change? (See 'diverse' book corners in school libraries, or one-off staff training sessions).

2. What are the three main aims of your initiative(s), and how suited are they to your proposed methodology? An initiative aimed at encouraging students to 'write themselves', as writer



will its impact be measured and how frequently?

Moreover, are interactions between staff, colleagues, students and visitors at the school conducted with due sensitivity towards, and awareness of diversity and inclusion?

This might involve being aware of 'who is in the room' and the different roles performed by individuals in said room, and ensuring that everyone feels safe in sharing their ideas and challenging those of others.

Does this kind of input shed any further light on questions that may have been answered previously, but without being discussed in much detail?

Shared goals

Some questions to consider more generally might include:

1. Is a specific individual currently leading on diversity and inclusion? If so, how will these areas continue to be prioritised if that person ever leaves? Be aware of how the relevant staff member is being supported and compensated (assuming they are) for the extra work they're doing.
2. Are all members of staff aware of, and working towards a shared goal of prioritising diversity and inclusion? If not, then this has just become your chief priority.
3. Teachers are time poor. As an organisation, how do you therefore intend to carve out

sufficient time to ensure all of the above is embedded and maintained at all levels via multiple avenues – such as regular compulsory training, evaluation time during training days or any other means?

A vicious cycle

These questions might seem messy and long-winded, but as we all know, this *work* is precisely that. The effort involved in addressing these different areas could be seen as a barrier, but it doesn't and shouldn't provide an excuse for tokenism, empty virtue-signalling and quick fixes – the latter of which typically solve very little.

When we look closely at the undeniable benefits of being able to provide a truly diverse and inclusive education, we can't afford to *not* consider every conceivable aspect of the above questions in all that we do.

So what does all this mean for English? English A Level uptake has been in decline for some time. Research is ongoing as to why, but initial findings show that students don't feel that English is relevant to them, or able to offer career pathways that will interest them.

In 2018/19, only 19% of students taking A Level English literature were Black, Asian or of a minority ethnicity.

Back in 2018, The Runnymede Trust found that nearly 92% of teachers in state funded schools were White, while in 2020, the publishing industry media outlet Publishing

Perspectives found that just 13% of people working in the publishing industry were Black, Asian or of a minority ethnicity.

At present, it's not unusual for pupils to leave school

having never read or studied any book written by a Black author, as shown in research recently carried out by Penguin Random House. It would seem that there's a vicious cycle at work, in that everywhere young people turn, they don't see themselves.

A real reflection

The writer Junot Díaz once observed that, "*You know how vampires have no reflections in a mirror? There's this idea that monsters don't have reflections in a mirror ... that if you want to make a human being into a monster, deny them, at the cultural level, any reflection of themselves. And growing up, I felt like a monster in some ways. I didn't see myself reflected at all.*"

What Díaz describes here about representation is a particular area of concern that these changes can help to address. As The Runnymede Trust puts it, schools must look beyond "*Representation, and the pitfalls of tokenism, to thinking about how schools can be proactive in tackling racism.*"

Ultimately, what we offer in educational settings can't be called an education in the truest sense until every child is in some way represented, included and celebrated. We're already behind as it is. What we need to do now is come together and push forward diversity. There is no other option.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jessica Tacon is second in English at City of London Academy and a member of NATE's 'Reviewing Literature' working group; for more thought-provoking articles on diversity within schools' literature provision, visit Pearson's Plotting Ahead webpage at go.pearson.com/plottingahead



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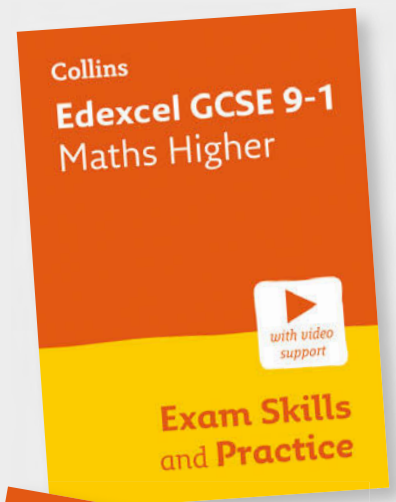
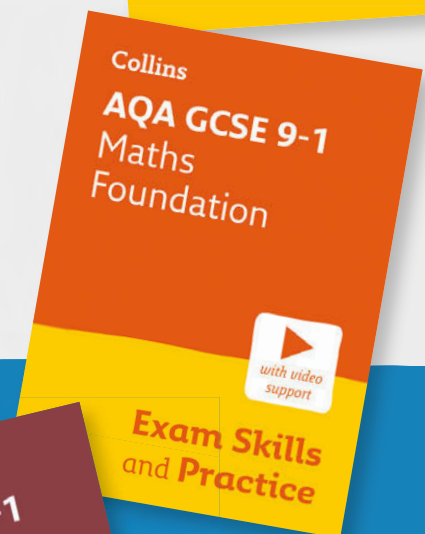
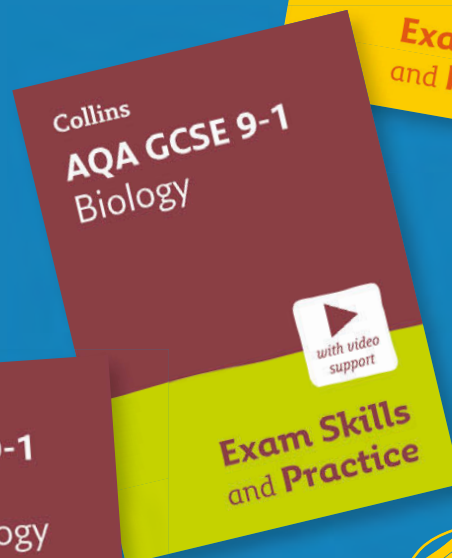
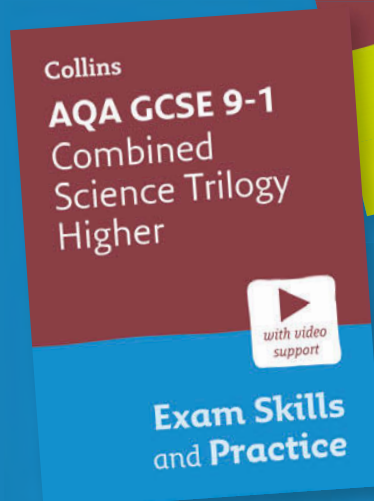
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FOCUS ON: THE ARTS

This issue, we ask whether provocative art belongs on the school curriculum, if arts subjects could potentially experience their own 'STEM' moment – and whether AI should be allowed anywhere near your students' art assignments...

Why should we value the study of art – and what kind of art is ultimately worth valuing?

THE AGENDA:

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Tallulah Holley explains why arts subjects need their own catch-all acronym – and why SHAPE may well be it...

60 CAN AI DO ARTISTRY?

Hannah Day considers the role that AI could eventually play in art and design education – and the problems it's causing in the here and now



BEYOND THE PALE?

As literature departments have discovered, some creative works previously considered worthy of study can now warrant ‘content’ or ‘trigger’ warnings.

Caroline Aldous considers whether the same can be said for visual art...

Should we be more careful when deciding what artworks to show to our students?

I recently visited the fantastic Gilbert & George Centre in Shoreditch with a group of sixth form students. The exhibition included a range of new pieces by the artists – including one in the gallery that was titled ‘Date Rape’. In the typical style of Gilbert and George, it was a brightly coloured sectional piece with a large ‘date’ picture at the forefront – and it made me feel a little uncomfortable.

I’d already forewarned the students that Gilbert and George’s work could be controversial at times, perhaps even shocking – but I was still worried that this particular piece might well upset someone. Might it prove to be a ‘trigger’ for someone in my group?

Engagement and opposition

As teachers, it seems we’re now faced with an unprecedented volume of parental complaints. In 2023, Ofsted received 14,900 complaints about schools – an almost 25% increase on the previous year. Prior to the pandemic, schools received around 10,300 parental complaints in 2019/20, and around 12,200 in 2018/19 (see bit.ly/ts131-CW1).

Parents have become much more engaged and opinionated about their children’s education. This means that as teachers, what we choose to show them could now have much wider implications than before.

In Florida last year, Hope Carrasquilla – at that time, a principal at a Christian charter school – was asked to resign after sixth grade students at the school were taught about, and shown a picture of Michelangelo’s ‘David’ statue. The calls came after a parent claimed the image was pornographic.

Carrasquilla hadn’t pre-warned parents that the students were being shown the sculpture. This may have been an extreme case, but teachers need to confront the fact that they’re now making calls over learning content that could potentially impact

department had since withdrawn, due to its inclusion of the ‘N’ word – a word broadly seen as so unacceptable that I feel unable write it in full here.

Hearing this prompted me to wonder whether a teacher might at least be able to explain the history behind the word and thus still ‘use’ it, albeit only in the context of academic discussion. By attempting to erase the word completely, are we helping students to confront old, yet persistent prejudices, or simply avoiding discussions of difficult topics from a place of fear?

“Could this fear of cultural pushback end up restricting students’ learning?”

their careers in dramatic ways. Which prompts the obvious question – could this fear of cultural pushback end up restricting students’ learning and effectively wall off material previously considered perfectly acceptable?

Avoiding the discussion

At the same time that unrestricted internet access has enabled students to view almost anything they like – including hardcore pornography – the criteria for what’s deemed as ‘acceptable’ in class seems increasingly restrictive.

Speaking to a colleague who teaches English, I asked if any books they had taught previously were now deemed unacceptable. She replied that the book *Of Mice and Men* was one that her

Art of all kinds has endeavoured to shock and challenge people’s views throughout history. In 1863, Manet’s ‘Le Dejeuner sur l’Herbe’ was rejected by the Salon in Paris for its portrayal of a naked woman surrounded by clothed men. I imagine that a similar piece shown now would prove similarly controversial in the wake of developments like the #MeToo movement, and its highlighting of serial abuses of women by men in positions of power.

Narrowed horizons

Modern conversations around ‘cancel culture’, Black Lives Matter and #MeToo have all done much to shape people’s thoughts and opinions, and recalibrate our notions of what’s ‘culturally acceptable’ – but our students still need

guidance and help in answering difficult questions and engaging with current issues and events.

The way students now react to art is interesting. Over the past 10 years, the teaching time allocated to creative subjects has been cut significantly. DfE figures published in June 2018 showed that between 2010 and 2017, the number of teaching hours dedicated to arts subjects in English secondary schools fell by 21%, accompanied by a 20% reduction in the number of arts teachers.

It could be argued that these (notably pre-pandemic) reductions have caused a generation to be exposed to only a very narrow and prescribed art curriculum. Most schools are still predominantly teaching students about white, male European artists such as Van Gogh, Turner *et al*, despite Ofsted stating that it’s now looking for greater curriculum diversity in their inspections.

Students’ ideas of what art even is also appear to be narrowing. To prove this point, ask any student to name three female British artists. I did so myself, and they struggled. I then asked the same question of colleagues, and saw similar results.

If, however, you ask them to name three *artists*, they probably can – but more often than not, the names you’ll hear will be those of white European men, or at a push, Andy Warhol. What teachers need is more time to present students with a greater diversity in art, in a way that mirrors the

approaches currently being pursued by big galleries like The Tate and The Royal Academy.

