

VISIT TEACHWIRE.NET/SECONDARY

teach SECONDARY

Outstanding advice from the UK's top education experts

teach
co

**INCLUSIVE
MAINSTREAM FUNDING**



*How should you be
spending yours?*

MEMORY MATTERS

Why students should
still remember dates

NO MORE NEETS

The careers
support schools
SHOULD be offering

KEEP IT CASUAL

How slang can lift your
language lessons

FROM PAGE TO SCREEN

Is it ever okay
to 'watch the
book?'

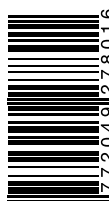
It's showtime!

PUT ON A PLAY WITH LESS STRESS

Plus

artichoke

£3.99 | Issue 15.7



9

Behaviour

Maths

Buildings

Humanities

Revision

SEND

**Make a
difference.**



**Join the
NEU.**

neu.org.uk/join

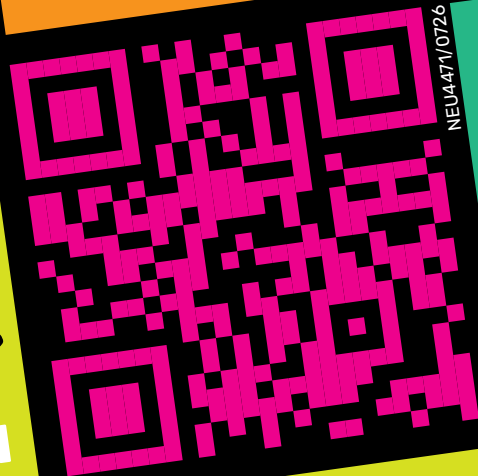
“With each win in
our workplaces,
we’re improving
conditions
across the
country.”

“The NEU is
the voice of
the people who
make education
work.”

“The NEU is
our chance
to change
education for
the better.”

**Join us
today**

0345 811 8111



NEU4471/0726

“Being part
of the NEU is
a reminder
that we are
employees, and
we have rights.”

Terms and conditions at neu.org.uk/neu-membership-tcs

In maintained schools, only the local government unions (GMB, Unison and Unite)
are recognised to collectively bargain on behalf of support staff.

FROM THE EDITOR

“Welcome...”



“What jobs will our students have after they leave school?”

Once upon a time, depending on whereabouts in the country you were, that could be an easy question to answer. It wasn't uncommon for kids to leave the state comprehensives of the 60s and 70s and, with some inevitability, apply to one of several major regional employers – often manufacturers of one kind or another, with a range of shop floor and admin roles that needed filling.

The starting salary wouldn't be much to write home about, but you'd at least be *in*, and taking your first tentative steps as an employee for a company that you could conceivably still be working for, in a more senior position, many years later.

From the vantage point of 2026, it's easy to romanticise certain aspects of that bygone era. Yes, the predictability of so many young people's pathways was reassuring to a degree, but could easily corral all manner of untapped talent and expertise into places where it might never be recognised. Students are now routinely encouraged to at least envisage what they see themselves doing for a living one day, and pursue whatever avenues may be necessary to get there, with their school's careers provision potentially giving them a nudge (see this issue's careers coverage commencing on page 21). That involves a recognition of young people's independence and agency that previous generations would have surely welcomed.

Trouble is, once the stifling conformity of those manual and clerical jobs disappeared, along with the companies that provided them, there was often no like-for-like replacement. Some industrial centres remained, but the predominantly white-collar roles – and university degrees – that subsequent generations were encouraged to aspire to were disproportionately concentrated in larger urban areas and the South East.

We know what happened next – a prolonged decline in the economic and social outcomes of many former industrial hubs, resulting in growing inequalities and a steady, cross-generational rise in the number of young people not in education, employment or training. The present government's widely publicised pivot towards prioritising reductions in NEET numbers is to be commended – though as Melissa Benn points out on p15, there's only so much you can achieve by overhauling the curriculum and offering new technical qualifications.

At some point, we have to collectively reckon with the numerous national and global factors that have contributed to the highly volatile, hypercompetitive jobs market school leavers now find themselves in (special mention here to those employers busily outsourcing their entry-level positions to AI). A comprehensive industrial strategy would be a start – because however helpful and encouraging we are when helping young people formulate their career plans, the jobs need to actually be there.

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser
callum.fausser@theteachco.com

On board this issue:



Martin Matthews
is a teacher and
lecturer



Catherine Priggs is a
secondary history
specialist and
education consultant



Aaron King is a
SEND advisor



Julia Polley is the
headteacher of
Wensleydale School



Aaron Swan is an
English teacher
and Language for
Learning lead



Ama Dickson is a
maths teacher

KEEP IN TOUCH!

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

Essential reading:



46

Number fun

Explore the maths
behind students'
favourite leisure
activities



Money talks

How the Inclusive Mainstream
Fund can help your school

58

62

Hot stuff

What students can
learn from this
year's heatwaves



Regulars

11 DICTIONARY DEEP DIVE

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

14 NATASHA DEVON

The government's focus on reducing the number of NEETs is laudable, but hopefully won't come at the expense of taking urgent action to rebalance the curriculum

15 MELISSA BENN

Once again, action has been promised on restoring the status of technical education – but whether this latest effort is successful will hinge on broader societal developments that the DfE can't afford to ignore

33 MAKING SENSE OF... PENTACUBES

Students struggling to match isometric drawings to their corresponding plans and elevations? Colin Foster has some advice on helping them out

36 OFF THE SHELVES

Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore

82 JOHN LAWSON

If any school leaders still doubt the urgent need for teaching around political and moral literacy, then the rise of nationalist sentiment we've seen across the country ought to serve as a stark wake-up call

Features

12 LET GREAT BEHAVIOUR BLOOM

Aaron Swan observes how, in their attempts at improving behaviour management, school staff could try turning to Bloom's taxonomy for some useful inspiration

16 BE PREPARED

How ready are you and your colleagues to put your case before the government's new Inclusive Mainstream Fund? Nick Evans runs through what you need to know

18 INCLUDE EVERYONE

Headteacher Julia Polley tells us what whole-school inclusion looks like in practice at Wensleydale School, North Yorkshire

30 A PREPARATION PROBLEM

Gareth Edgell looks back on the process of creating a 3,600-strong question bank, and what it revealed to him about how students really revise

39 BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE?

With standards of school estate management continuing to vary wildly across the country, we look at whether the government's new Education Estates Strategy marks a genuine turning point

42 '¡QUÉ VA!'

How teaching based around informal language use and slang can be a powerful motivational tool during Spanish lessons

46 POLYGONS AND PLATFORMS

Instead of focusing on humdrum applications of maths in the real-world (shopping, banking, etc.), try showing students the maths that underpins some of their favourite leisure activities, writes Ama Dickson

49 TAKING THE TEMPERATURE

If you really want to get a handle on behaviour, forget the interventions promising miracles and start attending to your school's culture

50 SCENES ON SCREEN

Far from being a lazy shortcut, watching literary adaptations in the context of English lessons can actually lead to deeper understandings of source texts

52 CURTAIN UP

Putting on a school production can be hugely time-intensive and stressful – here's how to make it to opening night without compromising your other duties or impacting negatively upon students' wellbeing

58 HOW TO SPEND IT

Aaron King offers some practical advice for those charged with putting together the strategies that will grant access to the government's new Inclusive Mainstream Fund grants

72 AN ARTISTIC CELEBRATION

David Hockney was a giant of modern art, with far-reaching influence and a hugely impressive legacy – show your students why with the help of Hannah Day's creative lesson activities

TS Special – Careers

22 REAL-WORLD MEANING

Executive principal Karen Hayward talks us through the career education priorities and practices in place at Sandy Secondary School, Central Bedfordshire

25 AI AND CAREERS

Subject knowledge, adaptability and critical thinking aren't important despite tech-driven changes to the world of work, but because of them, writes Fabian Stephany

26 SEIZE THE INITIATIVE

Gloria Delafu explains why more joined-up thinking and better communication among school staff can play a key role in tackling the growing NEET crisis

TS Focus – Humanities

62 HERE COMES THE SUN

Steve Brace shares his thoughts on how this year's historically hot summer can become an engaging – and indeed sobering – topic for discussion in geography lessons

65 1066, 1215, 1789, 1939...

Sure, Google can remember all those key historical dates for you – but it will never be able to explain their significance as well as a pupil who has memorised them, maintains Catherine Priggs

66 UNFORESEEN CONSEQUENCES

Causation is a concept that's hard to explain, but one that your students will need to grasp if they're to think like historians, says Rebecca Chadwick

Learning Lab

75 BE INSPIRED

What English teachers should be prioritising ahead of this year's mocks, how to encourage the female leaders of tomorrow – and why smart teachers know the power that comes from being 'boringly predictable' in class...

teach SECONDARY

Publishers:

Joe Carter, Sam Reubin, Richard Stebbing

Editor:

callum.fausser@artichokehq.com, 01206 505 115

Advertising:

samantha.law@artichokehq.com, 01206 505 499
hayley.rackham@artichokehq.com, 01206 505 928
jude.coverdale@artichokehq.com, 01206 505992
demi.maynard@artichokehq.com, 01206 505 962

Art editors: Richard Allen, Sarah Barajas

Customer services: primary@artichokehq.com

Accounts: artichokemedialtd@integral2.com

Published by:

Artichoke Media, Suites 2 & 4, Global House, Global Park, Eastgates, CO1 2TJ



The views in this magazine are not necessarily those of the publisher. We try to ensure the veracity and integrity of the companies, persons, products and services mentioned in this publication, and the details given are believed to be accurate at the time of going to press. However, no responsibility or liability whatsoever can be accepted for any consequence or repercussion of responding to information or advice given or inferred.
©Artichoke Media Ltd

Academy 21

Behind every empty chair is a child that needs us.

“My son’s back
— he’s himself again.
Other people only saw the
behaviour, the aggression,
the climbing of the fences.
Nobody really saw him.
But now he’s back.”

— Claire, Ellis’s mother



Give them the chance to be seen.
Support can begin in 48 hours.
Visit academy21.co.uk



Department
for Education
Accredited Provision

The newsletter

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

The UNINFORMED teacher's guide to...

VERITY

We're all familiar with *Minecraft* here, aren't we? It's the planet-sized ersatz LEGO set and crafting simulator that lives inside kids' games consoles and is good, wholesome fun with broad appeal to kids and teens, right? Well, mostly...

The game's Survival Mode – where players have to survive being besieged by an army of green ' Creeper ' antagonists – has been part of the experience since its initial release back in the late 2000s. More recently, the development of sophisticated scripting and animation tools has enabled *Minecraft* to become a platform for staging narrative stories – such as the troubling tale of Verity.

Created by YouTube user ThatMob, the Verity story cycle unfolds over three episodes – 'Something is Knocking at Your Door...', 'Something is Inside Your House...' and 'Something Won't Let You Leave...'. Via in-game footage, we see a *Minecraft* player download a mod for the game, which appears on-screen as a smiley yellow beachball called Verity and acts as a chirpy AI assistant.

However, it's not long until Verity's parroting of *Minecraft* facts and stats gives way to some weirdly obsessive behaviour. It won't leave the player alone. It's always there. And then it turns into... something else entirely.

Through clever sound design, committed voice acting and some gleeful deployment of good old jump scares, it's quite the engaging yarn (albeit rather swears, and very much not for the little 'uns). It certainly seems to have gone down well among the sprawling online *Minecraft* community, at least, complete with all the memes and 'ykyk' in-jokes and references that are the hallmarks of internet fame these days...



DO SAY
"I think I'm safe..."



DON'T SAY
"Is Jack Black not in this?"

BEAT THE BUDGET



Who is it for?

School and college governors and trustees

What's on offer?

Practical guidance aimed at governing boards on how to obtain information regarding staff wellbeing, pupil voice, parental engagement and pupil need. The resource also includes a Measurement Toolkit to help schools and colleges to check the implementation and measure the outcomes of whole-school wellbeing approaches.

What are we talking about?

Mental Health in Schools and Colleges: Essential Resource for Governing Boards developed by the University of Sussex



Where is it available?

wsca-measurement.co.uk

WHAT THEY SAID...

"The clear theme emerging across all the feedback we have received is that this Ofsted framework is even more stressful than the one that preceded it. It poses a real and present danger to the wellbeing and mental health of school leaders and teachers, possibly even a risk to life."

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers

Think of a number...

410

teachers took phased retirement in 2025/26 – down from 959 doing the same in 2015/16

Source: DfE data obtained by financial services provider Wesleyan following a Freedom of Information request

21.95%

of teachers report being subject to discriminatory language from a pupil within the past year

Source: 2026 NASUWT survey of more than 5,000 teachers

80%

of the UK's 15,566 PISA entrants gained an L2 or higher score in reading, compared to an OECD average of 69%

Source: Programme for International Student Assessment results

ONE FOR THE WALL

"A just society is a society that if you knew everything about it, you'd be willing to enter it in a random place"

John Rawls



Technical overhaul

The government's efforts at overhauling the technical education offer in England are continuing apace, with the DfE's announcement of new, nationally-set 'Vocational GCSEs' alongside the launch of an initiative aimed at boosting the availability of work experience placements.

In line with recent messaging from Downing Street and the DfE, which has talked of giving technical and academic education equal status, the new qualifications will eventually replace the existing Technical Awards and 'sit alongside traditional GCSEs'.

There are few details yet as to what their subject content is likely to consist of, though the DfE has hinted that "Subject options could include Business Management and Finance, Creative Media Production, Digital Tech, Child Development, and Building and Construction." The Department has, however, made it clear that they're intended to be every bit the equal of GCSEs, with Ofqual handling assessment and grading duties.

The timeline given so far suggests that the first students to take the new qualifications may do so as soon as September 2029 for certain subjects.

The government's new 'National Mission on Work Experience' will meanwhile seek to create a further 200,000 work experience placements for 14- to 16-year-olds, by helping to foster working partnerships between Mayors, local authorities, schools and employers, and setting up a series of local Careers Hubs where employers can publicise their upcoming placements.

According to Education Secretary Lucy Powell, "Our new Vocational GCSEs will give young people a stronger connection to the careers and industries shaping our economy, helping them discover and develop their talents while maintaining high standards across our education system."

▼ **SAVE THE DATE** ▼

SPEECHES AND CORRESPONDENCE

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



THE SPEECH:

[Skills Minister outlines government's vision for post-16 pathways](#)

WHO? Baroness Jacqui Smith, Minister for Skills

WHERE? Universities UK conference

WHEN? 10th September 2026

"We've set a target for two thirds of young people to participate in higher level learning by the age of 25. This includes degrees, higher technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

Universities have a role in facilitating all three of these, in partnership with FE colleges and employers. And I hope you've heard in recent weeks, but under this government, further education and technical pathways will no longer be associated with low standards.

To be clear – that does not mean that I want to put people off going to university. I want more young people to go to university, and I want more young people to do apprenticeships. It cannot be a case of either/or, when we have nearly a million young people not in education, training or employment, and whilst a quarter of job vacancies are due to skills shortages.

New technical education pathways for 14-year-olds were announced last month; they will combine core academic subjects with technical education linked to local industries. The new V Levels announced in the White Paper will allow students to combine vocational study with A Levels or other Level 3 courses. Crucially, they offer an additional vocational route for 16- to 19-year-olds to progress to Levels 4 and 5.

The Prime Minister has championed place-based policies that closely consider communities' circumstances. That means universities, colleges, local leaders and employers working together to understand the opportunities in their area, and giving local people the skills and experience needed to take those opportunities."

THE RESPONSE:

[NASUWT criticises government SEND plans](#)

FROM? Matt Wrack, General Secretary of NASUWT

REGARDING? The DfE's latest projection of the national pupil population

WHEN? 14th September 2026

"Our teachers have raised urgent concerns about the impact of proposed changes to the SEND system on the safeguarding of all pupils in their care. They have also raised valid concerns about their continuously increasing workloads and working conditions. If the government continues to press ahead with their plans after teachers have raised such concerns, they will not just be reckless – they will be negligent. Our children, teachers, and all those working in schools and colleges deserve better than a desperate rehash of a SEND system that is designed to save money before it saves education."