Changing attitudes

Some recent exhibitions in London have included exciting and diverse line-ups, including Labid Himid, Sarah Lucas, Philip Guston, Yayoi Kusama and Paula Rego. This needs to filter through to the classroom. Teachers should try stepping away from more traditional practices in art once in a while and shine a spotlight on a greater diversity of artistic endeavour. It's essential that students' creativity be nurtured from an early age, continuing what's historically been a great British tradition of innovating in both the arts and the workforce.

Exposure to a more diverse range of artists ought to start in primary

school and continue throughout secondary, with students of all backgrounds being encouraged to visit galleries and museums, and see plays that will help them further develop their critical and cultural understanding.

Pieces such as Duchamp's 'Fountain' and Tracey Emin's 'My Bed' caused controversy when they were

first exhibited. It's important to show students artworks such as these, which step away from art being limited to simply taking the form of paintings or sculpture. Whether the broader societal reactions to such artworks have changed over time, or if students' views of them are representative of a major shift in public attitudes remains to be seen.

Acknowledge the ignored

Still, the fact remains that art teachers have to now carefully consider what and who they include within their curriculum.

Creating a diverse curriculum that's informative, without being

shocking or considered 'too controversial' remains a tough challenge.

On the one hand, art teachers are required by the likes of Ofsted to actively expand their curriculum beyond traditionally taught artists and introduce students to a broader curriculum. At KS4, students will typically be better able to cope with more challenging artworks, but the backbone of any curriculum should be an art history that covers some previously ignored contributors to art history.

Examples here might include the first professional female artist in western art history, Lavinia Fontana (1552-1614), who ran her own thriving studio in her native Bologna and later in Rome. Another notable figure is the first widely recognised professional artist of colour, Henry Ossawa Tanner, who gained international acclaim in the 1890s for his beautiful paintings.

The art history taught must also take account of relevant contemporary biases and historical influences. By taking students to galleries such as the Tate Modern, Tate Britain or the Royal Academy, they can begin to understand the vast depth and quality of art that's out there, and start thinking more critically about what art is and why it's created.

If schools lack the time or resources for such trips, then another option could be to arrange for artists to visit the school, or make original artworks inspired by pictures and commentary relating to currently running exhibitions.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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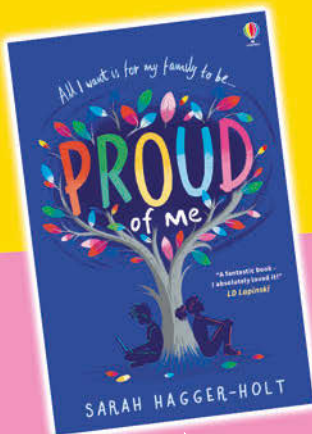
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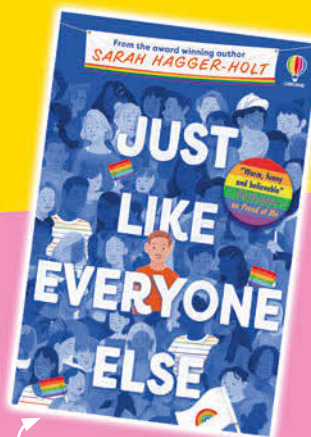
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A tale of two ACRONYMS

Tallulah Holley explains why arts, humanities and social sciences subjects need their own catch-all acronym – and why SHAPE may well be it...

The acronym ‘STEM’ is so ubiquitous you could be forgiven for thinking it’s been around forever. In truth, it’s actually a 21st century creation, having first been coined by the U.S. National Science Foundation back in 2001.

In the two decades since, STEM has travelled the world – its popularity and usage in part due to a growing recognition that the knowledge and skills gathered under the STEM umbrella are vital for the modern age.

Redressing the balance

If, however, you teach a subject that falls outside the STEM club, you could be forgiven for feeling somewhat left out. As the value placed on STEM subjects by policymakers, leaders and the media only continues to grow, other subjects have struggled to attract attention.

An increasing number of reports (see bit.ly/ts131-shape2) tell of declining uptake in humanities and

arts subjects, all along the student pipeline. Funding cuts for those same subjects have clearly communicated to learners where their priorities really ought to lie – regardless of what they’re actually interested in.

It’s in this education landscape that SHAPE aims to give arts specialists a louder voice and create dialogue. The term ‘SHAPE’ was collectively coined on this side of the pond by The British Academy and its partners in 2020 – an acronym for Social sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy.

We see SHAPE as a tool with which tell the story of subjects not represented by STEM, or even STEAM; subjects that enable us to explore and express the complexities of life and culture, as we attempt to make sense of the world around us.

Two counterparts

To thrive in all aspects of life, everyone needs at least some knowledge or appreciation of art, music, language,

history, politics, maths and science. No subject is worthless, or indeed worth any less than another. All subjects offer a perspective on the world, a method of investigation and a means through which we can derive some form of meaning.

SHAPE seeks to define the subjects in question as distinct – recognising the individual value they bring – while also championing a balanced and holistic approach to education.

Our hope is that employing the acronym SHAPE will encourage STEM practitioners to learn from and value the contributions of social sciences, humanities and arts.

SHAPE in Schools

My own research with SHAPE in Schools (see shapeinschools.org/impact) has shown that not all learners understand what STEM even means, often thinking of it as simply referring to the ‘important’ or ‘compulsory’ subjects.

Attitudes across SHAPE and STEM subjects also

SHAPE UP

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differ, with SHAPE subjects polarising opinion far more than STEM subjects. KS3 learners most enjoy art, PE and then English, with MFL and RE ranking lowest. Conversely, enjoyment of STEM subjects seems consistent across the board.

We must better articulate the purpose of both SHAPE and STEM subjects, so that learners can better understand how different subjects fit together and where their own interests might lie. SHAPE and STEM should both be widely understood collective terms, so that between them, they can create spaces in which all subjects can belong and be properly heard.

So yes, SHAPE is an acronym – but it’s also the start of a conversation around the interconnections between all subjects, and the valuing of every discipline as a worthwhile endeavour.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tallulah Holley is the lead researcher at SHAPE in Schools; for more information, visit shapeinschools.org



Can AI do artistry?

Hannah Day considers the role that AI could eventually play in art and design education – and the problems it’s causing in the here and now...

This term, as part of the graphics A Level, we looked at colour theory, for which students built colour palettes. One student, rather than selecting and refining his collections, sat back and let the computer do it. I asked him how. *“Oh, I just built some code...”* he responded, casually.

We then watched as his screen filled square after square with various tones. On the spot, I had to decide what I thought and how I should react to what I was witnessing.

Consider this

My issue with this student’s work was the overall *lack of selection or refinement*. He was merely accepting a result that some highly advanced software was giving him, rather than evaluating work he had produced by himself and changing it accordingly. In the event, the colour palettes ‘he’ produced were ultimately bland, and the work his code had generated garnered the poorest outcomes in the class.

Artificial intelligence, as applied to the field of art, currently works by taking all the information it can access, and using this to produce ‘new’ creations when prompted to by human input – but it’s a process that ensures the end results will only ever be average. In this case, the student’s colour palettes weren’t as good as they would have been had he simply done the work himself.

That said, a student of art will typically explore how different paints, brushes and

marks can change a painting. If that student then uses different AI tools and prompts to create a range of outcomes, selects the best and uses them to further develop their own work – how is that process any different?

But then there’s the matter of referencing. Any text that’s repurposed and used in an essay must be clearly referenced and cited. It therefore follows that any use of AI in image creation should be similarly highlighted and explained. What tool(s) were used in the work’s production? What prompt(s) did the student

that this was an AI-generated image, but students just starting out on their art history journey likely won’t know that these four artists never met together.

To prevent false information appearing in essays and being cited as genuine research, we’ll need to better educate our students in the skill of checking sources, and the importance of locating multiple examples of research to back up their assertions.

In contrast, there’s the humble, yet also mighty book. The thorough editing and fact checking undertaken

Dan Catt, who considers himself to be both an engineer and an artist.

Dan writes code, which he sends to a mechanical arm that he built himself. Said arm holds a fountain pen, the movements of which produce beautiful lined drawings.

This, however, is *not* an example of AI art, because Dan is actively telling the arm what to do. The process is functionally the same as what your own arm would do when manipulating a paintbrush. The only difference is the use of technology being placed front and centre.

In Dan’s view, we’re all trained to varying degrees in the history of art, just as an AI would be, since nothing or no one can work fully independently of the canon of imagery we have. The difference is the speed at which AI can absorb and assimilate this data, and the immediacy and range of its outputs.

He suggests that this can be seen by setting an AI a relatively simple task: *“Take light, for example. AI can generate an image of each individual student’s home town, and explore light in the style of 10 different artists. Suddenly, you see the same place specified by the same prompt, but rendered through very different approaches, making comparisons and analysis much simpler.”*

Never go ‘whole code’

Another of Dan’s observations concerns idea generation. If you have a student wanting to create a poster for a music festival, they could ask an AI to generate 100 different

“Any text repurposed and used in an essay must be clearly cited; it follows that any use of AI should be similarly highlighted”

enter? How many outcomes were generated, and how did the student approach those outcomes?

If those elements of a work directly ascribable to the students’ actions, and those that are the direct result of AI technology could be separately and clearly recorded, that would at least leave open the possibility of assessing that all-important reflection and refinement.

‘Dead’ media

Finally, there are the implications for research. AI can easily generate false information – as neatly illustrated by a photograph I recently saw picturing Picasso, Basquiat, Dali and Warhol all sharing a drink together. I knew immediately

by publishers before releasing any title far outstrips the comparative ‘anything goes’ wild west of online publishing.

With the internet becoming ever more swamped with unreliable sources – which are now feeding AI tools that in turn produce yet more unreliable content – perhaps in time we’ll see a true resurgence of books and other printed matter.

Manipulating the paintbrush

So what does an actual artist make of all this? I wanted to talk to someone working across both the tech and art sectors and get their perspective – which is how I found myself in the studio of

starting points while keeping the overall theme prompt consistent (such as ‘Glastonbury Festival’), but changing the suggested artist or influence (such as ‘Art Deco’, ‘Milton Glazer’, ‘Paula Scher’ and so on). These can then be utilised in much the same way as one might use a moodboard.

“As an engineer, I want efficiency,” Dan explains. “I therefore plot a whole page of code.” However, while he can predict whether his code will lead to straight, curved or jagged lines, he can’t focus as fully on the aesthetics until a later stage. Only once the mechanical arm starts drawing can he see how the code is actually building on the page. “I almost always stop the artwork part way through,” he says. “I see it build, and know when it’s reached a point that, for whatever reason, works visually. If ever I let the arm draw the whole code, I’m always disappointed.”

More recently, Dan has introduced a new element into his code writing that he calls ‘Co Pilot’. The idea is for Co Pilot to make further suggestions based on code that’s already been written, thus speeding up his processes considerably. Dan is, however, careful to note that Co Pilot doesn’t have

any understanding of aesthetic value – it’s still the artist who must decide on that.

I’m relieved to find that Dan’s views, while more practical and developed through his use of technology, coding and nascent AI, otherwise broadly align with mine. Reference, explore, rework; keep the artist as the final arbiter, and think of AI as a useful tool.

Tomorrow’s photography

Before I leave, he shows me some images produced by Midjourney – a generative AI programme and service that’s attracted attention for its sometimes sublime imagery – examples of which have been used as illustrations by a number of media outlets, including *The Economist*. Dan makes the point that artists and creators now have the option to develop their own artistic style using the same tool.

“Before AI, if you had an idea you also needed the skills to create that idea. Now, using AI, you can create a visual output for that idea. Some people view those working in this way as artists, and some don’t.”

His comment reminded me of the conversations that would have taken place during the early days of photography and still continue to this day. For many, the mechanical nature of the camera, and its ability to create images that can be reproduced infinitely, prevent them from considering photography as art – even some 200 years after the first photographic images were created.

Collectively, we seem to have a deep and perennial desire for the human and the unique. Yet AI is now very much with us, and will only become more sophisticated in its uses and applications over time. Just like the ‘ready-made’ and often conceptual art of photography, the notion that AI won’t similarly become a specialism in its own right appears absurd.

It seems to me that as teachers, we need to get on board and start helping our students understand how AI might influence, and maybe one day even enhance their artistic journeys.

A.I. IN THE CLASSROOM

- Familiarise yourself with your exam board’s AI guidelines. These must top everything, since it’s the exam board that will ultimately be awarding the qualification. Check this each year as the tech develops. Some exam boards have made their AI guidance available online, including JCO (bit.ly/ts131-AIA1) and OCR (bit.ly/ts131-AIA2).
- Discuss AI with your students and help them to understand its pros and cons. It may be beneficial to do this at a whole school level, rather than having each subject department tackle the issue separately.
- Ensure all AI-produced elements are clearly labelled, just as one might reference research in an essay.
- Where possible, students should use their own code or prompts for tasks involving AI assistance. If the code is then reworked to produce different outcomes, the code is the media. If the student is using existing code from elsewhere, then this should be deployed sparingly – and certainly not in a way that makes it central to the creation of the final piece.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hannah Day is head of art, media and film at Ludlow College

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Experience AI is a collaboration between Google DeepMind and the Raspberry Pi Foundation that gives teachers everything they need to teach the concepts of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to their class.

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6

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10

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The meritocracy myth

Matt Bromley explains why schools are classist – and offers some thoughts on what we might be able to do about it...

If you're a high ability pupil from a low social class, you aren't going to do as well in school and in later life as a low ability pupil from a high social class.

Put another way, it's social class and wealth – not ability – that ultimately define a pupil's educational outcomes and their future life chances.

Closing the gaps

For proof of this, observe the 2021 Deaton Review of Inequalities carried out for the Institute of Fiscal Studies (see ifs.org.uk/inequality). It concluded that disadvantaged pupils *"Start school behind their better-off peers, and the education system isn't succeeding in closing these gaps."*

Further, *"Educational inequalities result in substantial differences in life chances, leaving millions disadvantaged throughout their lifetime."* So, what, if anything, can schools do to help?

To answer that question, let's pose another: *why are schools classist?* So much of what schools do, whether by accident or design, is classist – from the way in which the curriculum is designed, down to how the assessment system works and the impact of the 'hidden curriculum' on pupils. Let's examine each of those problems in turn.

Problem 1 – curriculum design

The stated aim of the National Curriculum is to ensure that all pupils in England encounter the same content and material. As the National Curriculum framework document puts it,

pupils should be provided with *"An introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens."*

There are, I believe, two issues with this. The first is curriculum coverage, in that providing all pupils with the same curriculum only further disadvantages those who are already disadvantaged. I hope readers will agree we shouldn't reduce the curriculum for working-class pupils.

The same ambitious curriculum ought to be offered to every pupil, irrespective of background, but we should offer more, not less – and crucially, *not the same* – to our working-class pupils. We must broaden the curriculum for working-class pupils to ensure *equity*, as opposed to equality.

Equity in education should aim to celebrate and embrace pupils' working-class roots, while simultaneously ensuring those roots don't restrict their life chances. We want to broaden horizons and remove barriers to success, but we don't want the sun to set on working-class pupils' rich and proud ancestry.

The classist issue in schools, however, is the pervasive belief that we should feed all pupils the same diet and offer *equality of opportunity*, rather than equity. The way to counter this is to offer the same ambitious curriculum to all, ensure fair access to the same extracurricular

activities, and *then* do more for those who start with less.

The second issue with the National Curriculum is that definitions of 'core knowledge' are inherently classist. Said definitions are based on the notion that wealth and social status confer taste and discernment, and that selections of knowledge therefore ought to be made by those of a higher social standing, rather than by groups more representative of the country's broader social strata.

– but who decides what constitutes 'the best' in this context? By definition, that's a subjective value choice.

We should think more carefully about who decides what knowledge is taught when and why, and also consider how representative that knowledge is of our school communities; of how effectively it talks to pupils' lived experiences and their family traditions and cultures.

"We want to broaden horizons, but we don't want the sun to set on working-class pupils' rich ancestry"

Since 2019, Ofsted has inspected how schools develop pupils' cultural capital, which the regulator has previously (perhaps controversially) described as *"The best that has been thought and said"*



Having selected knowledge that does more to reflect our school communities, we should then identify curriculum content that celebrates diversity beyond those communities, so that we can broaden our pupils' horizons.

Problem 2: curriculum assessment

Our current assessment system starts with a home advantage, wherein pupils are expected to complete schoolwork at home – be that

homework, coursework or revision. Those lacking a home life conducive to independent study are therefore immediately placed at a disadvantage, which may be further compounded for those who don't

have parents or carers with the capacity to support them in terms of time, ability or finances.

However much a working-class pupil may want to learn and grow, the lack of a suitable place to study at home will present a serious handicap to their learning. Funding cuts have resulted in closures of public libraries across the UK, and dramatic cuts to the opening hours of those that remain – a development that's hit working-class people especially hard.

Then there's the way in which the content of tests often betrays a middle class bias, such as assuming personal experience of foreign travel or theatre visits on the part of those answering the questions.

Finally, there's the structure of the GCSE assessment system, which is currently designed to fail a third of all pupils each year – and it's the working-classes who suffer from this the most.

Problem 3: the hidden curriculum

All schools have a 'hidden curriculum' that exists within a school's rules and routines; in behaviour policies, rewards and sanctions systems, the learning environment, and the manner in which the adults interact with pupils and with each other.

Pupils at private

schools will encounter a further hidden curriculum – albeit one hidden in plain sight. Private school pupils are taught that they're part of the elite, and that their role in society is to rule over others. It's their destiny and birthright, because *that's the way we do things in this country*. And it works.

Working-class pupils in state schools may be told we live in a meritocracy, but they soon realise that any notions of 'merit' are largely smoke and mirrors. After all, it's harder to develop a growth mindset if you live in a cold, damp and overcrowded rented flat. It's harder to attend an after-school drama club if you're expected to collect a younger sibling from school. And it's certainly harder to succeed in exams if you've nowhere to study and limited access to internet-enabled devices.

The idea that you compete on the same level playing field irrespective of social background is *deeply flawed*, since it's much more difficult for working-class people to enter and thrive in various professions. Even leaving aside the typical cost of entry and importance of prior connections and work experience in the relevant field, a person's intelligence and ability will often be conflated with their cultural tastes, mannerisms and confidence.

So what can we do?

In our book, *The Working Classroom*, Andy Griffith and I explain how there is a trio of things we can do to make the classroom work for working class pupils.

1. The core curriculum and extracurricular activities

The core curriculum comprises those programmes of study all pupils are taught, typically via timetabled lessons.

These are traditionally academic and will include, at a minimum, the foundation subjects stipulated in the National Curriculum. Participation in extracurricular activities provides pupils with opportunities to develop new skills, make new friends and build self-confidence.

2. Curriculum adaptations and interventions

These might include one-to-one and small group tuition intended to help lower-attaining working class pupils access the same experiences as their peers – potentially by converting the causes of disadvantage into tangible classroom consequences, so that barriers may be overcome. The most effective curriculum interventions will be short-term, intensive, tailored and focused.

3. Curriculum extras and enhancements

This refers to enrichment activities targeted at high-attaining working class pupils, so that they might acquire 'secret' knowledge and skills otherwise denied to them because of their social background. They can help to develop behaviours, attitudes and values that allow students to compete alongside their more advantaged peers.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Bromley is an education journalist, author and advisor, with 25 years of teaching and leadership experience across the secondary and FE phases, and remains a practising teacher.

As well as contributing to various magazines, he co-hosts the SecEd podcast and is the co-author, with

Andy Griffith, of *The Working Classroom: How to make school work for working class students* (£18.99, Crown House Publishing); find out more at theworkingclassroom.co.uk and follow him at @mj_bromley

Banish the BUREAUCRACY

Debby Elley explains how reimagining the role of education, health and care plans could give families a surer footing in a faltering system

The year is 2014. England fails to get past the first round of the World Cup in Brazil, the ice bucket challenge is in full swing and Elsa is still belting out ‘Let It Go’. Meanwhile, the world of education sees the introduction of education, health and care plans.

The England squad’s fortunes may have improved since then, but nearly a decade on, EHCPs are becoming bogged down amid an increasing volume of bureaucracy. There are currently over 500,000 out there, only half of which were issued within the prescribed 20 weeks (see bit.ly/ts128-ehcp2). And with those growing numbers have come mounting delays in the completion and updating of documents.

It’s a challenging landscape for schools to navigate, but there are some steps you take to change your own EHCP administration for the better, making for less bureaucracy and better quality plans.

Legally binding

Firstly, let’s not use EHCPs to outline basic standards of inclusive provision. Broad inclusive practices are essential, because they don’t need thinking about on a daily basis. They simply help to foster the kind of environment in which SEND pupils are less likely to experience overload – the upshot of which will be fewer daily struggles.

What we need are EHCPs focused around a core

purpose of pinpointing additional interventions, rather than daily fire-fighting. This is what my co-author Gareth D. Morewood refers to as a ‘proactive, rather than reactive’ approach, which is central to the model of inclusion we outline in our recent book *Championing Your Autistic Teen at Secondary School*. Adopting a whole-school approach to inclusion will ensure that nasty surprises are kept to a minimum, and that trust between families and school remains high.

Parents tend to feel safer once they’ve secured an

and what may need a rethink.

I’ve experienced these kinds of short catch-ups as a parent myself, and found they were highly effective at helping to forge a trusting relationship. Such meetings give everyone the chance to work as a team, and can lead to better discussions of what’s possible within the setting at the next EHCP review.