10 OCTOBER 2026 CASE Annual Conference | 23-25 OCTOBER 2026 MCM Comic Con Careers Fair | 20-22 JANUARY 2027 Bett UK 2027

10 OCTOBER 2026

CASE Annual Conference

Hybrid online / 32 Woolwich Road, Greenwich
case.org

The Campaign for State Education has this year given its annual conference the title 'Why are so many children unhappy at school? And what we can do about it.' Those making their way to Greenwich and paying the £20 fee will get to explore the array of potential responses to that question in the presence of expert academics, experienced educators and a recent school student.

23-25 OCTOBER 2026

MCM Comic Con Careers Fair

ExCeL London
mcmcomiccon.com

Should you happen to be attending the huge celebration of comics, film, popular TV and gaming that is MCM Comic Con, be advised that this year's event also includes a series of practical workshops in the ExCeL's ICC Capital Suite, where aspiring creatives can pick up tips on voice acting, script-writing, podcasting and the like, and even get some face time with professional creators over a series of career clinics.

20-22 JANUARY 2027

Bett UK 2027

ExCeL London
uk.bettshow.com

As seasoned educators will know, Bett is where you go to see and get hands on with the very latest edtech innovations. From time-saving administrative tools to cutting-edge audiovisual solutions designed for the classroom, there's a plethora of discoveries waiting to be uncovered at the event's sprawling exhibition floor, plus all manner of inspiration to be had from the show's extensive programme of speakers.



Better spaces build the best experiences



YPO Design

brings together specialists in environmental design to provide end-to-end space planning and creation for projects of all shapes and sizes.

*Every lesson is **shaped** by the space it's taught in*

Well-designed spaces transform how people Work, Learn, and Connect.

The best learning outcomes depend on environments that work in perfect sync with subject matter, schedules and students.

How we transform

Space Design Projects

Bespoke creation to suit any and all requirements

Furniture Frameworks

Tailored solutions built around trusted suppliers

Furniture Range

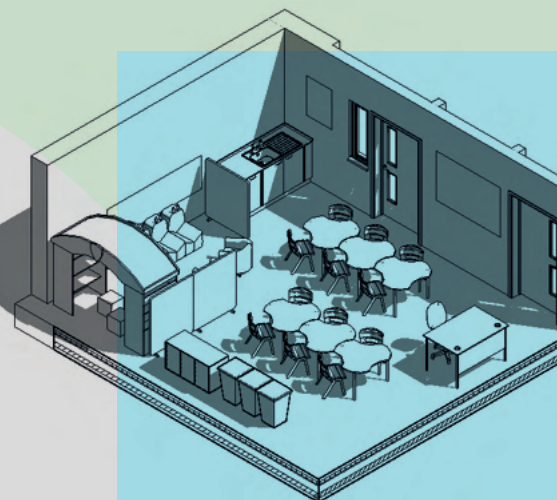
Independently design your space with pieces curated by our experts

Where we know best

- Classrooms
- Dining Halls
- Outdoor Areas
- Breakout Zones
- Inclusive Spaces
- Specialist Labs
- Libraries
- Offices
- Sports Halls



Explore space planning and design
ypo.co.uk/furniture



Get Into Film

RACE
(2016, PG (12+),
135 MINUTES)

Curriculum Links:
History, physical
education



The inspiring story of black Olympic athlete Jesse Owens is told in this biopic that reveals the barriers Jesse had to overcome in his own country before taking the world stage.

Under pressure to boycott the 1936 Games, but equally urged to compete in order to publicly disprove racist Nazi ideology, a conflicted Jesse is the centre of attention and controversial focus of propaganda filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl's lens when he arrives in Berlin.

Dedicated to the sport, even while the target of institutionalised racism, Jesse finds himself becoming a role model and a symbol for the Black community – and with much more riding on his performance at the Olympics than just doing his personal best...

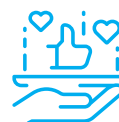
Discussion questions:

- Though many of the film's American characters claim to be disgusted by the racist ideology of Nazi Germany, the film also highlights the USA's racist treatment of African Americans. What are some moments that do this?

- What does the role of filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl show us about how history is made?

- Race depicts the beginning of the friendship between Jesse Owens and German athlete Luz Long – how does Luz embody allyship in the film?

Head online to intofilm.org to stream this film for free and download the film guide, which includes Teacher's Notes for the above discussion points; be sure to also check out our theme page for Black History Month (see tinyurl.com/ts157-NL2)



Like and subscribe

Who's been saying what on the socials this month?

Stuart Lock @StuartLock

If one's government was going to announce a load of new key stage four qualifications to start very soon, one would hope one's government would announce where the qualified teachers are coming from. And what's happened to the curriculum review.

The Thinking School @Thinkingschool2

There should not be any grades on an Ofsted Inspection Report. Just detail what the school does really well. And what needs to be worked on. And how the school will be supported to improve. That's what parents want to know. They don't need grades and comparisons.

Follow us via [@teachsecondary](https://twitter.com/teachsecondary) and [@teachsecondary.bsky.social](https://twitter.com/teachsecondary.bsky.social)

TEACHER TALES

True stories from the education chalkface

Packed your own bags?

Some time ago, our school used to regularly host a group of visiting students from Moscow every other year. At the end of one such visit, I offered to transport the group to Heathrow for their early morning return flight.

I already had the minibus keys, having taken a team of athletes and their equipment to a district sports event the previous day. They finished late, however, meaning that some items of said equipment had to be left in the minibus overnight and returned to the PE store when time allowed.

The 12 Russian students, plus their two teachers, had all been staying with different families, so we needed to wait until everyone arrived at school that morning before we could set off. Time passed, to the point where the party was at risk of missing their flight. Eventually arriving later than planned at Terminal 2, I hastily dropped off my passengers and their assorted luggage.

Arriving back at school, I was informed that in my haste to ensure the group made their flight, I'd inadvertently given one of the students not just their own luggage, but also a holdall containing three starting pistols, which had caused some alarm at airport security. I was then duly summoned to Heathrow Police Station, to explain to the stony-faced officers why I'd transported firearms onto the airport's premises and into a high security area...

Pulling my leg

Response to a Y7 general knowledge test question:

What are Doberman Pinschers?

A pair of trousers

Have a memorable true school tale or anecdote of your own? Share the details, and find more amusing stories, at schoolhumour.co.uk

**ENOUGH
AS YOU
ARE**

**#2 - OCTOBER
BECAUSE FRIENDSHIPS
CAN SHIFT A LOT AT
THE START OF TERM...**

The graphic below comes from 'ENOUGH AS YOU ARE' – a deck of 52 affirmation cards intended for pre-teens and teenagers created by 12-year-old Marco Ruggieri.

Each card carries an original message – one for each week of the year – written in the style of a supportive peer to help navigate areas such as anxiety, exam stress, friendship challenges, body image concerns and peer pressure. The full deck can be ordered from enoughasyouare.co, priced at £14.99.



Making assessment straightforward

*Introducing
Cambridge OCR.*

Discover how we're making
assessment straightforward.



CAMBRIDGE
OCR



David Voisin is a head of MFL

DICTIONARY DEEP DIVE

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

PARDON MY FRENCH

The term 'manoeuvre' stems from French military jargon, describing the planned movement of troops. The flexibility of the English language has also made it into a verb. It contains the noun 'oeuvre', meaning 'body of work' – hence the artistic expression, 'Chef d'oeuvre', literally translating as 'masterpiece'. Culinary tradition is, of course, another field where the word is featured. An 'Hors d'oeuvre' is an appetiser that stands 'outside' the meal, preceding the 'entrée' (starter)



TEACHING TIP: BREAKING THE SPELL

It's essential to identify when spelling needs to be taught (curriculum time being precious), and when to focus on recurring mistakes, or those technical and cognitive aspects that can hinder pupils' ability to spell accurately. To do this, teachers will require both keen observation skills and a proclivity for recognising orthographic hurdles – 'identify and address'; 'anticipate and prevent'.

English features a large number of phonemes (42). Your pupils will be engaging in phoneme-to-grapheme correspondence at a crucial stage when mistakes are likely to occur, yet contrary to common belief, English is actually far more regular than people think. It's also relatively light in inflectional morphology (verb endings, gender and number agreements). By contrast, in French these challenges can combine and create numerous opportunities for spelling errors. Ironically, the French word 'orthographe' (spelling) is itself often misspelt by young learners.

Two key principles should be prioritised – *identify patterns* and *break things down*. In terms of cognitive load, 'WED NES DAY' is easier to remember than 'Wednesday'. This matters even more with root words and affixes. I recently corrected a pupil's revision notes in which the word 'disease' was misspelt because she hadn't recognised it as two morphological units, or linked it to other words such as 'disengaged'. Further common errors (such as the tenacious 'could' or 'there' in place of 'their'/'they're') are usually traceable to gaps in grammatical knowledge.



LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

Vladimir Nabokov was a master of words. In *Lolita*, he famously wrote, "The tip

of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta." Rather than merely describe the name, he makes the reader physically pronounce it, turning speech itself into part of the literary experience.

This reveals an understanding of not just semantics and grammar, but also phonetics – though ironically, Nabokov spoke English with a noticeable Russian accent, English being his third language. Today, phonetics and phonology are central to language teaching and speech therapy, and help explain why words are the way they are. Babies naturally produce /m/, /b/, /p/ and /d/ sounds because they're easy to articulate – thus helping to explain why words for 'parents' are remarkably similar across languages: *mama, maman, mum, papa, baba* and *dad*. Caregivers interpret these early babbles as meaningful and reinforce them until they become the child's first words.

Another striking pattern is *ablaut reduplication* – the ordering of vowels from front/high to back/lower positions. We instinctively say 'tick-tock' and 'ding-dong', not 'tock-tick' or 'dong-ding'. Our preference for these sound patterns quietly shapes everything, from rhymes to literature.

SAME ROOT, DIFFERENT WORDS



Scribes used to copy **manuscripts** by hand



Manacles were placed on the suspect's hands



The physiotherapist gently **manipulated** my neck

Bloom's for BEHAVIOUR

Bloom's cognitive taxonomy is a well-known framework for measuring students' progress – but could his Affective Domain become a new standard for measuring the progress of behaviours?

Over the years, I've seen a number of methods for measuring students' work ethic. It might be called their 'Attitude To Learning' (ATL) or 'Effort' grade. It may be broken down into sub-categories, such as 'classroom effort', 'homework effort' or the level of pride they take in their work.

The scale can sometimes be as simple as a '1, 2 or 3' grade denoting 'below expected progress', 'as expected' or 'exceeding expectations', but to follow this approach would be pedagogically crude. That's because these behaviour scales compress a huge range of human behaviours into a very simple scale that prioritises ranking, while leaving the 'why' and 'how' to the imagination.

It can sometimes be described as a 'deficit' model, in that it assumes all students should standardise at a top ranking, and that anything less is lacking. The good news, however, is that there's now a growing body of research that's challenging these reductive scales, and instead proposing richer, more pedagogically-aligned ways of summarising student behaviour.

Administrative overwhelm

At the cutting-edge of behaviour for learning we can find attempts at being multi-dimensional, strength-based, context-aware, co-constructed and narrative-rich. The BERS-2 scale, for instance, aims to measure 'interpersonal strengths', 'school

functioning', 'affective strengths', 'intrapersonal strengths' and even 'family involvement'.

Other modern scales will aim to describe the student's self-regulation, help-seeking and emotional resilience. Context-sensitive behaviour for learning broadly aims to make sense out of settings, triggers and antecedents, but these forms of behaviour measurement aren't without their problems.

The NASUWT's 2025 'Behaviour in Schools' report (see tinyurl.com/ts157-BB1) highlighted how teachers were then already feeling overwhelmed by behaviour-related administrative tasks. Traditional ATL scales may be crude, but at least they're simple. Newer scales risk being complex, yet still unreliable and sensitive to subjectivity or biases driven by failures to diagnose the triggers of bad behaviour.

Teachers aren't

conference of educators developed a hierarchy of terms that could be used to describe the relationship between students and their learning objectives. The affective domain is organised into five levels, each representing a progression from simple to more complex emotional responses:

- 1. Reception** – This is the lowest level, where learners show awareness and a willingness to hear new ideas, and demonstrate attentiveness by willingly listening during discussions.
- 2. Responding** – At this level, learners are actively engaging with the material. This is done mostly through duty and wanting to meet expectations, however, rather than due to a conscious desire for progress.
- 3. Valuing** – Here we reach the internalisation of

values and recognition of their significance. Students may, **for instance**, express appreciation and understanding of diverse perspectives during debates.

4. Organising – Learners are now beginning to integrate new values into their existing value systems, which might involve changing a personal belief to better align with a value being measured, or being willing to change their behaviour to make progress.

5. Characterising – At this highest level, learners will consistently embody values in their behaviour. They may independently undertake, or

“‘Good behaviour’ doesn’t simply amount to a child accepting all tasks willingly”

psychologists, and yet some modern ATL strategies require a level of detail that's almost akin to personality profiling. So where can we turn for an alternative model that's both simple *and* effective?

From 'Reception' to 'Characterising'

As it happens, Benjamin Bloom might have provided us with a solution via his second taxonomy – the Affective Domain. Through this, Bloom and his

aspire to participate in extracurricular activities which call upon the values or skills being measured, and will therefore be consistently proactive and independent in their demonstration of said values.

Curriculum values

Using Bloom's Affective Domain to talk about behaviour would give us five levels for describing the ways in which students are impacted by their learning, though I concede that this assumes some level of agreement in the meaning of 'affective' and 'behavioural'.

In my experience, most students would fit into a level 2 response – they're willing to participate in lessons, but only because of the expectation for them to fulfil their role as 'student'. Few students will value their time in lessons so much that they'd actively choose to remain in the classroom, if given the freedom to abstain from attending.

By the time we're ranking a student's learning participation as 'level 4 / organising', their teacher might need to conceptualise 'behaviour' differently. By this point, the Affective Domain isn't just

describing the way a student is involved in the learning, but also *how* the student embodies the learning, is being changed by their experiences and is exhibiting the values of the curriculum.

Aspirations and awareness

I think this is an interesting way of conceptualising behaviour, because 'good behaviour' doesn't simply amount to a child accepting all tasks willingly. Desirable behaviours in cognitive domains will entail some degree of transition towards embodying a set of values, aspirational academic behaviours and awareness of the existing knowledge base.

A student who's behaving or responding to the stimuli as intended is one who'll also be developing their tolerance levels, sense of civic responsibility, ability to think critically, reserves of empathy and co-operative behaviours. Some students may be readily 'characterised' by their experiences of academia; for everyone else, it's our job to nurture them towards it.

Where Bloom's Affective Domain is somewhat lacking, however, is in describing those students whose behaviours are *oppositional to learning*. If the Affective Domain were to be taken up as a set of descriptors for behaviour, then there would need to be an extra level below that of 'level 1 / reception' that's still part of a pathway, and not just an accusation of deficiency.

Passivity and defiance

We could perhaps add a new lowest level of '0 – passive reception' for students whose behaviour calls for regular and procedural prompting, just to keep them involved in the learning process. We could even add a further level below that '–1 / passively defiant' to describe students whose behaviours are seeking (albeit without confronting the teacher) escape from the learning in various small ways.

Below that could be '–2 / actively defiant' for students whose behaviours are directed towards escapism through confrontation, or any other performative actions that serve to destabilise the learning environment.

The reason for this language of 'passive reception', 'passive defiance' and 'active defiance' is that it all fits within the wider taxonomy of 'behavioural stages'. It's a type of language that will try to place behavioural steps in a logical sequence, so that small goals can be given to students and parents for them to see the 'why' and 'how' of behavioural progress.

Easier analysis

That said, there are some limitations to using Bloom's Affective Domain in this way. Students have been known to exhibit both 'characterising' and 'defiant' behaviours, which

this scale would struggle to accommodate – an average score right in the middle ranking would fail to record this kind of polarised behaviour accurately.

On the plus side, however, a scaled numerical system lends itself to data analysis in ways that would be much more difficult via traditional, narrative-rich ATL. With enough data, I could imagine a situation where we're able to say that each behaviour level carries with it some added-value result at GCSE – something impossible through qualitative ATL strategies.

What purposes are currently being served by ATL measurements – the recording of insightful data? Forecasting of outcomes? Are they helping us to nurture relationships and belonging? Providing any short-term goals that can help build the incremental changes needed for long-term success?