Prescriptive wishlists

Carers who don’t have regular contact with their school can come to feel uneasy, so it’s hardly surprising if they then crave certainty at their EHCP

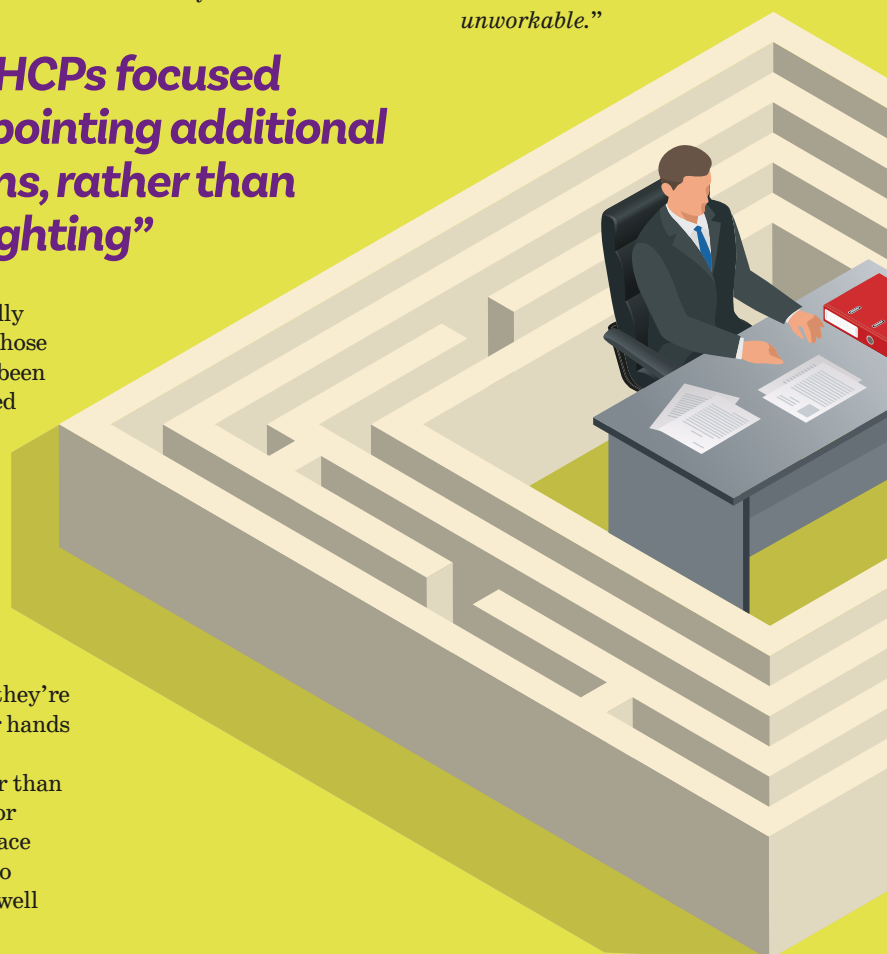
reviews. Families who lack trust in a setting can have the tendency to turn their EHCP into a highly prescriptive wishlist, says Greg Loynes of Inscape House School – a provider of outreach support for mainstream schools in 14 local boroughs.

“The amount of times an EHCP will dictate myriad interventions...and when you add them all up, it’s more than a school day,” he says. *“A well-written EHCP should last for a whole Key Stage. You’ll review it every year, and maybe tweak it – but an inflexible EHCP doesn’t allow for that, and will soon become outdated and unworkable.”*

“We need EHCPs focused around pinpointing additional interventions, rather than daily fire-fighting”

EHCP, since it’s a legally binding document. If those levels of trust haven’t been built, don’t be surprised if parents want their EHCP to include and cover everything.

A lack of regular contact between parents and settings can also affect annual reviews. I’m often surprised at how many families believe they’re expected to sit on their hands and wait for their next official meet-up, rather than feeling able to pop in for regular short face-to-face chats with their SENCo about what’s working well



It's important to be open and honest with parents over the resources the school has, and how they can best make use of them. Also crucial is that there be some guidance during the review meeting to prevent the content from becoming too inflexible. It's advisable for any chairperson to outline an EHCP's true remit and then immediately focus on outcomes first, rather than shunting the outcomes discussion to the end of the list.

Putting carers in the picture requires openness, but pretending there aren't any difficulties relating to resources will only lead to anger, or parents feeling that they've been hoodwinked. Bear in mind that families typically won't be aware of exactly how the EHCP process itself actually works, and can often feel in the dark over what's meant to happen next. You'd be amazed at how much a full explanation will help.

Acknowledging reality

Poorly attended EHCP reviews can also be an issue, with documents running the risk of being lopsided at best, or outdated and

inaccurate at worst.

The capacity of health and therapy professionals to attend and contribute to annual reviews can present challenges. They need time to write and submit bespoke contributions, with six weeks' notice generally the absolute minimum required for them to be able to provide any input.

Allowing outside professionals sufficient time will allow their contributions to follow a consistent format, which will in turn make it easier and quicker for the EHCP to include their final recommendations.

In terms of attendance, some settings adopt a termly approach to their invites, where they compile a list of all children due a review over the coming term, which seems to work well. One school I spoke to even gives families 12 months' notice.

That said, there are some realities we need to acknowledge. I've attended meetings where a health professional has had to wait some time before making their contribution. Ideally, everyone should be present throughout, but in practice, that's typically not possible. It's better to offer 15-minute slots in meetings upfront, rather than risk having no discussion at all. Presenting this as an option could mean the difference between

getting the input you

need and being turned down altogether.

Mixing and matching virtual meetings with face-to-face encounters isn't perfect, but it's better than nothing. Even just a small amount of attendance can stop plans being made that later prove to be unworkable.

Stress support

Great schools will also hold pre-review brainstorming meetings with teaching staff, so that they can be prepared with essential information on progress and interventions. One aspect of the current system that urgently needs changing, however, is how the onus is on schools to be almost entirely responsible for an EHCP's progress, including chasing submissions. In Greg Loynes' view, it's unfair for education settings to be shouldering such stressful and time-consuming work, when LAs could and should be doing more to make things easier.

And yet, despite all the measures that can be taken to make EHCPs more focused, their format isn't well-suited to practical classroom use. The best settings will thus employ a host of strategies that bridge an individual's EHCP and their classroom needs – such as one-page profiles that include a photograph of the student and contain essential information for teachers presented from the student's viewpoint.

Gareth Morewood advocates using 'Stress Support Plans' to identify and offset potential daily obstacles, which can be compiled with input from students, parents and teachers. In our book, we also recommend that parents create simple charts to communicate potential issues, their causes and classroom strategies that have previously worked well. I've done that myself, and knew it had worked when I

FIND OUT MORE

The Council for Disabled Children has developed a suite of free EHCP e-learning courses that cover following areas:

- Delivering Quality Annual Reviews
- The role of CAMHS in the EHCP process
- Holistic outcomes in EHCPs
- Focus on Health Advice

To find out more and register a place, visit learning.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk

STUDIO 3

Training provided by Gareth D. Morewood that's centred on a whole school approach to improving integration and support for SEND students; further details can be found at studio3.org/education

arrived at parents evening and didn't have to explain autism to anyone I met with.

Once parents can establish that kind of trust, they won't feel the need to throw the kitchen sink into their EHCP – because it's not just the England squad that can benefit from better teamwork.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Debby Elley is the co-founder of *AuKids* magazine and co-author, with Gareth D. Morewood, of *Championing Your Autistic Teen at Secondary School* (£14.99, Jessica Kingsley Publishers)

TS readers can receive a 20% discount off the book's RRP when ordering from jkp.com by entering the code 'Champ 20' at checkout until December 31st 2024

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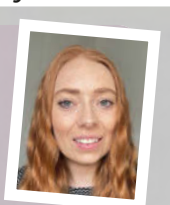
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The meaning of WELLBEING

We need to think more deeply about we actually mean by ‘wellbeing’ and what schools can do to support it, suggests **Barry Mansfield**

For a near-ubiquitous topic of conversation, there’s a surprising lack of agreement as to what ‘wellbeing’ actually means and how we can cultivate it. Not that this stops the internet from weighing in, of course. A quick Google search produces ‘5 steps to wellbeing’, eight levels, 10 domains and a triangle, to name just a few.

This talk of wellbeing ‘steps’, ‘levels’ and ‘domains’ might seem helpfully clear and concise at first, but such approaches can prove to be distinctly mechanical and medical in practice – often stemming from the conflation of ‘wellbeing’ with ‘mental health’.

This is what can lead some to commission a new bolt-on practice, buy a new system or training course, enlist personnel or build a whole new ‘wellness suite’. This kind of activity lets us add a patina of wellbeing to our daily routines – but will it really provide the answer?

Effects, not causes

In schools, the focus can often be on ameliorating effects, rather than

tackling causes. Of course, we need to put out the fire before we try banning matches. Wellbeing is so broad, so complex and so contingent on different factors it seems almost impossible to argue that schools should be capable of addressing root causes.

However, it’s also true that schools are *systems* – and as such, can be unresponsive, mechanical and detrimental to our wellbeing. They may also operate with cultures or values that enable inequitable or exclusive exercises of power. So if we’re to find our ‘answer’, we need to first check that our own houses are in order.

When Halcyon London International School was founded 10 years ago, we did just that. Our starting point was that wellbeing is about feeling safe, happy and secure, with all of us able to fulfil our unique potential as a result. This led to us approaching education in a way that ensures the whole individual feels understood, trusted and respected.

Our culture of wellbeing is defined by a consistent sense of meaning and purpose in all we do. Underpinning this is a commitment to promoting autonomy and agency among our students;

developing our sense of belonging as a community of learners; our sense of emotional, social, intellectual and physical security; and our sense of competence and achievement.

This is enabled by creating a culture that nurtures such opportunities – which, by definition, excludes cultures built on hierarchy, obedience, power and compulsion. It also shuns learning approaches where it’s planned that some will fail.

Values over rules

In practice, implementing this approach has entailed investing in cognitive coaching training for all staff, and providing timetabled space in which trained coaches can work with students. We actively demonstrate trust and confidence in our students, while helping them learn how to self-regulate, problem-solve and utilise the agency we give them.

This has meant removing arcane systems of ‘consequences’ that often shade into ‘punishment’, and investing in restorative practice training to rebuild relationships and trust. Teachers understand how structured conversations can be used to build students’ ability to reflect on wrongs, and take ownership of making them right.

It has also meant abandoning ‘rules’ that require enforcement and communicate power. Instead, we’ve placed our trust in values that support the mediation of problems and help young people better understand civic and

political processes. For this to work, every classroom must be culturally responsive, allowing everyone to feel recognised and that they belong there.

Engagement and belonging

What we do for students we also do for staff – investing in training and development, removing internal hierarchies and promoting collaborative practice and innovation.

None of this is easy, but we all know that we learn better when we’re engaged. And you can’t be engaged if you feel you don’t belong, or that your education doesn’t have meaning. We shouldn’t treat wellbeing services as an extra; wellbeing should be built into the fabric of every routine, every classroom and every decision.

We’re privileged in having the resources to adopt this approach, and are aware of the exceptional work schools across the education sector do in circumstances much more challenging than ours. If this innovative and collaborative approach to education is to become more embedded across our system, then we need those leading our country to invest in education and allow innovation.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barry Mansfield is the Director of Halcyon London International School – a non-profit school in Marylebone for ages 11-18 that follows the International Baccalaureate curriculum

More than a feeling

It seems an almost heretical question to pose within the teaching profession, but ... could too much empathy be a bad thing? **Colin Foster** suspects so...

What qualities do schools look for when employing a teacher? High on the list, I'm sure, is empathy.

Because who could possibly argue with that? If the Oxford English Dictionary is correct, and empathy is indeed '*The ability to understand and share the feelings of another*', then that's surely an essential prerequisite for anyone wanting to work with children and young people.

Teaching is, after all, famously one of the 'caring professions', with personal attributes such as empathy playing an arguably even more important role than subject knowledge and pedagogical skill. When parents send their children off to school each morning, the very least they expect is that the teachers who'll be looking after them *in loco parentis* won't be sociopaths, but rather people who care, and who have a deep capacity for empathy.

Against empathy

The 2018 book *Against Empathy* by Paul Bloom has an arresting title, but it's important to note that Bloom is fully supportive of compassion. That much is clear from the book's subtitle, '*The case for rational compassion*'. Before you dismiss what he has to say, it's essential to understand that this isn't a book that endorses being horrible to people. Actually, it's quite the opposite.

Bloom's core argument is that we don't make good decisions in other people's best interests, or respond well to real-world incidents,

if we're overly influenced by how another person's situation makes us feel.

Being motivated solely by our natural human empathy may sometimes lead to us being more disposed towards actions that alleviate someone's pain and distress in the short term – or merely make us feel better – while leaving them worse off in the long run.

Actions motivated by empathy will often leave us feeling as though we've 'done the right thing' and are a 'good person'. When looked at more coolly, however, we might not have helped the other person as much as we'd like to think. Without realising it, we might have even helped to make things worse.

Compassionate rationality

Let's consider some examples. When a student is distressed about something, we obviously want and need to be compassionate.

We give them time, listen to what they want to say and try to take the pressure off them. We might ask them how we can help, and possibly seek to involve other professionals, if needed. All are sensible courses of action informed by common sense.

However, the motivation for taking such actions won't be primarily empathy. Focusing on empathy may cause us to misdirect our available resources principally towards those

who 'shout the loudest' by being extremely vocal about their problems. Over-servicing those students can risk establishing a cycle of reinforcement, where they learn over time to continue claiming more and more of the wrong kind of attention – the type that won't really support them in their personal growth. In the meantime, other students with less 'noisy' problems will be overlooked.

Compassionate rationality, on the other hand, could entail actively *looking*

for students with difficulties who might naturally generate less attention towards themselves. Rather than waiting and responding to the most dramatic incidents and people, we instead deliberately seek out those students who are quieter and more withdrawn; whose issues may be just as serious, perhaps even more so, than their peers who loudly demand our attention.



Proactive support

Students can sometimes experience genuinely appalling events and changes within their lives that can be very hard for us to hear. Being led by our empathy can result in us being astonished that some of our young people are able to function at all, and expressing amazement at their ability to even make it into school.

We may find ourselves doubting whether we, as

adults, would have the capacity to cope with what they're facing, and humbled by their apparent reserves of strength and bravery. All that may be true, and should be acknowledged.

But empathetic reactions such as these can also trap us into seeing such students in ways that may not support their long-term wellbeing.

A more *compassionately rational* response may involve asking what

proactive support would be in their best interests to help them take the next steps in their journey. An *overly empathetic* perspective might make us feel guilty about expecting anything from them.

The need for distance

Professionals in other caring professions readily recognise the importance of distance – not just as a protective mechanism for carers, but because over-involvement isn't necessarily always in the person's best interests.

For illustrations of this, we can look to medicine. In his 2022 book, *And Finally: Matters of Life and Death*, the neurosurgeon and author Henry Marsh wrote that, "As a doctor, you could not do the work if you were truly empathic – if you literally felt yourself what your patient was feeling ... You have to practise instead a limited form of compassion, without losing your humanity in the process."

If this is right, then when you next enter hospital for a surgical procedure, you shouldn't be hoping that you'll get the surgeon with the greatest reserves of empathy. Such a person might be too distracted, or too inhibited to

carry out the procedure that you'll ultimately need to be performed as competently as possible. There's the possibility that they may hold themselves back from seeing the necessary actions through to their full conclusion.

Setting the boundaries

If this is the case for doctors and other professionals, then perhaps there's something valuable here that education professionals in schools can learn as well.

If teachers are to go on serving their students in the most effective ways they can, then what's needed are boundaries – which should include being compassion-led, rather than empathy-led.

Burned-out, emotionally exhausted teachers aren't going to be in the best position to offer care and support to their students. Facing students who present with complex needs, day after day, while fully feeling the depth of those problems – especially at a time when schools have increasingly limited access to external solutions and support – will likely lead to disillusionment and burnout.

Instead, we should focus on developing greater reserves of rational compassion, so that staff are encouraged to think hard about what actions will put the students' interests first, and actively limit the extent to which we make important decisions based primarily on empathy.

“Empathetic reactions can trap us into seeing students in ways that may not support their long-term wellbeing”



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

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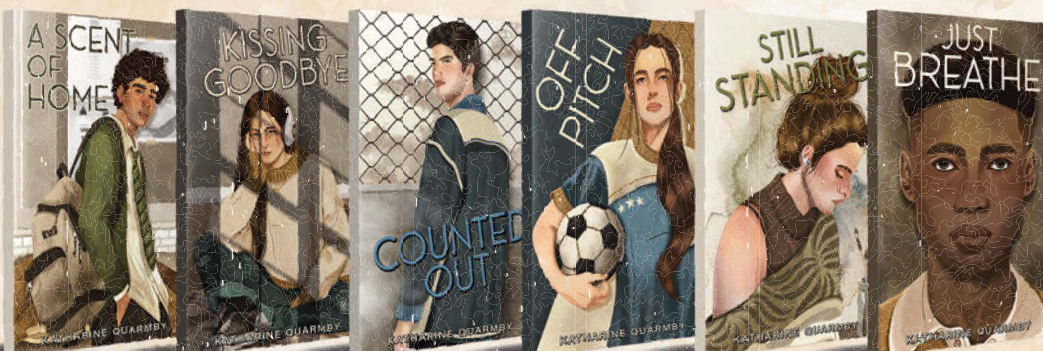
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- + How England placed in PISA 2022
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Thinking about...

BEHAVIOUR AS COMMUNICATION

It can be tempting to assume that the behaviours presented by learners result from conscious decisions they make about how they'll act – but this is not always the case.

Behaviour is influenced by a complex range of factors – from physical factors, such as medical conditions or disability, to psychological factors, like emotional trauma or delayed social development, and even elements of the learning environment itself, such as noise levels or seating arrangements. Add to those the raft of social influences at play – discrimination or bullying, for instance – and it's easy to see how some situations can trigger challenging behaviours.

As education professionals, however, we are responsible for creating safe learning environments in which youngsters can feel that they belong; places where they can learn, achieve and make progress towards happy and fulfilling adult lives. So how should this be reflected in our daily practice?

- **Know what influences behaviour**
It's important for practitioners to explore what factors might lie behind their students' behaviour, and add depth to their understanding by learning about their individual context in order to encourage more positive engagement.
- **Identify and anticipate triggers**
Work with the other adults in your classroom or setting to identify changes in behaviour and possible explanations for these. Where appropriate, talk to students and

other stakeholders and try to unpick any reasons for behaviours that challenge. Sometimes, behaviours that challenge may be indicative of underlying unmet needs.

- **Encourage self-reflection and share coping strategies**
Students should learn to recognise and be conscious of how they're feeling and how they might be supported. This might involve the student chatting with an adult away from the classroom, or spending time in a safe space to self-regulate. Perhaps a change of activity is called for, or a chance to stim – though the aim of any coping strategies should always be to enable a return to learning as soon as possible.
- **Promote positive behaviours through strong relationships**
Create an ethos that recognises the individual, celebrates mutual respect and ensures everyone feels valued.

The theme of behaviour as communication is further explored in a new online SEND CPD unit from Whole School SEND and Real Group, as part of the Universal Services programme, which is funded until 2025 by the DfE.

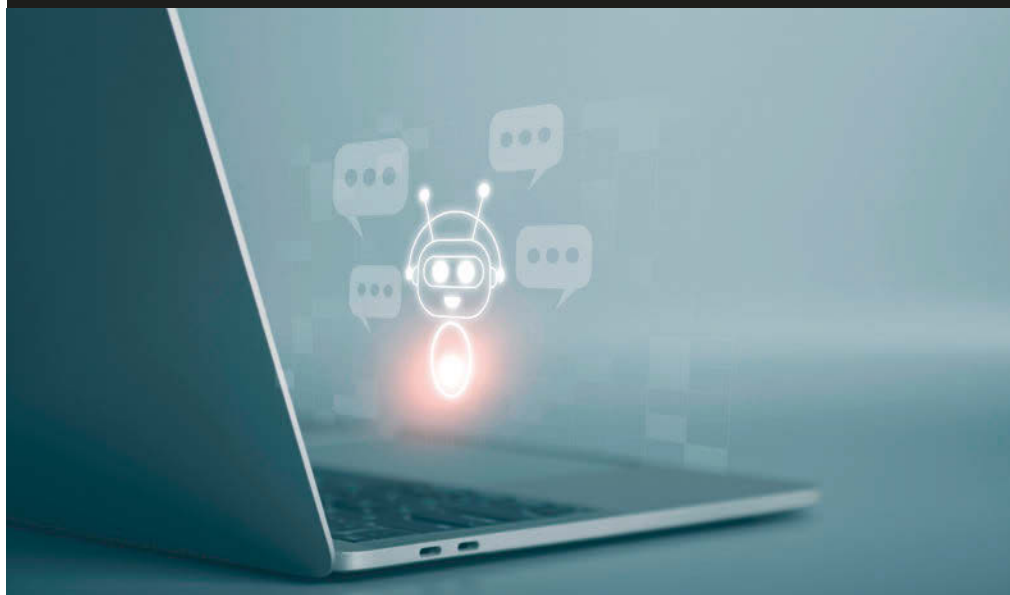
The free-to-access unit is one of a series of 20 that will be released over the course of the programme to help practitioners explore some of the most commonly observed barriers to learning in classrooms and other learning environments regardless of age, label or area of need. Find out more at wholeschoolsend.org.uk/page/online-cpd-units



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amanda Wright is head of Whole School SEND, having joined in 2018 as a Regional SEND Leader; prior to this, she worked in mainstream education for 20 years and has extensive experience as a SENCo and senior leader

CLOSE-UP ON... SAVING TIME WITH AI



Improbable as it may seem, last year saw the generative AI-driven chatbot ChatGPT reach 100,000,000 registered users – barely two months after its initial launch in November 2022. Like many, I found myself intrigued by this new ‘do everything for you’ technology and wanted to find out more.

My first impressions were positive. This tool could write emails for me, help with school improvement planning targets – what’s not to love? The more I used it, however, the more I came to realise that its responses were good starting points, but that it lacked specific knowledge of education. Ask it, ‘*What is section 4 of the SEND Code of Practice?*’ and you’d likely get a confidently expressed but wholly inaccurate reply. The CoP was published in 2015, so one might assume that ChatGPT would be familiar with it, but apparently not.

This got me thinking. How much of a genuine game-changer could

ChatGPT be if we knew for certain that it was drawing on correct information? If it had absorbed the latest DfE guidance, been given explicit information from Ofsted, or been primed with some of the EEF’s latest research reports? Imagine that – a ChatGPT that could substantively answer questions put to it on operational matters relating to education...