Many ATL systems are currently failing to provide any of that, and are thus ripe for modernising – but not necessarily through disruptive innovation or revolution. Instead, we could look back to a far older, dustier and yet much more promising pedagogical tool – the sequenced, descriptive and adaptable nature of Bloom's taxonomy which, with just a little evolution, could make for a compelling ATL scale.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aaron Swan is an English teacher, Language For Learning lead and has been a head of department; for more information, visit disciplineofenglish.co.uk

A wholesale readjustment of the education system is long overdue, but let's prioritise rebalancing the curriculum over fixing the life paths of 14-year-olds...

Natasha Devon



In his first speech as Prime Minister, Andy Burnham spoke of 'fundamentally changing the education system'. As more details emerged, it soon became clear that part of his strategy would be to incorporate more access to technical education, skills training and local work placements for pupils aged 14, which they would be able to do alongside core GCSE subjects like English and Maths. It's thought that this will be rolled out in full in 2028.

Supporters claim that these changes will reduce the number of so-called NEETs (16 to 24-year-olds not in education, training or employment, a figure currently exceeding 1 million in the UK at the time of writing) while also helping to future-proof young people's job prospects, at a time when many entry-level positions for graduates are being eliminated by AI.

Soft bigotry

Now, while I'm not saying we shouldn't try our best to prepare young people for an uncertain future and a highly competitive job market, one could argue that the skills we learn in the humanities and the arts – critical thinking and empathy, for example – are just as, if not more, crucial to being able to survive and navigate an era increasingly dominated by technology.

Critics of Burnham's proposals have noted that there's the potential for us to be returned to a time reminiscent of the 1970s, when children were crudely divided into groups considered as 'academic' (who would get to attend grammar schools, and be much more likely to stay in education post-16) and the rest (who would attend secondary moderns).

Back then, of course, this division would occur during the

final year of primary school, with pupils sitting the 11-plus exam, though those sceptical of Burnham's ideas maintain that 14 is still far too early for young people to commit to a specific career path.

Unsurprisingly, Michael Gove has been perhaps the most vocal of these opponents. Writing in a column for the *Daily Mail*, he argued that the Labour Party "*Does not believe in aspiration, just the soft bigotry of low expectation*," adding that the message to working-class young people was "*Know your place*."

I never thought I'd ever type these words, but *I think Michael Gove might have a point*. My working-class parents both attended secondary moderns, and have told me how further education for them wasn't even discussed as a possible option. Indeed, any future at all outside of a fairly tightly restricted range of jobs wasn't considered as being 'For the likes of them'.

The tyranny of endless testing

I was the first in my family to attend university, and there isn't the space

here to list all the ways in which those years enhanced my life, few of which had anything to do with the qualification I ultimately attained.

I despise the notion that education is simply one long recruitment process, and that its only real value is in ensuring that we all have the ability to pay taxes once we leave. I applauded the Curriculum Review that was launched by Starmer's administration and published at the end of 2025 for that very reason. It broadly recommended what I'd call a 'de-Gove-ifying' of the curriculum, and signalled that the controversial English Baccalaureate suite would be scrapped by 2028.

Assuming that the Curriculum Review's key recommendations end up being implemented, we should also hopefully see the tyranny of endless testing and assessment ease up a little across the entire school system.

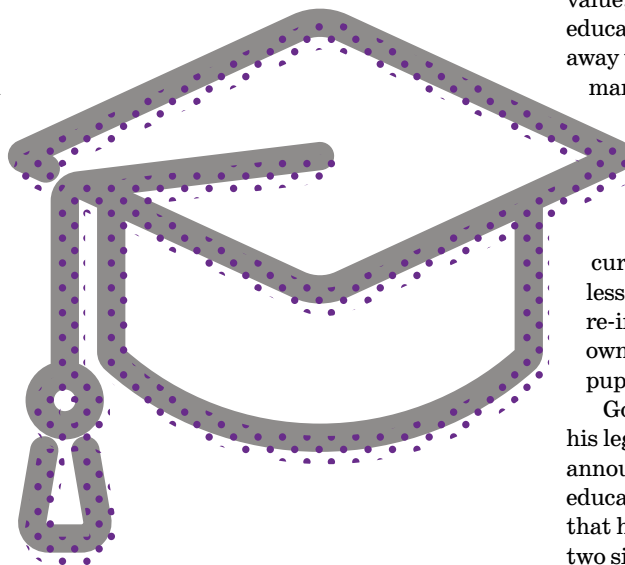
A love of learning

Lest we forget, that Baccalaureate was criticised by educators who believed – as I did – that it worked to de-prioritise certain subjects with proven therapeutic value, such as sport and the arts. Gove's education reforms also did much to strip away the joy of studying English for

many children, reorienting the subject as one that was more concerned about nailing correct punctuation than it was with creativity and expression.

Burnham's plans in their current form, however, seem to be less about reversing those changes and re-instilling a love of learning for its own sake, and more about ensuring pupils' future employability.

Gove might be panicking about how his legacy will be perceived after these announcements – but when it comes to education, at least, it could be argued that he and Burnham are actually two sides of the same coin.



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

Andy Burnham's determination to boost technical education is laudable – but if recent years have taught us anything, it's that any such reforms must be far-reaching, long-lasting and, above all, radical in their impact...

Melissa Benn



Though still relatively new to the job of PM, Andy Burnham has already revived an age-old dream pursued by many within the British school system – the offer of a first-class technical education to millions of young people.

Burnham's vision breaks with nearly half a century of cross-party policy principally aimed at driving up academic results and outcomes. The long-emphasised desirability of a university education over all other options has left behind the 33% of school leavers who fail to pass their core GCSEs, and for whom education ends up being little more than a sterile, even miserable experience often leading to unemployment and a life on benefits (see tinyurl.com/ts157-MB1).

Valuing the hard hat

Burnham's government should therefore be applauded for valuing the hard hat as much as the graduation cap. Thus far, we know that the government intends to scale up the Greater Manchester Baccalaureate (MBacc) developed during Burnham's period as Mayor, in order to help students develop skills and experience in one of seven local economic sectors (see tinyurl.com/ts157-MB2). This would be enabled via a form of devolution that would see different regions adapt the MBacc model to their own specific employment needs and local opportunities.

Attempts at creating meaningful vocational or technical routes for young people are nothing new, of course. The 1944 Education Act initially sought to establish three school types – secondary moderns, grammars and technical schools – but somehow sufficient funds were never found for the latter.

Issues beyond the classroom

UK education policy is littered with acronyms from largely failed technical programmes dating back to the 1964 Industrial Training Act – from the TVEI

(Technical and Vocational Initiative) to the GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualifications). More recently, we've had T Levels (technical qualifications on a par with A Levels) and will soon see the arrival of V Levels (conceived as less demanding entry routes into certain economic sectors).

As is often the case with educational initiatives, however, the deeper issues (and more effective solutions) lie beyond the classroom. With a more robust national industrial strategy, similar to those adopted in countries such as Germany, planning around training and apprenticeships could be far better managed.

Similarly, a properly resourced strategy for lifelong learning would help catch those failed by the first hurdle of schooling.

As the Centenary Commission on Adult Education (centenarycommission.org) and others have observed, it's both illogical and wasteful to keep cramming so much skill development and so many life choices into adolescence. Even so, the last government abolished a successful and cost-effective trade union scheme to develop the skills and education of its members (see tinyurl.com/ts157-MB3).

Even sympathetic supporters of Burnham's plans fear that offering routes into technical and vocational

education from 14 will only confirm existing class distinctions, in similar ways to the iniquitous 11-plus.

Purposes and processes

One possible solution to these issues has been proposed by Peter Hyman – a former speechwriter for Tony Blair and free school founder, who has called for an updated revival of the 2004 Tomlinson Review (see tinyurl.com/ts157-MB4).

This proposed a radical shake-up of the school system, including the replacement of GCSEs, A Levels and vocational qualifications with a single four-level Diploma. Students would proceed at their own pace (sometimes resulting in mixed-age classes), and could switch between, or even blend vocational and academic subjects. There would be fewer exams and more opportunity for all students, whatever their subject choices, to deepen their practical and intellectual interests.

Blair ultimately bailed on implementing the Tomlinson Review, fearing that he would be attacked on 'standards'. The Conservatives would later double down on a more traditionalist approach during Michael Gove's tenure as Education Secretary – a man who continues to beat the same drum to this day, having recently derided Burnham's proposals as 'bring back stupid' (see tinyurl.com/ts157-MB5).

Burnham must filter out the traditionalist noise, be bold enough to implement change on the scale of Tomlinson and reshape both the purposes and processes of education itself, rather than merely tack some new initiatives and qualifications onto a system that continues to emphasise academic achievement. A more radical shake-up could produce a genuine parity of esteem, while also offering all young people a more holistic, stimulating and enjoyable education.



DEVISE YOUR *inclusion strategy*

As schools prepare the inclusion strategies required to access the government's new Inclusive Mainstream Fund, **Nick Evans** highlights the areas they should be looking to focus on...

The government's incoming reforms to the SEND system mean that mainstream schools will soon be required to take on greater responsibility for inclusion. As a former senior leader of a special school, that's something I welcome.

The government's commitment to additional funding and support for mainstream schools presents a golden opportunity for the education system to reshape the way it meets the needs of children and young people with SEND. However, to qualify for the government's new Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF), every mainstream school in England must publish an inclusion strategy on its website by 31st December 2026.

This strategy needs to set out a whole school plan for supporting SEND students. What follows are some approaches that schools can adopt now, in order to start building an inclusion strategy that fulfils the DfE's brief and ultimately makes learning more accessible for all students.

1. Experience a day in the life of a SEND student

Despite staff's best efforts,

mainstream secondary schools can still be intimidating places for a child with SEND. The size and layout of the buildings, the hustle and bustle of the corridors, that long stretch of unstructured time during lunch break – these can all be overwhelming.

Seeing the school day through the eyes of a child with additional needs can be an extremely powerful way to better understand the pinch points for children with SEND, and will provide valuable insights for your inclusion strategy.

Simply observing how a child with SEND manages their typical day will go a long way towards uncovering precisely which aspects of the school's environment or routines may increase anxiety, create barriers to participation or make learning harder to access.

Some children might be more anxious in the mornings because they find the crowds of students at the school gate challenging. Others might find eating lunch in a busy dining hall or getting changed for PE difficult. In my experience, the biggest issues tend to arise

during the transitions from one lesson to the next, break times and unexpected changes to the school day.

If a student is experiencing difficulties with the morning routine, you could offer them a quiet space in which they can regulate before the day ahead. If lunchtimes are proving to be a particular challenge, you can put extra support in place, such as earlier meal choices, supervised activities or the option to eat in smaller dining spaces.

2. Make it easier for students to find their way around

The most inclusive schools will spend a lot of time thinking about how children navigate their days. If mainstream schools do the same as part of their inclusion strategy, it will benefit not just children with SEND, but their neurotypical peers too.

For some neurodivergent children, knowing where to go and when, and understanding what's

“What an ‘inclusive space’ looks like in practice will vary from school to school”



happening next, can involve a significant degree of cognitive load. The easier we can make this, the more energy students are likely to have for learning.

Visual cues are a very effective way of signposting students around the school. Using visual prompts – such as those making up the structured visual language developed by Widgit Symbols (widgit.com) – can really help. These symbols will need to represent objects or actions you can use alongside written signs, so that a student can find their way to the library, or locate sports equipment without needing the support of an adult.

It can also be a good idea to use visual supports when helping students manage their routines. A visual timetable that includes symbols for different subjects, outdoor activities and study periods can give children with limited vocabulary a quick and easy way to see what to expect as the day unfolds.

A key advantage of using symbols throughout a mainstream school is that students and staff quickly become familiar with them

– not as a SEND intervention, but as part of the school's culture. They serve to boost everyone's concentration and memory, whether we need them to or not, rather like the visual signs we see in airports, stations and hospitals.

3. Provide inclusive spaces at the heart of the school

The way a learning environment looks and feels can also play an important role in helping children feel safe, calm and ready to learn. Mainstream classrooms function well for neurotypical students, but can cause sensory overload for children with SEND.

With schools now being encouraged to develop inclusion bases as part of their inclusion strategy, many are starting to think differently about how their spaces and facilities can be used to make the learning experience that much more accessible for pupils with additional needs. What an 'inclusive space' looks like in practice, however, will vary from school to school. For some, it might involve making relatively simple adjustments to existing classrooms, such as reducing visual distractions (like classroom displays) or lowering lighting levels.

For others, depending on the needs of their cohort, a dedicated inclusion base could prove more effective. This would be a space where

students can access specialist services, such as counselling, speech and language therapy or emotional wellbeing support.

It's a question of adapting areas in a school to meet students' needs. Is there a quiet spot away from the busy corridors where children can go if they're feeling dysregulated? Are there any calming rooms where students can stop masking and just be themselves?

4. Encourage staff to share ideas and approaches

The DfE is actively encouraging schools to include plans for ambitious leadership and governance on inclusion within their inclusion strategies. School and trust leaders can create opportunities for TAs, learning mentors and inclusion teams to work more closely, so that they can more effectively identify which SEND interventions could become whole school approaches and strategies.

There are many examples of where this is already happening. Some schools, for instance, incorporate different fonts and coloured backgrounds into the design of their learning materials – an adaptive teaching approach that supports students with dyslexia, but which can also be a helpful aid for all children.

Additionally, SEND specialists have a wealth of experience that could potentially benefit mainstream learners. By drawing on their knowledge and expertise, mainstream schools can deploy a range of tried and trusted strategies

INCLUSION STRATEGY ESSENTIALS

- Understanding the hidden challenges of the school day can help schools create a strategy which is targeted to the needs of their students.
- Designing an accessible school will be a key component of mainstream schools' inclusion strategy, so that all children, including those facing barriers to learning and participation, can achieve and thrive.
- The aim of an inclusive school shouldn't be to separate children from their peers, but to offer them somewhere they can feel safe and comfortable until they're ready to rejoin their class.

– sensory classrooms, signage with symbols, and spaces for regulation – as part of a revised universal provision.

At the time of writing, it's a pivotal moment. We could be about to see the education sector transform the way children and young people with SEND are supported. If schools start to make inclusion part of their everyday practice, and can carefully reflect on what works well, then they'll be more than ready to publish their inclusion strategy by the December deadline.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nick Evans is the former executive headteacher of Evergreen School for children and young people with SEND and now works as a SEND consultant



Standards start with INCLUSION

Julia Polley reflects on how fostering a genuinely inclusive school culture is far from easy, but never counterproductive...

There's still a quiet assumption in education that high levels of SEND make "Strong" outcomes harder to achieve. It's an assumption that's ever-present beneath many conversations around performance tables, inspection, curriculum, standards of behaviour and parental choice.

School leaders understand the pressures involved – but if we only treat inclusion as a risk to be managed, rather than a core part of how a good school works, then we're missing the point. 'Inclusion' isn't a room, a separate policy or something that's solely the responsibility of the school's SENCo or pastoral team.

Done properly, it should be the framework for every decision a school makes.

is that inclusion and academic ambition aren't mutually exclusive, but in fact depend on each other.

The strategies that help pupils with SEND are often the very same strategies that will improve learning for everyone – clear routines, predictable classrooms, careful scaffolding, high-quality teaching, strong relationships and staff who understand the children in front of them.

When a classroom is specifically structured in ways intended to support its most vulnerable learners, it often becomes a better classroom for *every* pupil, right up to the most academically able.

That's why I would encourage school leaders to stop seeing inclusion as a

high-stakes risk to their performance tables, and instead start seeing it as a core part of their school's infrastructure.

Designing inclusive systems

In practical terms, this means looking at a typical school day and asking, '*Who is this working for, who is it not working for, and what are we prepared to change?*'

Wensleydale is a rural school with a catchment area of around 800km².

Traditional after-school clubs aren't equitable for many families, because of issues relating to transport.

We could have accepted that our rurality places limits on such opportunities, but we instead built enrichment into the school day itself, as an entitlement for every pupil.

Pupils can take part in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Combined Cadet Force, sport, music, gardening and other clubs alongside their friends. That's inclusion in practice – not a focus purely on interventions, but rather a concerted effort at designing systems to ensure pupils aren't being excluded from opportunities due to factors such as geography, family circumstances, confidence,

"Inclusion isn't the opposite of standards – it's one of the ways through which standards are raised"

Inclusion and ambition

At Wensleydale School, our recent Ofsted report stated that "*Inclusion threads through all aspects*" of the school, and found our Inclusion judgement to be of a "Strong" standard. That matters, because we're a mainstream secondary school with a high-needs profile and a proportion of pupils with SEND and EHCPs that's well above average.

The lesson from our experience isn't that inclusion is easy. It is not. The lesson we've learned



anxiety or level of need.

The same principle applies in all of our classrooms. Our pupil passports aren't paperwork for the sake of paperwork but are instead living documents that are regularly reviewed in conjunction with teachers, parents and pupils.

They set out targets and explain what adjustments teachers can make to help pupils access learning. They can be used in the context of lesson planning, seating plans and quality assurance, because they're only useful if they change what happens in the room. For its part, Ofsted noted that teachers used information gleaned from the pupil passports to inform their teaching.

The right scaffolding

There can sometimes be a fear that adapting teaching necessarily means lowering expectations. It should, in fact, mean the opposite – that high expectations mean giving pupils the right scaffolding to access a broad, ambitious curriculum, rather than narrowing horizons because a child needs support.

The aim isn't to excuse pupils from ambition, but to make ambition reachable. For

some pupils that may mean targeted mainstream provision, a carefully considered nurture group, or adjustments that allow them to stay in lessons, build confidence and experience success.

This requires a whole-school culture. If inclusion sits only in an office, it fails. Teachers need training, time and practical information that they can make use of. Leaders need to make inclusion visible in their CPD, curriculum planning, behaviour systems, attendance work and staff conversations.

That doesn't mean adding an endless series of new processes. Inclusion can't be built on staff exhaustion, after all. Systems that are clunky, duplicated or performative won't last. Leaders instead have to streamline what they can and make sure that the work is ultimately useful in the classroom.

For us, this has meant reviewing feedback approaches so that they reduce teacher workload, while still helping pupils improve. It has also meant using CPD to build a practical, evidence-informed understanding of pupils'

needs, and making time for regular one-to-one conversations with staff about workload, progress and support. No school has all the answers, so being outward-facing matters too. Welcoming external challenge and working with nearby schools and trusts helps keep practice sharp, honest and grounded.

Belonging isn't a soft concept

Attendance and belonging are part of the same picture. We still have clear expectations, but we work hard to understand why a pupil is absent. Is it anxiety? Transport? An unmet need? A family circumstance, or a pattern we've missed?

This doesn't mean accepting poor attendance. It means addressing the barriers in question, so that pupils can return and stay. When pupils feel safe, known and connected to school, attendance improves. Belonging is fundamental to learning, which is why a child who feels invisible, anxious or out of place will struggle to learn effectively. A child who feels seen and included is more likely to take risks, accept help, recover from mistakes and

believe they have a future.

Young people only get one chance at secondary education, and qualifications matter – but context matters too, and a spreadsheet will never fully capture the human context of a school.

Our Ofsted report recognised that pupils with SEND make appropriate progress from their starting points in classroom subjects, but also in wider skills such as speech, language and emotional regulation. It further noted that almost all pupils progress to appropriate next steps in education, employment or training.

That is what success should mean – young people leaving with qualifications, confidence, social skills and a route into the next stage of their lives.

My advice to other headteachers is simple. Don't build inclusion as an add-on, but build it into the way your school works. Make it part of curriculum, behaviour, attendance, enrichment, staff development and quality assurance.

Be outward-facing, welcome challenge, protect staff workload and know your community. Don't apologise for doing right by the children in your catchment, because inclusion isn't the opposite of standards – it's one of the ways through which *standards are raised*. It takes patience, systems and trust, and if we want mainstream schools to serve their communities properly, that is the work.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julia Polley is the headteacher of Wensleydale School, Leyburn, North Yorkshire



teachwire
talks



Scan to listen or search
Teachwire Talks



DO PUPILS UNDERSTAND **AI TOOLS** BETTER THAN WE DO?

**A new podcast exploring
how to help students
become critical users of AI.**

**Plus tools for teaching AI literacy
when you're still getting to
grips with it yourself.**



Listen on

 Apple Podcasts



Spotify



YouTube

THE TS GUIDE TO... CAREERS

We look at what schools are doing to ensure their students can flourish and prosper in an employment market undergoing a series of huge, tech-driven transformations...

IN THIS SECTION

22 OPEN UP THEIR WORLD

What does a robust careers provision with real impact look like in practice? Executive principal Karen Hayward shares what she's learned...

25 FIRM UP THE FOUNDATIONS

AI is the future, writes Fabian Stephany - but it's not the most important skill that students need to learn...

26 BEFORE THE REGISTER TURNS RED

Gloria Delafu tells us why curbing the number of NEETs tomorrow calls for more effective observations and information sharing on the part of teachers today



IN FIGURES:

HOW DO STAFF FEEL ABOUT THE CAREERS PROVISION THEIR SCHOOL CURRENTLY OFFERS?

73%

of teachers and education professionals feel that there isn't enough focus in schools on preparing young people for work and employment

66%

believe that young people's preparedness for work has declined over the past five years

73%

agree that the curriculum could include more work-related knowledge and skills without lowering academic standards

Source: March 2026 YouGov survey of a representative sample of 1,004 teachers and education professionals commissioned by the Department for Work & Pensions

3

TEACHWIRE
ARTICLES
FROM THE
ARCHIVES

HOW BALANCED IS YOUR CAREERS PROVISION?

Balancing careers education at scale with a truly personalised approach isn't the impossible ask it's sometimes made out to be, says Jim Burton...

tinyurl.com/157special1

EVERY TEACHER IS A CAREERS TEACHER

You're likely already linking curriculum learning to careers, says Liz Painter - so why not make those links even more explicit and more engaging for your students?

tinyurl.com/157special2

GIVE STUDENTS THE SKILLS THEY NEED

Why traditional thinking around careers guidance ought to give way to a different, more far-reaching approach...

tinyurl.com/157special3

Open up their WORLD

What does a robust careers provision with real impact look like in practice?
Executive principal **Karen Hayward** shares what she's learned...

Many young people struggle to see how education connects to their future, leaving them disengaged and without a clear sense of direction. They don't see the point of education, and lack motivation and aspiration.

Where we're situated, in a small market town, the local economy is stagnant. With few local opportunities to inspire them, we have a responsibility to work hard at helping our young people see that education is the key to opening the world beyond the one they're growing up in.

A motivation catalyst

Preventing students from becoming classed as 'Not in education, employment or training' is a core leadership focus for us. If students fall into the NEET category, it means they've not got a clear progression route or future. It means that we've not been successful.

One of the strongest and most effective NEET prevention tools we've found is a robust careers programme built around the Gatsby Benchmarks. High-quality careers guidance is a motivation catalyst – one that gives our young people ambition, a sense of purpose and a clarity of focus for what comes next.

The careers programme is about providing students with a clear progression route. It's about giving them that ambition and motivation that comes from bringing the real world into the classroom, and taking young



people out of the classroom to experience what could come next in the real world.

Here, I'm going to share some of the things we've done to make such a huge impact with our careers programme.

NEET reductions

Gatsby's research shows that when institutions meet more of the Gatsby Benchmarks, students are less likely to be NEET at the key transition points of 16 and 18. In schools serving the most disadvantaged young people, that reduction can reach as high as 20%.

We've prioritised careers guidance over the past few years, and the impact has been widespread across many of our wider priority areas – driving up good behaviour, boosting attendance, improving wellbeing, aiding inclusion and raising attainment.

This focus on careers guidance was also central to our school's move from a 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted rating to 'Good' in just two years. Over the past three years, the proportion of our leavers who go on to become NEET has continued to decline, and now sits at

below 1%.

If a careers programme is to deliver any meaningful impact, it must first be made a strategic priority across the whole school – not just left as something that's solely the preserve of the careers leader. I undertook careers leadership training alongside my careers leader in 2024/25. This was something I felt I needed to do in order to properly support him, and to place careers right at the heart of what we do at the school.

We proceeded to also deliver regular training to our staff, so that they too



“If a careers programme is to deliver any meaningful impact, it must be made a strategic priority across the whole school”

better understand the broad range of careers available from studying the subjects in question. We make time for our staff to acquire up-to-date information on the rapidly changing labour market, to ensure that any information they in turn share with students remains relevant and accurate.

Our local community has been a vital partner in delivering an effective careers programme. Local businesses have brought in role models to talk to our young people, offered meaningful work experience placements, mentoring and taken part in our careers fairs. One such example is AHSE – a local construction company that has previously come in to talk about different career pathways within its industry. We’ve also engaged with funeral directors, hair and beauty providers and the local Rotary Club.

Beyond that, we’ve built relationships with organisations from further afield too. Our business and

media students, for example, heard from a LEGO designer about careers in online advertising, branding and digital marketing. Representatives from Arsenal Football Club spoke about the importance of MFL, and how language skills are valuable across careers within the sports industry.

We work closely with our local careers hub, regularly drawing on their expertise and contacts. They help us identify gaps in our provision and focus more clearly on what’s working well.

One student’s story

A couple of years ago, one of our current Y11 students, Kelsey (pictured above), despised coming to school – something clearly reflected in her attendance figures and behavioural incidents.

A career skills intervention arranged with assistance from ZSL Whipsnade Zoo, tailored to Kelsey’s specific needs and challenges when she was in Y9, marked a major turning point. The

programme is aimed at students who are disengaged from education and at high risk of becoming NEET – and in this instance, it took Kelsey out of the classroom environment one day a week, for a total of six weeks.

The intervention was focused on an area we knew she was interested in – animals – and turned that interest into something aspirational. After seeing all the roles on offer at the zoo, she could begin to picture what she might want to do, understand what would be required of her, and eventually come to actually see herself working in one of those roles.

From there, our wider careers programme helped Kelsey to build on that experience and nurtured that spark, mapping out a clear, achievable pathway towards a career she now genuinely feels confident about. Good careers guidance prompted a profound change in her. She’s attending school regularly, present in lessons, and most importantly, she’s developed a real sense of ambition. At the time of writing, she’s intent on securing the GCSEs she’ll need to attend a local college, which she hopes will lead to an apprenticeship back at the zoo.

When careers guidance is made a genuine strategic priority, the impact is easy to see – fewer young people becoming NEET and instead, like Kelsey, finding their purpose.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Hayward is executive principal at Sandy Secondary School, Central Bedfordshire. There is a range of support available to help you put the Gatsby Benchmarks at the heart of your school’s careers provision, including practical tools and leadership resources – find out more by visiting gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk/leaders

could feel properly equipped and enthused about the part they had to play in rolling out our careers programme. Every member of staff needs to understand why careers guidance matters, and what their role within it should be.

Starting from Y7

Careers guidance needs to be planned early – from Y7, all the way through to Y13 – with a clear and structured plan in place for each year group. Every teacher is encouraged to link their specialist subject to the wider world of careers, so that our young people can



ASK THE EXPERT

“Students become more engaged”

The Royal Geographical Society’s Claire Brown explains how subject-specific careers education can elevate your school’s careers offer

How can we ensure that careers education prepares young people for the future?

Careers education can go beyond simply helping students choose a job. It can equip them with the knowledge, skills, attitude and adaptability needed for a rapidly changing labour market. Careers education should provide inspiration and pathways, while also building employability and showcasing transferable and specialised skills. Widening aspirations while being realistic is key. Teachers should develop their own awareness of the careers their subject can lead to – which is where subject associations like the RGS can help.

How can engaging professionals benefit a school’s careers education?

Hearing from real people with real jobs can challenge stereotypes and assumptions, while showcasing how knowledge learnt in the classroom has real-world impact. The RGS runs free online events themed around curriculum content, where students meet professionals working in, for example, hazards and risk, thus highlighting potential pathways and opportunities to students interested in those particular areas of the curriculum. Look out for career profiles that can provide case studies and pathway information from a range of backgrounds.

How can careers education be impactfully embedded within the curriculum?

Ensuring that careers teaching materials are directly related to required GCSE and A Level subject content is one way of ensuring that your careers education becomes fully embedded into your curriculum. In geography, decision-making activities linked to real workplace challenges are a great way to show how professionals using geography have real-world impacts, while helping students reflect on their own skills. The RGS provide free teaching materials to support this work.



EXPERT PROFILE

NAME:

Claire Brown

JOB TITLE:

Manager: Educational Professional Support

AREA OF EXPERTISE:

Professional development and careers education

BEST PART OF MY JOB:

Inspiring students to choose geography

How can young people be encouraged to explore a range of pathways?

The RGS can offer support for young people in the process of choosing a university and geography course through its online directories, events with admissions tutors and UCAS guidance. The RGS can also offer guidance on apprenticeships and vocational routes that utilise geographical knowledge and skills, and introduce role models from a range of backgrounds to showcase the variety of pathways that may lead to a geographical career. The RGS also has a free virtual work experience programme with Springpod – Careers Using Geography (see rgs.springpod.com).

Why is subject-specific careers education so important?

When careers education is linked directly to curriculum subjects, students become more engaged, motivated and able to make informed decisions about their future. Subject-specific careers education raises aspirations by showing how the knowledge and skills gained in lessons can be deployed in the real world. The RGS uses the Gatsby Benchmarks framework to support geography teachers when they’re asked, ‘Why study geography...?’

ASK ME ABOUT

MEMBERSHIP – The RGS provides a free membership for students and a School Membership for just £50, providing enrichment and support through resources, lectures and access to expert publications.

CPD AND TRAINING – Participate in a programme of free and affordable training for geography teachers focussing on subject knowledge, fieldwork, GIS, leadership, pedagogy and more – online and in-person.

NETWORKING – Sign up to hear about the RGS’s latest support and advice for teachers, find out about the latest courses and resources and provide more opportunities for your students.

rgs.org/schools

T: 020 7591 3053 E: education@rgs.org

Firm up the FOUNDATIONS

AI is the future, writes **Fabian Stephany** – but it's not the most important skill that students need to learn...

Teachers are increasingly being told that they need to prepare their pupils for an AI-powered future. The obvious response to this might be to teach more AI skills – but that may be the wrong conclusion to draw.

Nobody can reliably predict what the world of work will look like in 10 or 20 years' time. We're navigating by sight. AI is likely to become commonplace across many areas of work, but that doesn't make AI itself the most important skill to learn.

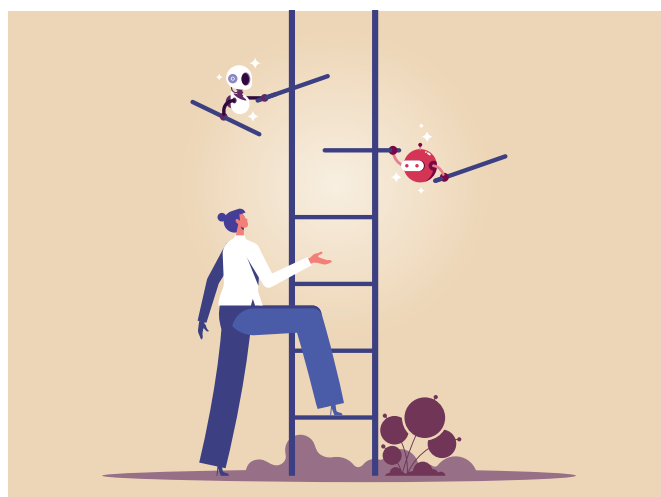
Instead, the evidence points towards three more fundamental priorities – expertise, human capabilities and adaptability. These may sound like existing educational mainstays, but there's solid scientific evidence for their continued importance in a world of AI.

Deep domain expertise

Firstly, deep domain expertise matters. The quality of an AI answer depends to a considerable extent on the quality of the question. Experts know what to ask, how to interpret the resulting answer and, crucially, *when to question it*.

Our own research at the University of Oxford, using millions of job vacancies and career histories, confirms this. Expertise is increasingly rewarded, not in spite of artificial intelligence but *because of it*. As AI makes producing answers easier, knowing what constitutes a *good* answer becomes ever more valuable.