Enter SLT AI – an instance of the ChatGPT engine that’s been trained on 75 documents (and counting) from the DfE, Ofsted, the EEF, the Home Office and other entities with the specific aim of reducing workload for school leaders through the practical application of generative AI.

The main SLT AI interface currently features more than 50 distinct tools – for everything from focused school improvement, to SIP/SEF writing, deep dive preparation, curriculum progression, composing emails, writing newsletters, producing job adverts and more besides, with new tools being added

all the time.

I’d have loved having access a suite of such tools back when I was a headteacher, as it would have allowed me to spend considerably more time with pupils and staff instead of being chained to my desk, buried in paperwork. Rather than setting aside 30 minutes every Friday morning to write that week’s newsletter, it could have taken me 5 minutes. Hours spent writing my SEF/SIP would have taken barely one hour or less.

I was recently made aware via X/Twitter of a deputy trust CEO who had previously dedicated a whole day to supporting his headteachers with some Deep Dive prep. Using SLT AI’s Deep Dive tool, he was finished in an hour. Not ‘a whole day’ – *one hour*.

How about you? If you’d like to see how SLT AI could potentially save you hours each week, visit sltai.co.uk. We always welcome suggestions for new features – so together, let’s lead smarter, not harder...

DO THIS

KISS LESSONS

Exercise better class control with these tips from Robin Launder...

The thinking goes that all-singing, all-dancing lessons are the epitome of great teaching. You know the ones – those lessons you roll out when you’re being observed and for Ofsted visits. Someone’s watching, and you want to knock their socks off.

Trouble is, this can whip students up into a frenzy. Their behaviour slips out of your control. Little actual learning takes place, because that’s no longer the main rationale for the lesson. Instead, it’s *razzmatazz*. Oh, the students can tell you what they *did*, but not what they *learned*.

The surest bet in terms of both learning and behaviour management are ‘KISS’ lessons; those that Keep It Simple and Straightforward. Teacher positioned at the front. Students sat so that they can see the teacher. Teacher instructions that are succinct and easy to follow. Work that’s challenging, thus requiring the students to focus.

There’ll be lots of working in silence and lots of pens moving. A mix of individual and paired work will allow for high ratio engagement while making it easier to manage student behaviour, resulting in a win-win. Transitions between activities end up being quick and crisp. The teacher will always be on their feet, but not rushing around. Because a calm teacher will have a calm class.

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

CRAIG MCKEE IS A FORMER HEADTEACHER AND THE FOUNDER OF SLT AI; FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT SLTAI.CO.UK OR CONTACT INFO@SLTAI.CO.UK

36%

of parents consult their child's teacher for general guidance on vocabulary building

Source: The Oxford Language Report 2023-2024 produced by Oxford University Press

Having been talked up for a number of years, it seems the first all-digital GCSE may finally be upon us. OCR has announced that as of 2025, students taking its computer science GCSE will be able to sit only digital exams, with no paper-based component at all. Schools will ultimately decide on whether to offer the digitally assessed GCSE (which is still awaiting regulatory approval by Ofqual), depending on their general preference and/or the extent of their digital infrastructure.

The announcement comes in the wake of a successful year-long trial, during which students took 'digital mocks' in OCR's computer science GCSE course and were able to receive rapid results and feedback following the exam's conclusion.

According to OCR's chief executive, Jill Duffy, "It's striking how readily students and teachers have taken to digital mock exams. Our pilots show that digital exams are quicker, more suited to how students learn, more sustainable and great learning tools. Digital assessment is not a hypothetical future, it's happening now."

Computer science is an especially good fit for the benefits offered by all-digital exams, of course, but Duffy was clear that this is just the start, adding, "Other subjects will follow computer science. Our pilot mock exams show that students appreciate being able to type, rather than handwrite their answers, seeing wordcounts and timers as they progress. It brings greater clarity to the marking process."

YOUR GUIDE TO...

SILENCE



The established tendency in contemporary teaching is to avoid all-silent classrooms, in favour of a more collegiate atmosphere where talk and discussion is encouraged, but carefully managed and controlled.

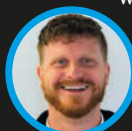
This orthodoxy has gone on to shape many teachers' classroom conduct and with it, students' expectations when they enter the classroom. As a result, it's become easy to forget just how valuable 'quiet time' can be when utilised correctly. So how should you look to use silence, and what's the most efficient way of making a class comfortable with the idea of working silently?

Switching to phases of silence throughout a lesson can be a great way of giving learners a varied diet. While collaboration and talk can certainly be helpful for collective efficacy, silence allows students to apply their learning in order to see what they have retained or understood, and what they haven't. If we explain our reasoning behind switching to silent phases, then we should be able to build self-efficacy in our learners over time, so that they come to see for themselves just how significant and useful silent working can be.

Of course, it's no secret that students will sit their final exams in silence. Suddenly dropping learners into situations of extended silence can affect their thinking processes if they've only ever had limited experience of it before. Anxiety, confusion and fear are feelings that all of us can encounter when placed in an unfamiliar situation, regardless of age. By integrating short bursts of controlled silence in our lessons, we can help learners adapt to exam conditions and make them more familiar with an important aspect of the assessment process that they may well be worried about.

When it comes to encouraging silence, reach for those visual indicators. Clear, non-verbal gestures and your overall body language will be your most reliable tools and not only reduce the extraneous load for those working, but also enable you to set and maintain silent periods without having to raise your own voice.

Above all, we shouldn't see silence as an old-fashioned, draconian measure for maintaining classroom discipline, but as an effective tool we can deploy when crafting a healthy and varied lesson experience.



ADAM RICHES IS A TEACHER, EDUCATION CONSULTANT AND WRITER

69%

of those who qualified as teachers five years ago are still teaching today (with 15% of said cohort having left within their first year)

Education Policy Institute

Need to know

Research by Manchester Metropolitan University has identified links between sports participation at school and higher levels of wellbeing among young people – while also showing that participation in sport can be a significant predictor of self-belief and mental toughness.

The findings came from a survey of 5,481 13- to 15-year-olds conducted across both state and independent schools, carried out on behalf of the Youth Sport Trust and The Heads' Conference. The survey data was used to produce a composite score reflecting the number of sports a child had participated in, their level of school sports involvement and how important they perceived school sports to be.

The correlation between involvement in sport and levels of wellbeing seemed particularly pronounced between pupils in Y9 and those in Y10, the latter of whom reported lower levels of wellbeing, self-belief and mental toughness – coinciding directly with the reduced participation in sport that can often accompany the start of students' GCSE studies.

Commenting on the findings, Youth Sport trust CEO Ali Oliver MBE said: "This powerful new research clearly shows not just the importance of young people taking part in sport and physical activity at school, but crucially, continuing to take part throughout exam season. We know that healthy and happy children learn better, and with mock exam season approaching for many young people, this research highlights the need for young people to remain engaged in sport throughout the school year."



WHY YOU NEED A... ROBUST COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

With the number of parental complaints submitted to schools seemingly on the rise, it's worth ensuring that your reporting systems are sufficiently reliable and responsive, writes Tamara Dasht...

All schools must have a complaints procedure, as set out in Section 29(1) of the Education Act 2002 and Part 7 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

If, however, you're unsure as to whether your complaints procedure is fully compliant with current legislation and guidance, it may be worth looking at it afresh, and possibly seeking legal advice. Some might choose to adopt a templated procedure from a reputable source to ensure their compliance, but do make sure this doesn't give the name of your school or trust as [INSERT NAME] – because yes, we have seen that before...

At Browne Jacobson, we've seen a surge in both the number and complexity of parental complaints, with clients regularly telling us about the huge volume of time and resources they're putting into managing the complaints they receive.

Dealing with them efficiently requires having a legally compliant procedure in place (and following it!), but beyond that, we would strongly encourage taking an holistic approach to complaints management.

Key to this is building a culture of open conversation and mutual respect within your school. If parents feel they can approach you with their concerns, and that those concerns will be addressed both promptly and properly, you can avoid later escalations.

Your staff also need to know the procedure inside out, and possess the skills needed to follow it to the letter.

Managing difficult conversations with parents has always been part of the job, but one that's unfortunately grown larger in recent years. To that end, we'd urge leaders to provide some form of training specifically designed to prepare staff for such situations.

Staff should always know where they can go to seek support, or simply air their grievances. Consider appointing a nominated individual at the school whose role will include complaints management, and who can offer support and guidance to staff in the event of any challenging exchanges with parents.

Keeping a thorough record of complaints will help you both identify any similar or recurring issues, and bed in any major changes to your practice or procedures.

For example – is the school currently receiving multiple complaints concerning attainment levels? If so, you might need to review your communication of students' grades and progress to parents. It's often cases of mistaken communication – or, indeed, a lack of any communication at all – that lies at the heart of parental complaints. Keeping parents well-informed, and perhaps seeking their input on occasion, will make them feel more involved in the life of the school, and prevent otherwise robust relationships from breaking down.

In short, get the fundamentals right. Ensure your complaints policy is legally compliant. Make sure that (suitably trained) staff know and follow it – and more than anything, communicate as much as you can. You can then sit back and hopefully watch as your volume of parental complaints, and the time/resource investment in dealing with them, both start to decline.

TAMARA DASHT IS AN ASSOCIATE AT BROWNE JACOBSON; FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT BROWNEJACOBSON.COM OR FOLLOW @BROWNEJACOBSON



On the radar **PISA**

The OECD's latest Programme for International Student Assessment findings are now out – so how did England's outcomes stack up against those of other countries?

Before going into the headline figures, it's necessary to point out that England's assessment data (based on a 2-hour computer assessment and questionnaire completed by 4,763 15-year-olds drawn from 165 schools) failed to meet two of PISA's 82 Technical Standards. Subsequent analysis found that England's sample was not 'entirely representative' of its

overall pupil population, with participants having higher attainment compared to the average, and a lower than average proportion of FSM-eligible pupils. As the DfE's own PISA report for England puts it, "Higher performing pupils may be over-represented in the final sample."

So with that in mind – plus the inevitable post-COVID factors – pupils in England achieved a mean maths score of 492, which was significantly higher than the OECD average of 472, but lower than England's score of

504 back in 2018.

In reading, England's score of 496 again put it some way above the OECD average of 476, equating to 13th place overall, with Singapore, the Republic of Ireland and Japan making up the top three reading countries. It was a similar story in science, with England's score of 503 faring well against an OECD average of 485. All told, England's overall PISA score came to 494, amounting to 14th place in the global rankings.

For more information and to view the full set of PISA results, visit oecd.org/pisa

TRENDING

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

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

Film education charity Into Film has launched a new student-oriented podcast. The Media Careers Podcast will see industry professionals from the TV, broadcast, film, animation and gaming sectors – on both the creative and technical side – discuss their career journeys, and the specifics of what their current roles involve. mediacareers.org

GLOBAL OUTLOOK

International Baccalaureate educators might be interested in the information and resources now available to download from IB Exchange, including a series of resources themed around dialogue produced by Generation Global – the education arm of the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. bit.ly/ib-exchange

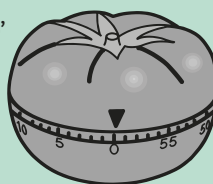
STUDENT STUDY TIPS

STRUCTURING REVISION

SOME POINTERS TO PASS ON AS YOUR Y11S APPROACH EXAMS SEASON...