For teachers, the message is straightforward – keep teaching pupils to know things deeply. Subject



knowledge isn't becoming obsolete because said information is instantly available; in fact, it's quite the opposite. That knowledge provides the foundations upon which young people can use new technologies intelligently.

Human capabilities

Secondly, we need to invest in human capabilities. As more repetitive and routine elements of work are outsourced to AI, humans will increasingly be asked to shine at what makes them distinctively human – exercising critical thinking, passing judgement, communicating clearly and working as a team, which are all capabilities that can be developed in virtually every classroom.

Don't just ask pupils for an answer – ask them to explain *why they believe it*. Give groups difficult problems that involve dividing responsibilities, managing disagreements and defending their decisions. Present them with competing explanations and ask which is better supported by the evidence.

Finally, there's adaptability. We can't predict what the future labour market will bring, but we can be reasonably certain that change will be a constant. Today, we're talking about AI. In 10 years we could be discussing quantum computing, or some other technology that's yet to enter classrooms. Preparing pupils to master today's tools therefore can't be enough – they need the capacity and motivation to learn again, and again.

Navigating change

Psychology offers an important lesson here. People who are deeply engaged in a subject, who develop expertise and genuinely care about what they are doing will have stronger foundations from which to explore and adapt.

Passion for a certain topic is therefore an important resource for navigating change. Schools can nurture this by giving pupils opportunities to pursue questions that genuinely interest them, tackle unfamiliar problems, learn

from unsuccessful attempts and improve their work after feedback.

Of course, digital fluency matters too. Pupils should understand what AI can do, where its limitations lie, why it makes mistakes and when its outputs shouldn't be trusted, but that doesn't require us to invent a standalone 'AI skill'.

A more useful approach would be to bring AI into existing subjects. In languages, pupils might use chatbots for conversation practice. In biology, they might critique an AI-generated explanation. In history, they could identify what evidence an AI-generated interpretation may have overlooked. Teach AI through the subject, rather than teaching AI *instead* of the subject.

Preparing pupils for the future shouldn't mean chasing the latest technology. It's the foundations that will endure – know something deeply, think critically, work well with others and develop a passion for learning and adapting. *Those* are the capabilities that will enable young people to make good use of whatever technologies come next.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fabian Stephany is an economist leading a research group on technology and skills at the University of Oxford; his forthcoming book, *Skilled: How to Master the Changing World of Work*, is due for publication in November (Icon Books, £15.99)

Before the register TURNS RED

Gloria Delafu tells us why curbing the number of NEETs tomorrow calls for more effective observations and information sharing on the part of teachers today

The pupils who go on to disappear from education don't always leave in one dramatic, decisive moment. Sometimes they leave in pieces – maybe the occasional Monday at first. Then it's the football club they never used to miss.

The homework gets sparser. They stop talking about going sixth form or college, or doing an apprenticeship, or anything much after Y11. At the same time, though, they're still coming through the school gates. They're still on roll, still wearing uniform, still attending lessons. Nothing's happened that would warrant calling an emergency meeting – yet something *has* changed.

Combine the pieces

I want you to imagine a Y9 girl whose attendance is around 93%. Her form tutor notices that she no longer hangs back after registration. Her English teacher says her work still comes in, but that there's less of it. Your PE colleagues report that she's no longer attending the after-school club she once loved.

Each of these adults holds one piece of information. Nobody's at fault for not being alarmed – what's important is that those pieces be somehow combined, because by the time her attendance has fallen far enough for the issue to be picked up on, the window for asking a more useful and pertinent question will

already have closed – namely, *'When did she start leaving...?'*

Alan Milburn's 2026 'Young people and work' interim report for the Department of Work and Pensions (see tinyurl.com/ts157-N1) made the school connection hard to ignore. According to the report, persistent absence is associated with a 3.9-times greater risk of being NEET between 16 and 18, with absence and exclusion among the strongest predictors of later detachment.

“Shared concern can quietly become a shared assumption”

Emerging risks

To its credit, the government itself appears to recognise that steps need to be taken at an earlier stage. In July, the DfE updated its practical guidance around using 'Risk of NEET' indicators (RONI, see tinyurl.com/ts157-N2). The guidance now asks education providers to identify any emerging risks from KS3 onwards, apply their professional judgement to the data they've gathered and work with local authorities and partners to ensure that any required support is put in place ahead of time.

This matters. RONI gives schools and local authorities

a more systematic way of asking who may be at risk, but there's another question that's also worth asking – *'What has changed for this pupil now?'*

A child may have had SEND for years, or be eligible for free school meals over a similar span of time. These details matter too, though they might not necessarily tell us why this Tuesday feels different from last Tuesday. I call this period the 'pre-absence drift' – the weeks, or sometimes even months when a pupil is technically still in the building, but at a point where their relationship with school is beginning to loosen.

A Monday goes. Then a friendship shifts. Their after-school club attendance evaporates and there's less substance to their schoolwork. Their future plans become harder to define.

Revising the baseline

None of this amounts to a crisis, but that's why the window is so easy to miss. Schools need thresholds, but thresholds only tell us where a pupil *is*; they don't always tell us in which direction they're moving.

Let's take a pupil who's at 88% attendance, but largely because they have a stable, long-term health condition. Another pupil currently at 94% may have started the year at 100% but be falling steadily, and yet it's the lower figure that will (understandably) command all the attention.

Research into attendance previously undertaken by The Children's Commissioner found that prior absence patterns did more to explain increased variations in subsequent absence than any other observable pupil metric.

One useful question to pose in your next year group meeting could therefore be, *'How does this pupil look compared with themselves six weeks ago?'* Not instead of thresholds, mind you – alongside them. That way, the child gets to become their own baseline.

3 adults, 3 forms of knowledge

Most schools aren't short of information. Between the registers, behaviour records, assessment data, SEND information, pastoral notes and careers conversations, we tend to know lots about our pupils. But then there's the remark that neatly sums up the kind of data that doesn't fit neatly into a spreadsheet – "*He seems different lately.*"

The new RONI guidance is right to require that schools take account of professional judgements alongside the data they collect. The challenge comes when trying to help those judgements travel.

There is, however, an idea from the healthcare sector that could be useful here.

The National Early Warning Score (NEWS2) is used in adult acute care to help clinical teams recognise signs of deviation and deterioration away from routine observations. It gives staff a shared way of seeing when a patient's condition is changing, while *supporting* (rather than *replacing*) their clinical judgement.

Schools aren't hospitals, of course, and pupils aren't patients. I'm not suggesting that we devise a 'medical score' for use in education, but the question remains – *'What happens when several observations that seem ordinary in isolation start telling the same story when placed side by side?'*

Early noticing

The form tutor notices a pupil starting to show signs of withdrawal. The English teacher sees the quality of their work begin to decline and the PE teacher no longer sees them at the after-

school club. The careers specialist finds that this pupil, who once had such grand plans, no longer wants to talk about them.

Separately, each of these observations might not amount to all that much. Taken together, they're worthy of further analysis. And then there's the

person no dashboard can speak for – the pupil.

"*What's changed?*" is a gentler question to put to them than "*Why aren't you attending?*" Sometimes, their answer will simply be that nothing significant is wrong. Early noticing shouldn't turn ordinary aspects of adolescence

into problems that demand a diagnosis – but sometimes, the answer given may indeed explain why those Mondays have gone.

Different by half-term

Schools can't solve the NEET problem alone. There are many services and specialists that will meet to discuss these young people's lives, but schools have access to something special that subsequent services can't recreate – the years leading up to the outcome.

Before a young person appears in a NEET statistic, they'll have been somebody's pupil. Some pupils will have still been arriving at the school gate each morning, even as they were starting to disengage.

I'm not asking for another programme. Instead, I'm asking whether the following four questions could sit somewhere inside the conversations that school staff are already having:

- Who has changed relative to themselves?
- Are several adults seeing the same change?
- What does the pupil say is happening?
- Who carries the next step, and when will we check that it's been completed?

That last question is perhaps the one that matters most. When several caring adults know something about a pupil, that shared concern can quietly become a shared assumption. The form tutor thinks that pastoral knows. Pastoral knows that attendance is somehow involved. Everybody *cares*, but the next required step needs to be accounted for. One specific action, one name, one completion date, but no additional bureaucracy. What's really needed is somewhere for the noticing to go.

Pupils, not acronyms

The girl at 93% attendance is still here. That's her advantage. She's not yet severely absent, not yet a NEET statistic. It may be that there's no crisis brewing at all, just a notable change.

The updated RONI guidance gives schools a stronger framework for identifying who may be at risk. The aforementioned report by Alan Milburn has helped put pre-16 prevention measures firmly into the national conversation.

We have before us now the opportunity to ask what 'professional noticing' can add while the pupil is still sufficiently close for us to reach them.

The young people who eventually appear in NEET statistics weren't acronyms to start with. They were pupils. And for a fair while, many of them will have been children and teenagers who were sat before us in the classroom each day.

If your school has found a good, reliable and consistent way to spot the signs of that early drift, or devised a means by which professional noticing can travel before absence becomes obvious, I'd genuinely like to hear from you about what's working. Because those experiences need to form part of a wider conversation around what early identification should look like in practice.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gloria Dalafu is founder and chief executive of School2U Virtual Academy CIC (school2uvirtualacademy.com); she spent 20 years in secondary schools as a form tutor, head of year and lead practitioner in mathematics, and now works with young people at risk of disengaging from education

Help young people build a pathway to their future

- ✓ **Build confidence, essential skills and aspirations**
- ✓ **Free KS3/KS4 activities supporting employability skills**
- ✓ **Help young people understand the world of work**
- ✓ **Curriculum-linked across five subjects**

Download here



5 REASONS TO TRY... Tomorrow's Engineers Week 2026

Where could your students' aptitude for STEM take them? Find out this November, over several days filled with compelling challenges, helpful advice and inspiring stories...



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Tomorrow's Engineers Week 2026 is a national campaign that helps students explore engineering and technology careers through engaging classroom activities and inspiring role models. It runs from 9th to 13th November.

1 CONNECT STEM TO THE REAL WORLD

Young people care deeply about the future – not just theirs, but also that of their communities and the world around them. Many don't realise that engineering and technology are among the most powerful tools we have for creating positive change. We want to change that. This year, Tomorrow's Engineers Week will show how engineering and tech can help tackle the real-world challenges they care about. Through free 'Shape our future' classroom activities, we'll help students connect STEM to the world around them, as well as their future careers.

introducing each challenge and sharing their real-world experience. The resources are designed to be flexible and easy to use, making it simple to bring STEM careers to life in the classroom. Schools that submit photographs of their students' completed challenge designs will receive a certificate, with selected projects showcased via an online gallery throughout the week.

2 ENGAGE STUDENTS THROUGH CREATIVE CHALLENGES

Aimed at young people aged 11 to 14, our classroom activities invite students to become engineers and take on some of society's biggest challenges. We've developed three exciting design challenges focused on topics we know they're passionate about – climate change, AI and food waste. Students could create ways to cool their school without air conditioning, design an AI solution that supports people or explore how to reduce food waste.

3 ACCESS READY-TO-TEACH RESOURCES

Each challenge comes with everything teachers need for successful delivery. Schools each receive a PowerPoint with accompanying teacher guide and notes, plus videos that feature professionals

4 HELP STUDENTS EXPLORE THEIR NEXT STEPS

Alongside the design challenges, schools can access an interactive take-home activity sheet that will encourage students to reflect on their interests, strengths and future ambitions. The activity sheet presents an overview of various post-school engineering and technology pathways, helping young people understand how their interests could translate into rewarding careers. Throughout the Week, real engineers will also be sharing inspiring career stories of how they're shaping our futures right now on our website and social media.



Download the resources at eukeducation.org.uk/tweek

5 INSPIRE EVERY STUDENT TO HELP SHAPE OUR FUTURES

The engineering and technology sectors need creative thinkers, communicators, problem-solvers, designers and innovators from all backgrounds. Tomorrow's Engineers Week showcases diverse role models and authentic career stories that will help young people recognise their own strengths and interests. By challenging stereotypes and highlighting different routes into STEM careers, the Week shows students that these exciting futures are open to them too.



Highlights

3 real-world design challenges – choose from 'climate change', 'AI' or 'food waste' challenges that will encourage students to think creatively and develop practical solutions.

A complete teacher resource pack containing PowerPoint presentations, teacher notes, expert videos and guidance to support easy classroom delivery.

Submit photographs of students' designs to receive certificates and the chance for their work to be featured online.

STEM career inspiration – interactive activities and real-world engineer stories that will help students discover where their interest in STEM could take them.

When the theory's NOT ENOUGH

Gareth Edgell tells us why he built a question bank of 3,600 questions, and what the process taught him about students' revision habits...

There's a moment that every CS teacher will recognise. You ask a student to explain how a bubble sort works, and they give you a decent answer. You then ask them to trace through an unsorted list on paper and they fall apart.

Afterwards, when looking at the mark scheme, they'll say, almost every time, "*I knew that.*" They probably did. That's not the problem. The problem is that knowing something, and being able to retrieve it under exam pressure are two completely different skills.

We spend almost all of our teaching time focusing on the former, while assuming the latter will follow naturally. In my experience as a senior examiner, however, it doesn't – and I see evidence of that in scripts every year.

Mapping to specific statements

A few years ago I started doing something I probably should have done earlier – tracking exactly where my students were dropping marks. Not at the topic level, but at the question level. I wanted to know whether a student who could explain the 'fetch-decode-execute' cycle could answer a six-mark question about it cold, without prompts, under timed conditions.

More often than I'd have liked, the answer was *no*.

That's what led me to build compscitutoring.com. The idea was straightforward — practice questions mapped to

specific statements in the AQA, OCR, and Cambridge IGCSE specs, so that students could not just see that they were 'shaky on networks', but that they specifically needed to work on packet switching and MAC addresses.

Three years on, it now hosts over 3,600 questions across GCSE and A Level, but what I didn't expect was how much the act of building it would teach me about the way students revise – and

videos, while a smaller number will make flashcards for themselves. All of these activities feel productive, but are almost entirely passive.

The material becomes more familiar over time, and the student gradually comes to feel that they're ready. Then the exam arrives, and the brain – which was never once asked to *retrieve* anything under pressure – suddenly can't do so on demand. This isn't a

questions, certain topics will soon start to show up as sinkholes – places where students *think* they understand something, only to repeatedly demonstrate they, in fact, do not.

Take binary arithmetic. Most students can convert between binary and denary in isolation by the time they sit their exam, but ask them to add two binary numbers and identify an overflow condition, and something completely different happens. It's not that they've forgotten something; it's that they've only ever *read about it*. You can't read your way to being comfortable with binary arithmetic. You have to do it, repeatedly, until it stops being a

“This isn't a ‘motivation problem’ or an ‘ability problem’; it's a preparation problem”

why so much of the revision they do *doesn't actually work*...

Not a hunch

Writing 3,600 questions forces you to be very precise about what you're testing. Not, '*Does the student know about binary?*' but rather, '*Can they convert a denary number without being told which method to use?*' Less '*Have they read about network topologies?*' and more '*Can they identify the right one from a diagram they haven't seen before?*'

It's a distinction that sounds obvious when written down, but in practice, most revision activities never get close to it.

Most students will revise by reading their notes, textbooks and revision guides. Some will watch

'motivation problem', or an 'ability problem'; it's a *preparation problem*, and one we can all do far more to address.

Those students who answered practice questions as part of their exam preparation will have received immediate feedback on what they got wrong. They will likely have then returned to weaker areas more often and more consistently than those who revised twice as hard using traditional methods.

I've now seen this occur often enough for it to not be a hunch — it's just what happens.

Sinkhole topics

When you set yourself the task of writing that many

procedure you have to think through and starts being something you can execute.

The same goes for logic gates. Your students will be able to confidently name 'AND', 'OR' and 'NOT', but drawing a circuit from a Boolean expression, or working backwards from a circuit to write that expression is a different skill entirely. It needs repetition, and the kind of low-stakes regular practice that most revision programmes simply don't build in.

Immediate feedback

Network security is another one. Students can learn the vocabulary easily enough – 'phishing', 'SQL injection', 'DDoS' – but when a

question asks them to explain the mechanism behind an attack rather than just name it, the answers fall apart. That gap is almost always a retrieval problem, not a knowledge problem.

The things that actually seem to help, though, are less complicated than most of the advice out there would seem to suggest. Setting 10 questions at the start of a lesson – in quiet conditions, with no prior preparation and only low stakes involved – will help to develop students' retrieval habits without adding anything meaningful to teacher workload.

That's because immediate feedback matters more than most teachers realise. The

moment between a wrong answer and the correct explanation is the most useful learning window there is. If that window doesn't open until the following lesson – or worse, never opens at all – then the opportunity is gone.

Assessment as performance

For more abstract topics – binary conversion, sorting algorithms, logic gates, the Little Man Computer – interactive tools can change things in ways that straightforward explanations simply can't. When students operate the LMC simulator themselves, and watch the accumulator change in response to their own instructions, something in them clicks that no amount of whiteboard demonstration will ever achieve.

I've seen this happen enough times that I've now stopped treating these tools as extras, and started treating them as the main event for certain topics. All the tools I use are freely available from compscitutoring.com/tools – a logic gate builder, algorithm visualiser, binary converter and others. Several colleagues

have begun using them as lesson starters.

If I'm being honest, most experienced CS teachers will already know instinctively that retrieval practice works, and that doing beats reading when it comes to technical topics. What I didn't appreciate until I sat down to write 3,600 questions was quite how specific some of the gaps are, and how precisely you can target them, *if* your practice activities are mapped tightly enough to the spec.

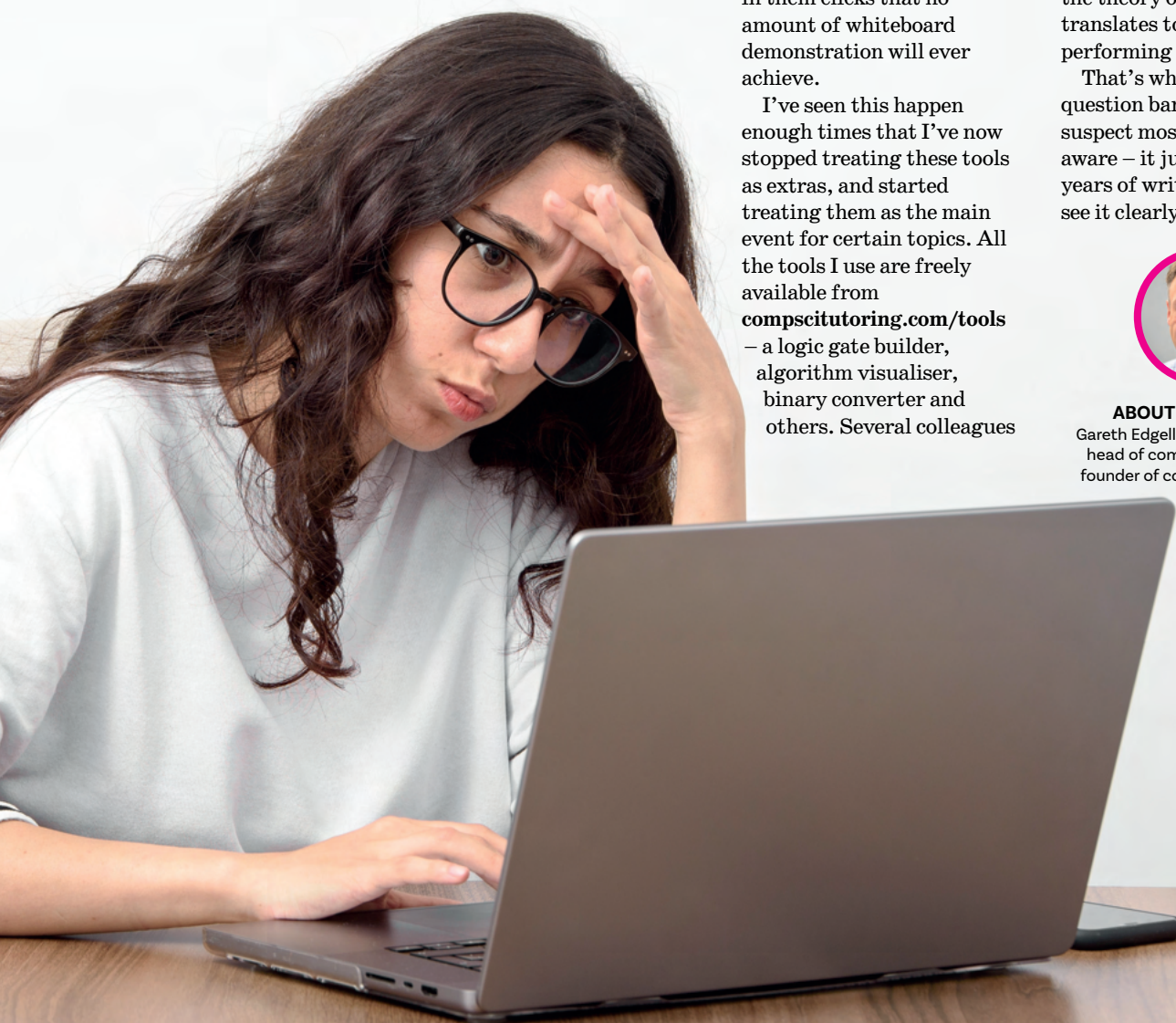
The thing to remember is that the exam isn't a memory test; it's a *performance*. And the only way to adequately prepare students for a performance is to make them rehearse the production beforehand, not just study the theory of it and hope that translates to them performing well on the day.

That's what building a question bank taught me. I suspect most were already aware – it just took me three years of writing questions to see it clearly.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gareth Edgell is a senior examiner, head of computer science, and founder of compscitutoring.com





87%

of students on SimpleStudy
achieve Grade 6 or higher.

SimpleStudy **sets the revision**, marks it and shows
every student what to **fix next**

Less time marking

More independent study

More room for progress

Find out how you can do it too here:

simplestudy.com/schools

4 million questions answered by UK students in the last two years

SCAN HERE



[MATHS PROBLEM]

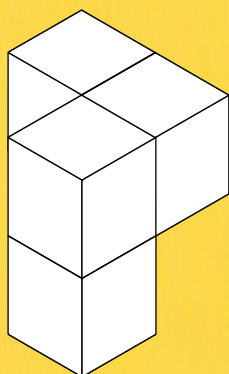
PENTACUBES

Students often find it difficult to match up an isometric drawing with its corresponding plan and elevations, says **Colin Foster**

In this lesson, students consider the possible plans and elevations corresponding to different pentacubes

THE DIFFICULTY

Look at this drawing.



How many cubes can you see?
What would it look like from different directions?

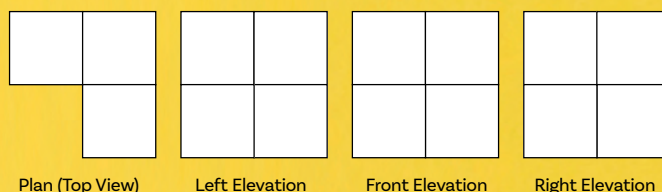
The drawing is ambiguous – there must be at least four cubes here, because we can see part of each of four cubes, but there could be more hidden – so there are different possibilities for the plan and elevations.

THE SOLUTION

We'll assume all the solids in this lesson are pentacubes – meaning they are made of exactly five cubes attached face to face.

Now you know this, how must the plan and left and right elevations look?

The answer is shown below.



Plan (Top View) Left Elevation Front Elevation Right Elevation

The left and right elevations will always just be mirror images of each other.

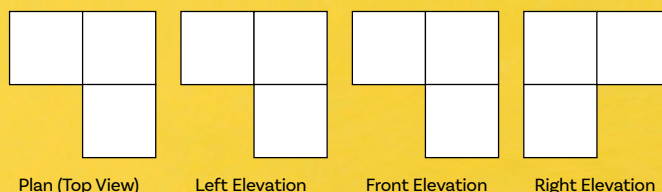
Now take five cubes and make a different pentacube. Draw the plan and any two of the three elevations for your pentacube. See if your partner can work out what your pentacube must have been, just by looking at the plan and elevations.

Checking for understanding

Go back and look at the original image.

If there are actually only **four** cubes present, how would this change the plan and elevations?

The answer is shown below.

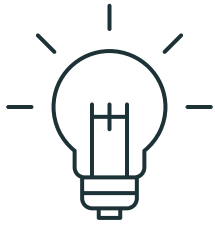


Plan (Top View) Left Elevation Front Elevation Right Elevation



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

THE NEXT BIG THING



HAVE YOUR SAY, SHAPE WHAT'S NEXT

Discover how your insights can help inform the future of qualifications, assessment and education

[TALKING ABOUT]

The AQA Teacher Insight Programme

Upcoming assessment reforms will soon shape the future of your subject and the experiences of your students. Through the AQA Teacher Insight Programme you can get closer to what's changing, contribute your expertise and help us develop qualifications and assessments that work more effectively in the classroom.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

We're creating more ways for you to get involved with AQA as assessment reform develops. The AQA Teacher Insight Programme brings together our Teacher Panels, our partnership with Teacher Tapp and our dedicated research. You could answer quick monthly questions, contribute to research or take part in more in-depth opportunities.

The Programme builds on the vital role teachers have always played in shaping AQA qualifications, while making it easier to contribute in ways that work for you.

"Teacher Tapp exists to make sure teacher voice is at the heart of education decision-making, so partnering with AQA during this pivotal moment for education in England is something we're really excited about."

"This partnership means our independent evidence base will have a direct line into the qualifications reform process. We're proud to be contributing our insights to the project, and to see teachers' opinions, experiences and values directly shape the future of qualifications, assessment, and support for teachers, students, and schools."

- Karen Wespieser MBE, Chief Executive, Teacher Tapp

WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

By getting involved, you can bring the realities of your classroom and subject into our thinking about what comes next. Your experience can help highlight what works, what could be improved and what different subjects need. This insight will sit alongside AQA's research and assessment expertise as we develop our qualifications and assessments.



It's about helping us make better-informed decisions and develop qualifications that work in practice for teachers, and which give every student the opportunity to show what they know and can do.


Contact:
THE FUTURE OF YOUR SUBJECT STARTS WITH YOU

Sign up to the AQA Teacher Insight Programme to make your experience count and hear about opportunities to get involved:
aqa.org.uk/shape-the-future-together.

WHAT'S NEXT?

As assessment reform develops, so will the opportunities to get involved. We'll move from understanding the big issues affecting classrooms to exploring emerging ideas and subject-specific questions in greater depth.

We'll also share what we're hearing along the way, so that you can see the themes emerging across the profession and how teacher insight is informing our work. It's an opportunity to stay closer to the reform journey and contribute at the moments where your expertise can add real value.

GET INVOLVED

Whether you have five minutes or want to play a bigger part in shaping your subject, there are different ways to make your experience count. Join AQA's Teacher Panels and share your views through quick monthly surveys. You'll also be among the first to hear about networking events, face-to-face opportunities and exclusive insider sessions, where you can test our thinking, shape what comes next and get an early look at new ideas and products.

As a thank you for your time, you'll also have the chance to win one of three £100 Amazon vouchers each month.

No 'School Within a School'

The time has come for schools to rethink the role performed by their inclusion base, says **Amy Husband**...

With permanent exclusions at a record high, and the AP sector stretched to its limits, the role of the on-site inclusion base in mainstream secondary schools has never been more critical – or more contested.

While primary bases will often focus on early nurture and gentle reintegration, secondary inclusion bases face the far more complex challenges of stabilising behaviour, repairing fractured relationships and closing learning gaps, all under the relentless pressure of looming KS4 exams.

And yet, just as inclusion bases have become more prevalent, a new risk has emerged of such bases becoming 'schools within schools' – siloed, separate entities that inadvertently entrench exclusion, rather than promote inclusion. Drawing on real-world practice across the UK's largest AP settings, here are six practical strategies for ensuring your inclusion base remains a rigorous, structured turning point for vulnerable students, rather than a holding pen or parallel school.

1. Design for inclusion

The physical and psychological positioning of your inclusion base is crucial. Is it tucked away at the edge of the site, or central to your mainstream facilities? The planning stage must be inclusive by design. Consider how it *feels* to be a student in the inclusion base. Does the journey to and from the base reinforce a sense of separation, or does it signal belonging? A centrally located and readily visible



base with shared communal spaces will send a powerful message that students accessing the base remain part of the school community.

2. See it as a stepping stone, not a destination

One of the most effective ways of preventing a base from becoming a 'school within a school' is to be relentless in reviewing internal placements. Every student should have an individual plan with clear goals, co-produced with the student and their parents or carers. Regular reviews will ensure that the base is a part of a graduated intervention approach, not a final stop. Focusing on transition and reintegration will ensure the inclusion base remains dynamic and purposeful, rather than static and isolating.

3. Maintain high academic standards

Too often, inclusion bases risk becoming places where academic ambition is quietly lowered, but this mustn't be allowed to happen. Students in the base deserve access to high-quality teaching and learning, delivered by subject

specialists and qualified teachers. Their timetable should be proportionate to their needs, but always ambitious for their reintegration and achievement. The inclusion base should be a place where academic standards are upheld, not compromised – a launchpad for success, rather than a cul-de-sac.

4. Harness the power of pastoral care

The staff in your inclusion base are your greatest asset. Are they the best fit for re-engaging students who need a circuit break? Pastoral intervention underpins how settled a student will feel, and paves the way for academic learning to be prioritised. Trauma-informed practice, reasonable adjustments, and high expectations of behaviour and learning must go hand in hand. Effective relationships are the key to ensuring that the base is a place of transformation, not containment.

5. Foster whole-school understanding and opportunities

It's vital that staff at all levels understand what the inclusion base is, and what it

isn't. Organise a timetable of visits throughout each half-term, and maximise opportunities for all staff and students to learn about the base's purpose. Students in the base should have equal chances to participate in mainstream lessons and activities, making it clear that the base isn't a separate entity. This whole-school approach is essential for breaking down barriers and preventing the creation of a 'school within a school.'

6. Embrace innovation and high aspiration

Finally, pursue high aspirations and expectations relentlessly for everyone connected to the inclusion base. Explore digital and hybrid partnerships with DfE-accredited online providers to enhance your offer. This innovation should be both visible and meaningful, and based around prioritising inclusion for your most vulnerable learners.

In summary, the inclusion base should never be a destination or a silo. Through thoughtful design, rigorous reviews, high academic standards, strong relationships, whole-school understanding and committing to innovation, we can ensure our inclusion bases are powerful engines of inclusion, aspiration and transformation.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Amy Husband is executive head at Academy21



Off the Shelves

Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore

A Little History of The Earth



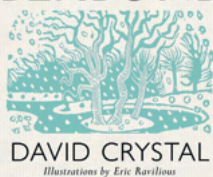
Jamie Woodward

A Little History of the Earth (Jamie Woodward, Old Street, £16.99)

When you visit an unfamiliar city, one thing you can do is book yourself on a bus tour. The guide will point out the most important landmarks and where they are in relation to each other, leaving you better prepared to later explore them at your leisure, should you wish. Well, what bus tours do for cities, this book does for geology, covering as it does a vast breadth of material that takes in not just the Earth but also the Moon, as well as *Homo sapiens'* ongoing search for extraterrestrial life, science fiction, earthquakes, oxygen and even the siting of canals. For all that, it's a very easy read that contains lots of potentially useful material for a range of subjects beyond just geography, including physics, chemistry, biology and even creative writing.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman
bit.ly/Eclecticism

A WORD for ALL SEASONS



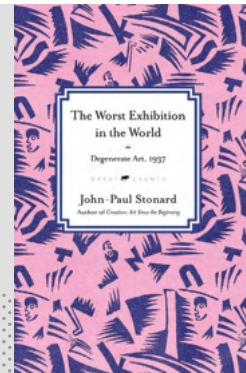
DAVID CRYSTAL

Illustrations by Eric Ravilious

A Word For All Seasons (David Crystal, Bodleian, £20)

Following on from his ambitious 2023 title *A Date with Language: Fascinating Facts, Events and Stories for Every Day of the Year*, Mr Crystal has produced another richly fascinating book, this time focusing on the language we associate with different seasons. Much more than a mere dictionary of word meanings and idioms, it contains a wealth of information about how the meanings of 'seasonal' words and expressions have changed over time. Lavishly illustrated, with beautiful engravings by Eric Ravilious, it includes a number of explanatory excerpts from novels, reports and poems to help unpack the sometimes surprisingly dense meanings behind such common terms as 'season tickets', 'Easter eggs' and even 'mince pies'. Whether you're searching for coursework inspiration, ideas for a cross-curricular project or just a snippet of info to help enliven a class discussion, *A Word for All Seasons* won't disappoint.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman



The Worst Exhibition in the World: Degenerate Art, 1937

(John-Paul Stonard, Old Street, £12.99)

In 1937, the Nazi Party staged an exhibition of art that the party, and Hitler in particular, disapproved of. It encompassed practically every school of painting at the time, with the exception of 'naturalistic' forms. To them, art was supposed to inculcate a 'correct' set of values. Over 2 million people attended – which is probably 2 million more than would have seen these works otherwise, which seems ironic. Stonard walks us through the exhibition's halls, dropping in snippets of conversation to provide atmosphere and factual information to provide context. Some of the exhibited works were destroyed, others were sold and the fate of several remains unknown. At one point, Stonard cites German poet Heinrich Heine's prescient observation in 1821 that "Where they burn books, they will ultimately burn people too." Indeed, the same could be said of artworks. An excellent guide to a relatively minor, yet highly revealing episode of the Nazi era.