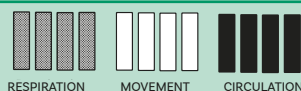
1 POMODORO TECHNIQUE

Break each study task down into manageable time chunks of 20-25 minutes and set a timer. Once it goes off, cross off one 'pomodoro tomato' and move onto another topic or subject area.



2 REGULAR TASKS

A 3- or 4-hour study session can be broken down into manageable 25-minute chunks – but every three sessions, take a 25-minute break. Rest, relax, listen to some music and put your feet up.

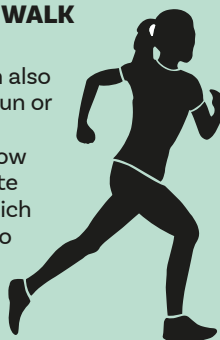


3 INTERLEAVING

As you work through those 25-minute chunks, why not mix up the topics you're studying? Working on different topics will help with long-term recall and ensure that you cover more ground.

4 GO FOR A WALK OR RUN

Taking a break can also mean going for a run or walk. Exercising increases blood flow and helps stimulate neural activity, which has been proven to help improve students' focus.



5 VARIETY OF MEDIA

Using different forms of media to revise can keep study interesting. Change point of focus from video clips, to podcasts to PowerPoint presentations.



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)

ENGLISH

Reading Plus

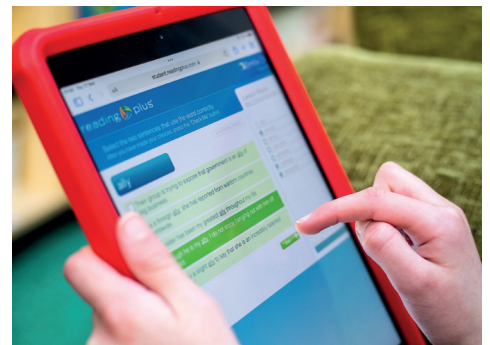
An online platform that provides valuable insights into students' reading abilities and can help them become more efficient and enthusiastic readers over time



AT A GLANCE

- A web-based reading platform
- Designed to help readers become more efficient and effective
- Adaptive intelligence matches learners to texts and continues to do so throughout
- Huge range of fiction and non-fiction texts
- Online nature makes it easily accessible for students and teachers alike

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES



Reading interventions are among the most complex activities in a secondary setting to get right. If you're in need of a programme that's proven successful at improving the reading abilities of young people, look no further than Reading Plus.

I've seen the power of Reading Plus first-hand in numerous settings, in terms of improving reading ability and more importantly, reading confidence. It remains one of the select few ways in which I've seen reading develop across a school, with almost zero cost in terms of time and workload for classroom teachers. Reading Plus gets young people reading in a way that builds self-efficacy and maturity.

The platform has a simple aim – to develop more accomplished readers. It does this by being essentially bespoke to each individual user. Upon logging in for the first time, learners undertake an initial baseline test which matches them to one of 14 levels aligned to their reading ability.

Each level has 70 to 80 fiction and non-fiction texts assigned to it. After each reading activity, the algorithm selects the most appropriate text for students to tackle next, based on live data. This makes the program hugely efficient at responding to learning needs, while requiring no input from teachers with respect to marking or assessment.

Reading Plus actually makes children read better. The platform's 'guided window' feature trains learners in how fast they

ought to read with the aid of a moving box, thus reducing both the extraneous load for readers as they encounter new pages and any temptation they might have to skip ahead. What's more, it gradually speeds up, stretching readers to increase their words per minute reading rate over time.

In this way, Reading Plus encourages the building of visual skills, getting readers to develop their reading muscles and train their eyes in moving effectively and efficiently when scanning words – a particularly helpful feature for weaker readers and EAL learners who may be used to reading from right to left.

Reading Plus is also designed to build vocabulary confidence and expose learners to a plethora of different words. To that end, its highly accessible and engaging vocabulary section boasts 2,500 words.

Automated reading programs are, however, often criticised for their non-individualist, one-to-one humanistic input. Here, however, teachers are easily able to effectively target and intervene with learners as they progress. Data concerning each student's fluency, words per minute, accuracy and comprehension is readily available via a highly functional and navigable interface, thus keeping teachers informed as to precisely what each learner is struggling with in a matter of seconds, rather than through laborious marking.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Impressive assessment facilities to ensure reading material is pitched at appropriate levels for each learner
- ✓ A huge range of texts that ensures learners will be exposed to many different types of reading
- ✓ Online functionality and usability that's second to none
- ✓ Contains content applicable for use at KS1 through to KS4

PICK UP IF...

...you are looking for an all-inclusive reading package that enables tailored reading experiences for all learners.

For more details visit readingsolutionsuk.co.uk

ENGLISH AND DRAMA

The (Incomplete) Lit in Colour Play List

If you're keen to expand the horizons of your existing English Literature and/or Drama curriculum, then let Bloomsbury show you the ideal way to get started

AT A GLANCE

- A comprehensive list of plays by writers of colour selected for 11- to 18-year-old learners
- The writers chosen include a number of outstanding playwrights from Britain and around the world
- A useful and accessible resource that highlights noteworthy works well-suited to the GCSE English Literature and Drama curriculums
- The texts themselves are readily available in editions that include supplementary material to assist with both study and performing

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

Diversifying your reading list is a simple and logical first step towards achieving a more inclusive curriculum. Bit by bit, schools and exam boards are increasingly coming round to this way of thinking, and are working to ensure that their own diversity efforts extend beyond the superficially tokenistic.

If you feel that your KS3-5 English Literature and/or Drama curricula could be adapted to better reflect modern society, then Bloomsbury's *The (Incomplete) Lit in Colour Play List* can help. Why 'incomplete'? Because according to the publisher, to state otherwise would be to exclude countless other voices that need to be heard.

This isn't necessarily about withdrawing or 'cancelling' texts you study already, but rather widening your students' literature diet. As such, the 40-page *List* highlights 57 plays (including four adaptations) from Bloomsbury's Methuen Drama portfolio, Nick Hern Books and Faber for you to explore with your departmental colleagues and students. Key information is given about each play, including synopses, brief overviews of themes and the like, alongside content warnings where applicable.

Also highlighted are plays already among the set texts for some exam boards, but there aren't any age recommendations, given how the plays have been carefully chosen to suit a wide range of cohorts and contexts.

To help you navigate through the featured material featured, many of the listed plays

can be ordered as free 'inspection copies' for teachers to review before deciding whether to purchase copies for their school.

The thematic choices on offer are nothing if not comprehensive, covering plays that variously explore history and culture, sexuality, love, friendship and LGBTQ+ identity, coming of age tales and explorations of family and belonging – as well as masculinity, politics, religion, slavery, corruption and more besides.

The (Incomplete) Lit in Colour Play List is a timely attempt at raising the profile of under-represented voices in literature, and bringing a large number of remarkable, thoughtful and sometimes provocative plays before a wider audience. The *List* is presented in a way that will allow schools to sample texts and explore different topics, themes and issues through works that students will find engaging, and perhaps even revelatory.

For some time now, there's been criticism of the National Curriculum – and the manner in which it's implemented by schools and English departments – for its narrowness, and general lack of diversity. That's why resources such as *The (Incomplete) Lit in Colour Play List* are so important. The list itself, and the works it seeks to draw attention to, represent an admirable attempt at expanding the canon and bringing hitherto overlooked voices and concerns into the light – which is something that all schools can and should get behind.



teach
SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ A practical and detailed selection of exemplar material well-suited to diverse and inclusive English Literature and Drama curriculums
- ✓ Presents a selection of works that can empower students to speak, write and act based on their own cultural experiences
- ✓ Promotes meaning-making and the accumulation of cultural capital
- ✓ Improves empathy, allyship, respect and tolerance of individuals from different backgrounds

PICK UP IF...

...you are looking to move your curriculum forward, increase students' access to plays by writers of colour and empower your learners to explore a wide range of themes that will nourish their thinking and lived experiences

The (Incomplete) Lit in Colour Play List can be viewed online for free via bit.ly/ts131-LIC; for more details, visit bloomsbury.com/litincolour

MATHS + SCIENCE

Collins GCSE 9-1 Exam Skills and Practice

A series of revision workbooks focusing on the kind of responses examiners will be looking for

AT A GLANCE

- Exam skills and practice books for GCSE maths and science
- Helps students master the full range of exam questions by focusing on command words
- Questions organised by question type and topic
- Gives students a very clear sense of how to shape their answers

REVIEW BY JOHN DABELL

Knowing how to revise is a skill, with many techniques out there for improving memory, bolstering knowledge and giving students the edge in exams.

With its new revision series, Exam Skills and Practice for GCSE Maths and Science, Collins has put the spotlight on the 'command' words used in exams, and pooled together questions of the same type to support students in getting to grips with the specific instructional, operational and task words they're most likely to encounter.

There may be other revision books that focus on keywords, but Collins has evidently thought carefully here about how to strategically organise and systematically structure keywords properly, so that students really get to know and recognise what's being asked of them.

Knowing the full range of command words is essential, as these are what give clues as to how students should be answering a question. And there are lots of them, making the arrival of these resources especially welcome.

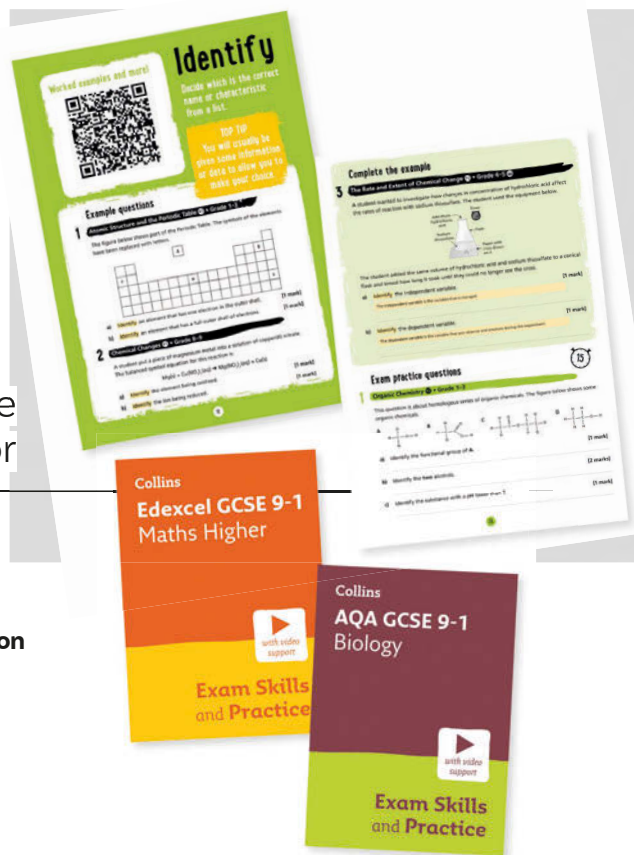
The books take a deep dive into different question styles by focusing on target words, helping students see how each command word or phrase contains a unique set of expectations, and how 'unlocking' their meaning can help them direct their answers more effectively. What Collins has done particularly well in these books is help students get a feel for the depth, type and breadth of the answers that

will be expected of them across a range of different topics and grade levels. Students are taught that each separate word and phrase has a specific purpose that demands a suitably specific response, making the books perfect for practising active recall.