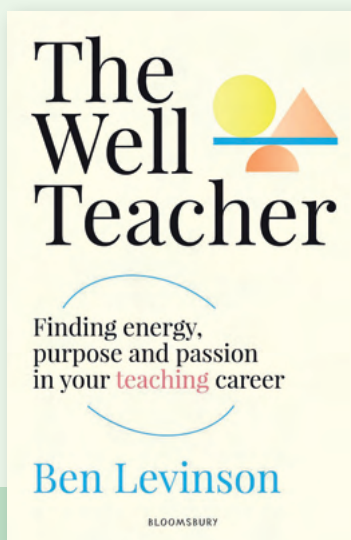
Reviewed by Terry Freedman

ON THE RADAR

The Well Teacher**(Ben Levinson OBE, Bloomsbury Education, £16.99)**

Given the now wearying frequency of surveys and reports that paint pictures of an education system barely held together by perennially downtrodden, demoralised and burnt-out teaching staff, one can only imagine that the advice, reassurance and suggestions contained within *The Well Teacher* will be welcomed by a very receptive audience.

As you might expect from an author who's previously been a teacher, school leader and advisor to the DfE on matters of work and wellbeing, the book is grounded in the everyday practical experience of what it's actually like to be a teacher on the ground, and written in the conversational, familiar tone of a colleague who knows what you're going through. Levinson backs up his advice in places with some light references to theory, but where he succeeds most is in not being afraid to show readers some of the vulnerabilities, difficulties and regrets he himself has experienced throughout his career, and in the sections of the book that speak to the importance of living a 'good life' outside the school gates, and how that can make someone a better, more complete teacher inside them.



Meet the author

ADAM SELDON

What motivated you to embark on such an ambitious project to see how education is practised in different countries?

There are some exceptions, but nearly every human on the planet attends some form of school, at least up until primary level, during one of the most formative parts of their lives. Aside from our parents, schools are perhaps one of the most important influences on our future lives.

Given that universality and importance, I wanted to see how different countries, cultures and contexts all approached that question of how we can make the experience of education as fantastic as possible for the young people who pass through the school gates each day, wherever that might be.

Why 80 schools?

Aside from paying homage to the book by Jules Verne, 80 seemed to fit quite nicely in terms of the project's global ambitions, to visit a range of cultures, contexts and places. I deliberately set out to visit every continent and a variety of cultures (with the caveat that cultures are fluid, and not static entities), so having that variety of input seemed necessary in order to answer the question of what makes a great school.

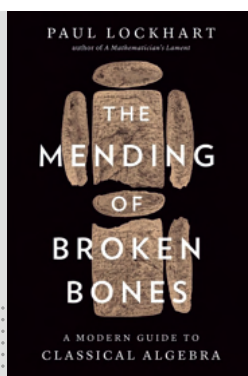
When visiting the schools, was there always a specific set of things you wanted to examine? By the end of the project, were you still visiting schools with the same aims in mind?

Perhaps initially I was a bit more open in my approach, but over time things started to cohere into these seven big themes of what happens in schools, which eventually formed the basis of the book's chapters.

As the project progressed, it became necessary to address important areas that really needed covering. One of the last countries I visited was Portugal, after I'd been advised by people in the know that the country had developed some great inclusion practice. SEN is a big issue for schools in England at the moment, so I wanted to see a system known for it.

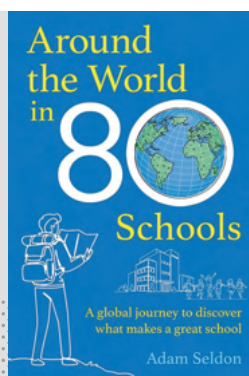
On other occasions I'd go somewhere and be really struck by something I hadn't been expecting – like these incredible social/emotional sessions I saw in South Africa, which successfully leveraged peer influence to develop young people's social and emotional intelligence, and foster a really strong school culture where all students felt involved. So it was partly intention, and partly just a case of seeing what happened...

Adam Seldon is a teacher and school leader based in London

**The Mending of Broken Bones: A Modern Guide to Classical Algebra****(Paul Lockhart, HUP, £24.95)**

The two main things I remember from my school algebra lessons are having to memorise formulae and methodology, and needing to tackle exercises at the end of each chapter in our textbooks – but I never really understood any of it. Having now read Lockhart's explanations of how to solve simple and quadratic equations, however, much of it makes perfect sense. I'd even go so far as to say that the processes appear to be obvious. Lockhart writes very engagingly, with some parts of the book even making me laugh out loud – not a response one would usually expect from a book on maths teaching. Some of the later chapters may be quite difficult for non-specialists to follow at first, yet one suspects that Lockhart's words will be compelling enough to make all readers want to persevere.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman

**Around the World in 80 Schools****(Adam Seldon, Crown House Publishing, £16.99)**

If you've ever been curious about how the education systems of other countries differ from our own, Adam Seldon has you comprehensively covered with this ambitious survey of how the practice and policies followed by schools and teachers across all five continents both overlap with, and deviate from what we're used to. Seldon isn't out to uncover the 'One Perfect School' in some far-flung land, or pick and choose from different practices to envisage some kind of idealised gestalt school. Instead, in his vividly-drawn descriptions of after-school 'Peer Inspiring Collaborative Learning' sessions in South Korea, and the Australian principal on a mission to develop a 'young renaissance man', Seldon comes across as an open-minded travel companion with a keen awareness of how important context can be, but also an infectious enthusiasm for interesting ideas and novel approaches – some of which may well be finding their way to a school near you soon...

ABRSM

Piano Exam Pieces 2027 & 2028

For Practical and Performance Grades
from Initial Grade to Grade 8



AVAILABLE
NOW!



Discover free
resources in our
Piano Learning Hub

Watch. Listen. Learn. Play.



RELIABLE WALL & DOOR PROTECTION SOLUTIONS

- ✓ Reduce Maintenance Costs
- ✓ Keep Classrooms & Corridors Looking Fresh
- ✓ Protect Against Everyday Wear & Tear
- ✓ Fire Door Services - Inspections, Installation, Maintenance & Remedials

Tel: 0113 279 5854
email: info@yeomanshield.com

THIS WAY!



School improvement advice for headteachers and SLT

FACILITIES | MAINTENANCE | HYGIENE

GOOD *working order*

SFG20's Paul Bullard shares his insights into some of the considerations and challenges that currently confront those engaged in facilities management for schools...

Is there anything in the DfE's recently announced Education Estates Strategy (see tinyurl.com/ts157-SE1) that sets it apart from previous interventions and initiatives in this area?

In this instance, it's a strategy focused on providing greater visibility for

leadership teams and governing bodies. Previously, school estates and buildings have tended to be viewed as a background operational issue – things that are simply *there* until something fails, and you have to deal with them.

The DfE now seems to be saying much more clearly that responsible bodies need accurate information, an asset management plan and a more proactive approach to maintenance. It's possible at the moment to visit some schools and discover that they don't necessarily have all the information regarding the assets

they have, or what condition they're in – but if you're spending money on having people service your facilities, your starting point has to be knowing what needs to be maintained.

There can be a tendency among some to prioritise 'high-level' areas – 'Let's have our fire equipment inspected,' 'Let's check our heating' – but what does that actually mean? How many boilers will need servicing? What's everything connected to? That's where the new strategy comes in. It

reinforces the idea that these are things you have to now know.

What's likely to be the most immediate impact of the new guidance on schools' operations?

There are some parallels between schools and the NHS, in that both have massive maintenance backlogs where things haven't been dealt with for years. For schools, the most immediate impact will be increased scrutiny of what they know about their estates.

Some currently don't have that information, but it would enable them to prioritise the work they require and check whether those decisions are supported by evidence, rather than falling back on the reactive principle of simply fixing things only after they've become broken.

The chief priority for schools will always be pupil safety and safeguarding, followed by statutory compliance. That's where SFG20 can help, since we can provide guidance as to those things you *must* do, the things you *should* do, and the things you *could* do.

We'll often use the example of a school during winter – if the weather gets especially cold and its boiler fails, the pupils will need to be sent home, thus making it vital that the school keeps its boilers well-maintained throughout the year.

Your own research recently found that schools are tending to prioritise day-to-day operational spending over planned preventive maintenance [see sidebar] – is that a consequence of statutory regulations steadily expanding over time?

Any public activity that involves regulating risks to personal safety will eventually acquire new laws as time goes on – it's just what happens. Even with regards to basic facilities management, the 2022 Buildings Safety Act has become an added consideration and significantly changed organisations' approaches to fire safety.

What have you found to be some of the most common – or indeed serious – instances of failing school infrastructure that you've observed? What are the biggest issues that can catch schools by surprise?

It's heating equipment that perhaps causes the most issues, though we're now starting to see many schools install cooling systems across their facilities – and having to manage all the maintenance concerns that come with



them, if those systems aren't properly looked after.

There's also been the RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete) issue in recent years, where building materials were found to be crumbling, which caused huge problems, and in some cases even prompted temporary evacuations from school buildings.

More everyday issues will tend to revolve around things like toilets, simply due to how often they're used. The same applies to any parts of a school estate that see heavy use – if you don't

look after them, you'll end up shouldering the cost of repairs.

Have you come across any noteworthy examples of schools managing their estates especially well?

The most effective schools will be those that have at some point specifically asked, *'What are the things that matter most to us?'* and then targeted those areas in the course of their maintenance duties. They still have to carry out their statutory duties, of course – you can't not inspect your fire safety systems – but they'll be actively identifying their

critical assets, and ensuring that even if they don't maintain anything else, those statutory and critical assets are being well looked after.

Schools tend to be fairly similar with regards to their facilities. Nearly all will have dedicated classrooms and a shared play area of some kind. Some may have fields (though fewer than in the past, given how many schools have sold off portions of land to generate revenue), many will have specialist laboratory areas with gas taps and the like, and some may have a swimming pool.

It's a question of schools going

PREVENTION PAYS

At what point does school hygiene and cleanliness become a maintenance issue? Here are some pointers, courtesy of Yeoman Shield...

The cheapest cleaning problem to deal with is often the one you successfully prevent in the first place.

For school leaders having to balance high expectations with stretched budgets, that means looking beyond your cleaning contract to consider how your school's actual building(s) may be contributing to your workload.

Busy corridors, dining areas and classroom entrances all take a daily battering from bags, chairs and trolleys. Scuffed paintwork, chipped corners and damaged doors can leave a school looking neglected, even after thorough cleaning. Repeated scrubbing, repainting and repairing of these areas can absorb time and money, often without addressing the underlying issues.

1. Audit your interiors

Start by touring your school premises with your site manager and cleaning supervisor. Identify areas where damage keeps reoccurring, any surfaces that might require extra attention, and any sites of frequent spills. Cleaning teams will usually know exactly which areas involve disproportionate amounts of work – their observations can help to distinguish a cleaning issue from a more involved maintenance problem that no amount of scrubbing will resolve.

2. Draw up a prevention plan

Use those findings to help prioritise your preventative improvements. Appropriately installed wall protection panels, corner protectors and door protection can shield vulnerable surfaces from everyday impacts and abrasion. Durable, easy to clean finishes can also make routine upkeep more straightforward, while

reducing the need for repeated repairs and redecoration.

3. Target your approach

Adopting a targeted approach is particularly useful when funding is limited. Protecting one frequently damaged corridor or dining area will be a much more manageable starting point than embarking on a whole-school installation. Compare the initial investment with your existing costs for labour, materials and disruption, then monitor whether those recurring demands gradually reduce over the coming months.

4. Review student and staff habits

Prevention also depends on everyday organisation. Review regular trolley routes, furniture positioning and storage arrangements, so as to reduce avoidable contact with walls and doors. Consider whether entrances are effectively guarding against tracked-in dirt, and whether your bins are positioned where pupils are most likely to need them. Small adjustments can help tackle recurring problems at source.

5. Facilitate easy reporting

Make reporting during the school day as straightforward as possible. Staff should know whom to contact, how to describe the location and urgency of a problem, and who will arrange a response. A shared log can be used to record incidents, confirm completion and reveal potential patterns. Clarity with regards to staff's responsibilities (and cover arrangements in the event of absences) will prevent spills and damaged surfaces from being repeatedly reported but left unresolved.

6. Consult your after-hours cleaning provider

Agree on a clear specification for after-hours cleaning that covers the areas required, tasks for completion, frequency and expected standards. Review cleaning performance via regular walkthroughs with the provider, using your agreed requirements as the benchmark. Encourage cleaners to flag any deteriorating surfaces and recurring difficulties, so that these can inform your maintenance planning.

7. Consider protective systems

Protective systems can support the steps outlined above, but will themselves require appropriate cleaning. Ask suppliers for care instructions and ensure these are shared with the cleaning team. At Yeoman Shield, our approach is to help schools identify vulnerable areas and select protection suited to their use. A well-maintained school starts with co-ordinated decisions around cleaning, maintenance and design. Preventing avoidable damage can give leadership teams a practical way of making limited resources go further, while still keeping their school's premises presentable throughout the year.

Harrison Thompson & Co. Ltd., trading as Yeoman Shield, has been a pioneer in the wall and door protection market since 1966, providing a range of solutions designed to prevent damage and extend the lifespan of building interiors. For more information, visit yeomanshield.com





“There are some parallels between schools and the NHS, in that both have massive maintenance backlogs”

through all of that, and identifying which areas are the most important. Having done so, a school may well soon find itself spending money on only a quarter of its total assets. Targeting that spend is key.

It's been reported that facilities management teams are increasingly understaffed – what are some of the factors that may be responsible for that?

Across schools and multiple other industries, the favoured practice in recent years has been to outsource maintenance work. Often, in cases where that's happened, schools will have effectively passed responsibility for their buildings on to someone else – they're already paying this organisation to perform maintenance tasks, so it follows that they can potentially also look after the school's asset register and maintain its asset information.

More recently, however, we're starting to see that responsibility being brought back in-house. Asset owners are increasingly realising that they need to preserve that responsibility for their buildings – albeit often only some time after the person on staff who used to run their computer-aided facilities management system was let go.

Another thing is that facilities management continues to be seen as this big overhead. Schools don't necessarily view themselves in the same way as, say, a provider of commercial office space or a flexible working venue. Those businesses want to create great spaces

for people to work in, and will therefore view their interiors and building maintenance as an *essential* area of spend that's necessary for drawing people in.

Finally, it's worth thinking about the cycle of maintenance. Organisations will now often change their provider every three to five years, with the result that accumulated knowledge and awareness of a school's specific set of facilities is now gone.

What are the main barriers preventing schools from doing what needs to be done with respect to their facilities management?

We ourselves are looking to help the industry by showing schools that there are different ways of approaching the tasks in question – identifying operational risks, targeting those areas accordingly and spending your money in the right way, as per the specific needs of your facility.

Finally, we want to further help the facilities management teams based at schools, who should already be involved to some extent with their school's strategic planning. They shouldn't just be the people who are called in when something goes wrong.



Paul Bullard is Chief Product Officer at SFG20 – a subsidiary of the Building Engineering Services Association that maintains an online database of building maintenance standards and schedules; for more information, visit sfg20.co.uk



IN FIGURES

Some key statistics from a survey of facilities management professionals recently carried out by SFG20, as documented in its 'State of Facilities Management Report 2026' publication

72%

of respondents cited 'improvements to compliance and safety' as their the top working priority

54%

of respondents reported feeling 'very' or 'somewhat' confident in their organisation's ability to comply with new legislation and regulations – a drop of 9 percentage points compared to 2025

51%

of respondents reported having experienced staff shortages within their facilities management teams

69%

cited budget constraints as their most pressing challenge; for 59%, it was reducing operational costs

52%

Now cite 'integration with existing systems' as one of their professional challenges; a significant rise from the 20% who expressed the same sentiment last year

51%

identify AI and automation as the 'most significant trend' in facilities management for the next five years – though only 24% rate their organisations as being 'AI-ready'

SFG20's full report can be downloaded via tinyurl.com/ts157-SE2; readers can also download an SFG20 e-guide to the the government's Education Estates Strategy from tinyurl.com/ts157-SE3

CASUAL COMPETENCE

Andy Kyle tells us how using conversational Spanish in class can get KS3 and KS4 pupils talking...

For 14 years I taught pupils how to build sentences in Spanish. The reality, however, is that building sentences and having a conversation are completely different things.

At KS3/4 there can often be a heavy focus on vocabulary, grammar and the accuracy pupils need for examinations. Occasional excursions into informal Spanish can do a great deal for engagement levels, while also giving learners a completely different experience.

A small bank of conversational expressions can make pupils sound more confident and genuinely more ‘Spanish’, instead of just ‘textbook learners’. More importantly, this will give them confidence – which in speaking is at least half the battle...

Giving learners verbs, adjectives, connectives and structures won’t necessarily prepare them to listen to native speakers – from whom you’ll often hear a constant stream of small expressions that carry almost no factual information at all. They react, they hesitate, they disagree and keep the whole thing moving.

A carefully chosen handful of these expressions, introduced regularly, will help bridge the gap between ‘classroom’ Spanish and the kind of ‘authentic’ Spanish you’re more likely to hear being spoken by the customers at an outdoor cafe as they have their morning *cortados*.

‘¡Qué va!’

Pupils will either already know, or learn *sí* and *no* almost immediately, but real conversations beyond the classroom offer more interesting ways to agree and disagree.

‘*¡Qué va!*’ is among the best of these, partly because its meaning isn’t immediately obvious from the individual words. Depending on context and intonation it could be translated something close to ‘*No way!*’, ‘*Not at all!*’ or a more emphatic ‘*Absolutely not!*’

This makes it perfect for snappy classroom exchanges: “*¿Te gustan las verduras?*” “*¡Qué va!*”

Once they’re in the habit of using it, a Y8 speaking task involving asking

each other’s opinions on various foods may start to sound more like something a Spanish person would actually say.

‘Es que...’

This is a perfect way of getting pupils to simply say more words and avoid those mundane, lacklustre one-word responses.

The exact translation of ‘*Es que...*’ is roughly along the lines of ‘*It is that...*’, ‘*The thing is...*’ or ‘*It is because...*’, but again, it’s highly context-dependent. As before, you must look past the direct translation because the real value

of ‘*Es que*’ is in what it forces the speaker to do – which is to keep talking.

If you were to ask “*¿Te gusta el instituto?*”, a pupil could easily say ‘no’ and stop. If you teach them to follow it with ‘*Es que...*’ they’ll now have a reason to continue, as well as some



“Conversational expressions can make pupils sound more confident and genuinely more ‘Spanish’, instead of just ‘textbook learners’”

valuable thinking time for coming up with a valid reason for the opinion: “No. *Es que los profesores son estrictos.*”

They don’t need to follow ‘*es que*’ with anything all that complex. What matters is that they’ve now developed an answer, rather than given an insufficient response. That extra second or two of thinking time really is priceless, and a very useful tool for pupils to have in their back pocket when it comes to the speaking exams...

‘La verdad es que...’

A close relative of ‘*Es que*’ is ‘*La verdad es que...*’, which directly translates as ‘*The truth is that...*’ – or indeed a phrase we’ve all definitely used before, ‘*To be honest...*’

It works particularly well when expressing opinions, since it instantly lends answers a more

conversational quality:

“*La verdad es que no me gusta mucho el fútbol.*”
“*La verdad es que prefiero pasar tiempo con mis amigos.*”

For those taking GCSE Spanish, it’s a simple way of adding variety. Pupils should be encouraged to use it as a Spanish speaker typically would – when providing an honest opinion, or when justifying yourself.

‘¡Menos mal!’

This little beauty would fall under the

classification of ‘reaction language’. The benefit in knowing this phrase is that it can give pupils something to do while they’re listening, rather than waiting in silence for their turn to speak.

‘*¡Menos mal!*’ roughly translates as ‘Thank goodness!’ or ‘What a relief!’ – “*El examen no es hoy. Es mañana. ¡Menos mal!*”

This could be useful for mini-dialogues. Hand pairs a set of cards that carry good news, bad news and genuinely surprising news, and ask the listener to respond appropriately when hearing each being read out. Now you have them practising reading, comprehension and spontaneous speaking, all at the same time...

‘¡Qué fuerte!’

‘*¡Qué fuerte!*’ is another expression that falls under ‘reaction language’, and one that I’ve found is easily remembered. Your pupils will probably already know fuerte means ‘strong’, but in Spain, ‘*¡Qué fuerte!*’ can be deployed informally to express shock, disbelief or amazement. We’d likely use ‘*That’s unbelievable!*’ or ‘*That is mad!*’ as equivalents in English.

One example usage could be

“*Tenemos tres exámenes el lunes. ¡Qué fuerte!*”, though the intonation used here matters. This could be a timely opportunity to remind pupils that *how* something is said can convey additional meaning – something that applies across all languages, and not just Spanish.

‘¡No me digas!’

When you say ‘*¡No me digas!*’, word for word, it means ‘*Do not tell me!*’. What you’re *really* saying, however, is ‘*No way!*’, ‘*Really?*’ or ‘*You don’t say!*’

“*He ganado la lotería.*”
“*¡No me digas!*”

Once your pupils start using it alongside ‘*¡Qué fuerte!*’ and ‘*¡Menos mal!*’, they’ll have a small repertoire for responding to statements in ways very close to those of native speakers.

If you’re trying to embed this, there’s one thing you can do that will better support your students than almost any amount of explanation. Before asking the next question in a paired task, one partner must react to the other’s previous answer. Have three or four suitable reactions visible on the board at the start of the lesson; after a few weeks, the pupils will eventually stop needing them.

‘Tío’ and ‘tía’

‘Tío’ and ‘tía’ are used so much, especially amongst young Spaniards, that their textbook meaning deviates wildly from what they’ve come to mean as slang.

Pupils will likely first encounter them as ‘uncle’ and ‘aunt’, but in informal Spanish (in Spain) they’re used regularly among friends as equivalents to ‘mate’, ‘buddy’ or ‘pal’. The formulation “*¡No me digas, tío!*” may therefore likely not involve anybody’s uncle.

This is a good chance to mention *register*, which GCSE pupils are eventually introduced to. They don’t need to drop in ‘tío’ into every informal sentence. Ask them to think carefully about who is speaking to whom. If it’s two friends at break, that’s socially acceptable. If it’s a pupil addressing their headteacher, less so...

‘¿Cómo que...?’

Finally, teach pupils how to challenge something they’ve not understood or can’t quite believe. They can use ‘*¿Cómo que...?*’ as ‘*What do you mean...?*’ though as with some previous examples, it’s best used when reacting:

FINDING THE TIME

Giving your pupils an informal ‘Phrase of the Week’ can work well, as could dedicating part of a permanent display board to showing some of the phrases here, or awarding points to pupils when they use one appropriately during a speaking task.

In my experience, the most effective thing was to simply use them myself constantly. If pupils hear ‘*¡Qué va!*’, ‘*¡Menos mal!*’ and ‘*¡No me digas!*’ several times a week, they’ll soon start using them without being asked.

One temptation I would resist, however (speaking as somebody who’s personally given in to it before), is to turn conversational language into a memorisation test. The moment it appears in another vocabulary quiz, it stops being a conversational tool and becomes the very thing it was supposed to be an escape from.

“*Mañana tenemos clase a las siete. ¿Cómo que a las siete?*”

This is completely different from the expression ‘*¿Qué significa...?*’ They’re not saying that they ‘don’t understand’, but are rather reacting to the very idea itself – which is a far more powerful thing to be able to do.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Kyle taught Spanish for 14 years – eight as a curriculum leader for MFL, and two as an associate assistant principal at secondary schools in Manchester and Leeds

Sponsored by

Beat
Eating disorders

EATING
DISORDER
HUB
for Education
Professionals

**NO
RUNNING
IN THE
CORRIDORS**
PODCAST

WHICH SCHOOL RULES ARE WORTH BREAKING?

A smart, honest podcast debating the
rules that shape school life.



Scan to listen or search
No Running in the Corridors

LATEST EPISODES...



No doodling in lessons

A still classroom isn't always a listening one. What if that doodling child *is* paying attention?



No diagnosis? No special support

How can schools respond effectively to individual needs?



No extreme hairstyles

Are strict hair policies really about maintaining standards, or simply about control?

Listen on
 Apple Podcasts

 Spotify

 YouTube

What's New?

Our pick of the latest solutions and innovations for secondary education

1 Spread the joy of reading

Browns Books has been appointed to support the DfE's 'Funding for books and reading materials for secondary schools' programme. The programme provides funding to eligible secondary schools across England, in order to support efforts at encouraging reading for pleasure among KS3/4 pupils.

Schools can explore a wide range of titles, discover new reads and firm favourites, and involve pupils in selecting books for their own 'Reading for Pleasure' collections. Eligible schools can now access their dedicated DfE account with Browns, and start selecting and ordering titles via the Browns Reading for Pleasure Hub at brownsbfs.co.uk/dfe-books-for-secondary.

For further details, email dfe@brownsbfs.co.uk or contact 01482 384 660.



4 Transform PE for girls

Developed with girls and teachers, Studio You x Nike is a digital hub that combines co-creation and insight to provide free curriculum-linked video lessons delivered by expert Nike Trainers.

The Nike hub features fun, inclusive, non-competitive activities like dance, fitness and yoga. With a mission to change the way girls see PE and movement, all lessons are designed with adaptability at their core.

This includes progressive challenges, accessible modifications and new lesson-ready content developed directly from teacher and student feedback. Independent evaluation has found that 98% of girls surveyed said Studio You improved their overall experience of PE, while 91% reported increased confidence taking part in PE lessons. For more information, email studioyouPE@wecomcommunications.com or visit studio-you.co.uk/studio-you-nike.



5 Making school meals better

Bite Back has spent years campaigning for stronger School Food Standards. Our analysis found identifiable breaches of existing standards in 76% of assessable secondary-school menus, showing why the government's commitments on monitoring, transparency and governance matter.

Schools need support to serve food that's nutritious, appealing and affordable. That's why we're part of the School Food Project, alongside Chefs in Schools, the Jamie Oliver Group, School Food Matters and the Food Foundation. Its free online Hub provides training, guidance and practical resources, so that every child can enjoy great school food – wherever they go to school each day.

Explore the School Food Project Hub by visiting schoolfoodproject.org.uk.

2 Plan your next adventure

The School Tour Company works with over 800 schools across the UK and Ireland, organising more than 1,000 school groups each year. From curriculum-focused educational visits and European city breaks, to ski, sports and worldwide adventures, our experienced team makes school trip planning easier – from the initial enquiry to the return journey home.

Teach Secondary readers can receive £500 off their next school trip when they request a quote and book with us (Must quote 'Teach Secondary' when booking, terms and conditions apply). Start planning your next adventure at schooltourcompany.co.uk, email info@schooltourcompany.co.uk or quote 01244 722 651.



3 Real employability skills

Every year, teachers work with students who need extra support to stay engaged in learning and build confidence for their future. Skills Builder research has highlighted the importance of essential skills, finding that individuals with higher levels are 25% to 50% less likely to be out of work or education.

Rise is here to help. Since September 2025, it has supported more than 88,000 students across the UK, giving teachers practical tools to connect classroom learning with real-world employability skills. Our free KS3/4 resources cover all core subjects, and are curriculum-linked and ready to use, to help bring employability skills into lessons. Explore Rise resources by visiting rise-initiative.co.uk/resources



The maths of 'fun'

Your students might not realise it, but some of their favourite leisure activities are only made possible by complex maths, says

Ama Dickson – so why not examine that in class?

Introducing students to real-world maths applications isn't always easy. At secondary, some applications can seem too abstract, as the concepts involved go beyond the more straightforward scenarios students may have encountered at primary – money problems, for example, or basic time calculations.

However, showing students the centrality of maths to many of the activities they enjoy in their own time can be a real eye-opener, and more relatable than they might imagine.

Video games

Gaming has been a popular pastime among secondary-aged students going back decades. Introducing them to the essential role that maths plays in the hobby can expose them to new ideas and whole new ways of applying their own learning.

The use of co-ordinate geometry and transformations in older, more simple games like *Pac-Man* can serve as an engaging classroom tool that students get to interact with. One potential activity could involve describing *Pac-Man*'s movements as the game is played in front of the class. They can start by describing *Pac-Man*'s movements as 'Translation', 'Reflection' or 'Rotation', depending on the order of movements.

Some online videos have even shown the game being played alongside a numbered x and y axis, which could help students describe *Pac-Man*'s position using a

pair of coordinates, while describing how many units the character has moved up, down, left or right.

For added challenge, you could show high-attaining students how vectors can be an alternative way of describing the same movements – a 90° clockwise rotation being the same as a 450° clockwise rotation, for example.

On-screen geometry

The use of geometry to render video game graphics can also come as something of a surprise for students, as

one location to another on the screen – or indeed enlarge, spin or rotate them, as many games will do – can be helpful to look at in the context of geometry, and vividly show how maths is routinely applied in both overt and less obvious ways to an activity that students enjoy in their own time.

Social media algorithms

Social media engagement amongst young people is at an all-time high (though the incoming ban on its use by under-16s may change that).

“Showing students the centrality of maths to many of the activities they enjoy can be a real eye-opener”

they discover that the detailed and complex animations they see in their favourite games will often be made up entirely of polygons.

Showing the class a game with less complicated graphics and more obvious gameplay elements – *Geometry Dash*, for example – can help them more readily recognise and appreciate how polygons are used within video game design.

Asking students to recreate the game using polygons that they can see – or alternatively make games and shape-based characters of their own devising – could be an interesting activity to encourage creativity and problem-solving.

The calculations needed to move a player's avatar from

The role maths has played in contributing to this could be an interesting topic to explore in the classroom – specifically the famous algorithms that govern what content social media platforms put before their users.

Those algorithms use mathematical rules to group various bits of data together, and then govern the effect that data has on what users see via their individual feeds. This data will include a record of all posts, videos and accounts that users will have previously interacted with, as well as any other links they may have clicked, and be used to identify what further content the user will find interesting.

Providing students with a

simplified algorithm – one that 'scores' content using only several variables, such as similarity to content previously watched, how recently a video was posted, and its existing popularity – can demonstrate in a compelling way how the scores for post recommendations are calculated and pushed towards particular users.

Try providing the class with a set of fictional data relating to a single imaginary user, alongside four variables, each with different point score (from 1 to 4) indicating how important that variable is. Students can then rank a series of 5 to 10 videos (each with a set of stats matching our variables) according to how well they satisfy what the algorithm is looking for – from 'most relevant' to 'least relevant'.

To extend the task, students can draw on skills they will have developed from working with percentages to try and answer a different set of questions. For example, let's assume an algorithm recommends a post on the condition that at least 20% of people who see it interact with it. If 50 people have seen a post, how many will have needed to interact with it for the post to be recommended by the algorithm?

Such tasks can help students practise

curriculum-linked skills in a fun, engaging and relatable way, while also helping them better understand how maths is used in particular industries to shape the modern world.

Rhythm and melodies

We could also look at the relationship between maths and another popular pastime among students – listening to music.

If a musical bar contains 4 beats, then creating a rhythm that fits that bar will require adding fractions together to make a whole.

Students