Studying the content of these books will help students fine-tune their exam technique so that it aligns more closely with examiners' marking criteria. The books themselves are well laid out, with clear definitions, useful tips, practical guidance and advice on timing, alongside a series of graded practice exam questions, partial worked examples, and mixed questions. Worked examples can be accessed via QR codes that link to video solutions with accompanying commentary for even more support.

These books will help students meet the demands of revision head-on. The material they contain is concisely presented and easy to digest, with a wide range of useful insights and advice designed to help students distinguish between different command words and become confident in their abilities to give examiners exactly what they're looking for.

To get to the top, students have to follow the commands. These guides will do a great job of helping them understand the hierarchy of skills needed to follow said commands accurately, unpack their meaning and ultimately improve the standard of their responses.



teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Helps students grasp precisely what examiners are looking for and how to align their responses
- ✓ Gives students a clear picture of how to meet the demands of different question types
- ✓ Supports students in 'translating' questions, deciphering context and allocating time judiciously
- ✓ Provides students with the confidence to answer questions effectively, while avoiding common pitfalls
- ✓ Helps students better understand marking criteria, self-assess and 'think like an examiner'

PICK UP IF...

You're looking to help students unpack exam questions in a detailed, nuanced way in order to optimise their answering technique and ensure their academic potential is realised

For more information, visit collins.co.uk/revision

CAREERS



Employable Me

An interactive online resource to help young people prepare to enter the world of work

AT A GLANCE

- Created and delivered by the charity Young Enterprise
- A comprehensive online course divided into discrete units
- Covers all the essentials of job-hunting, such as CV writing and interview technique
- Includes further useful units on knowing your USP and cleaning up your social media presence
- Presented in a lively and accessible way

REVIEW BY: MIKE DAVIES

Do you remember your first job interviews? Perhaps you'd rather forget them – the squirming self-doubt, the panic of being under-prepared, the cringeworthy replies born from ignorance and/or naive arrogance...

The careers advice provided at secondary school should go some way towards preventing these kinds of issues. And yet, while the overall quality of careers advice has dramatically improved over the years (particularly when compared to my own school days), the limited time and resourcing that schools can dedicate to their careers offering mean that advisors and teachers often face an uphill struggle.

Step forward, Young Enterprise. As a national charity committed to helping young people succeed in the ever-changing world of work, Young Enterprise is dedicated to empowering those leaving full-time education to make the most of their potential. That includes providing invaluable practical guidance to those taking their first tentative steps into the jobs market through its YE Learning Zone platform and comprehensive Employable Me online course.

Employable Me covers all the key aspects of job-hunting in an enjoyable and accessible way. As you'd expect, students are given essential advice on how to craft a good CV, prepare for interviews and generally give the best possible account of themselves – all of which is presented via

separate units that students can work through at their own pace.

What really impresses me about Employable Me are the inclusion of additional thought-provoking activities that are designed to make users think beyond the obvious employment essentials. For one thing, there's a whole unit dedicated to helping learners consider their own unique selling points – because after all, why would any employer invest in someone who doesn't even know themselves what makes them special?

There's also a unit dedicated to encouraging young people to clean up their social media presence. I'll bet that there are plenty of people who now wish, back in the day, that they'd had someone other than their parents or teachers telling them to

delete this comment, or think again about posting that content. Because which young people are ever going to listen to what they have to say about social media?

The information is conveyed throughout in a range of interesting and interactive ways that are a million miles away from the dry, airless careers sessions of my youth. Also included are brief questionnaires to help learners crystallise their self-knowledge, short video clips that serve to illustrate sound interview techniques and mini-quizzes to check for understanding.

Once students have completed the course, they receive a personalised

certificate. Most importantly, however, they'll have gained valuable insights into how they can best showcase their skills and talents to potential employers. Good job!

**teach
SECONDARY**

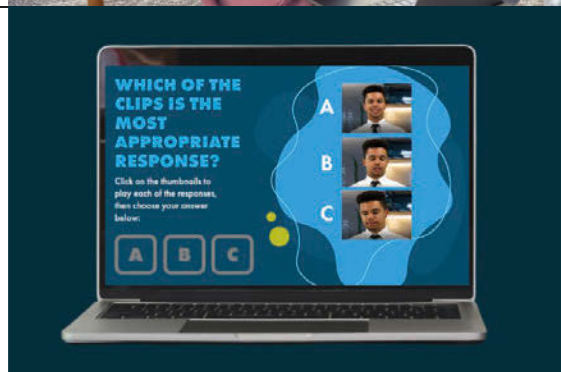
VERDICT

- ✓ Fronted by relatable presenters
- ✓ Imparts practical and valuable advice
- ✓ Thoughtfully laid out and designed
- ✓ Extends far beyond basic employability skills



UPGRADE IF...

You want to give your students a lively, yet informative introduction to entering the jobs market.



Licence priced at £5 per student; find out more at ye-learningzone.org.uk



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

The best of both worlds



Teaching to the test to the exclusion of all else will do your students few favours, warns **John Lawson** – but a little test-specific drilling can also go a long way...

Should we ever ‘teach to the test’ (4T)? Absolutely! Should we teach *solely* to the test? Absolutely not.

I’d never have passed my GCSEs without combining studying outside the box with specific prepping for tests. My seminary professors, on the other hand, were rock-solid Romantics who never knowingly tailored lessons to the dictates of the day’s exam questions – which created needless anxiety and stress for their students.

Only by seeking out and studying past papers myself did I learn how to connect parables of the Kingdom (from Matthew’s Gospel only) to Catholic social teachings or specific papal encyclicals. Yes, I wanted to be ‘saved’ – but I also wanted a degree.

Demystifying the papers

Exam skills will often determine students’ final grades, and therefore merit serious scrutiny. There’s a telling observation in David Lodge’s 1975 novel *Changing Places*, when the character of Professor Swallow is shown tinkering with and polishing exams that “*Mix easy questions on obscure authors with obscure questions on easy authors.*” Now, as it was then, too many examiners delight in fashioning cryptic clues for their exam papers, rather than clear, unambiguous questions.

So long as exam questions remain rendered in awkward prose and are closed, rather than approachable and open, it’s up to teachers to assist their students in demystifying these all-important exam papers that will so profoundly shape their futures.

If 4T advocates consistently help their students to achieve outstanding examination results, then they deserve our respect. I’ll stop being a 4T teacher myself once stellar grades are regularly awarded to those students who appreciate art for art’s sake, and when principals, parents, and pupils no longer stress so much over results.

Trim the fat

I remember once being assigned an A Level class on church history because my HoD couldn’t settle on how to teach 2,000 years of history over the course of 35 lessons. The answer? Trim the fat! (though yes, this is admittedly more difficult to do with some subjects compared to others.)

Far from being an act of vandalism, this streamlining process is actually the realist’s pathway to sanity and success. When exam boards overload those courses, get creative. I recently went through 10 years’ worth of past papers and soon identified eight

topics that would invariably appear – leadership, heresies, the fall of Rome, The Council of Chalcedon, St Thomas Aquinas, the Reformation, the Renaissance, and Vatican II.

I taught all of these topics comprehensively, and ensured students knew of their centrality to our understanding of historical Christianity – which will be why examiners routinely highlighted them. I didn’t do mock exams, though, since *testing* isn’t *teaching*. Instead, I dissected 20 exam questions over the course of four revision lessons, in effect teaching students how to *examine the examiners*. That’s a vital life skill, and as added bonus, seven of those aforementioned topics came up.

That same year I’d read 40 books on church history within eight months, feeling confident afterwards that I was among the country’s best read and most energised RE teachers.

The students’ enthusiasm for this exercise reassured me that I’d managed to convey an engaging narrative, which subsequently helped them better understand the crucial distinctions between the Jesus of History and the Christ of faith. Throughout the course, I’d focused on when and how the Church had succeeded, and when it had failed to be a spiritual force for good. That was the guiding question that informed everything.

The source and the summit

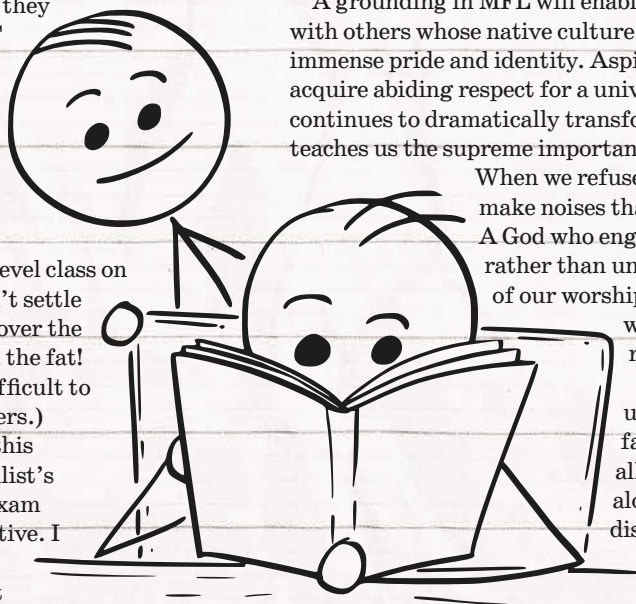
The greatest failure we can indulge is to let the tail wag the dog, and regard exam certificates as both the source and summit of our students’ lives. Because there’s much, much more to education than that.

A grounding in MFL will enable students to communicate with others whose native culture and tongue are sources of immense pride and identity. Aspiring mathematicians should acquire abiding respect for a universal language that has, and continues to dramatically transform all our lives. Theology teaches us the supreme importance of the language of love.

When we refuse to care for others, we merely make noises that ultimately hurt everyone.

A God who engenders fire and brimstone rather than unconditional love is unworthy of our worship. God’s greatest gift to the world was intelligence – and I refuse to leave mine unboxed.

Every subject has a universal eminence that goes far beyond mere grades. If we allow a soulless focus on tests alone to dominate and discourage us from independent thought, then we’re no longer educating.



V&A

INNOVATE

NATIONAL SCHOOLS
CHALLENGE YEARS 7, 8, 9



Free teacher toolkits
Accompanying YouTube series
Activities inspired by V&A objects
Real-world challenges



Cheetah Xtreme, designed by Van
Phillips, manufactured by Ossur,
1984 (manufactured 2012), Iceland.
Donated by Ossur UK.
Museum no. CD.152-2016.
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Run V&A Innovate in your classroom,
visit vam.ac.uk/innovate



Examine *with* us

Mark GCSE and A Level

- Art and Design
- Engineering
- Physical Education
- Psychology
- Build confidence supporting your students with assessment
- Enhance subject knowledge
- Great for professional development



Join our team: ocr.org.uk/assessor

OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA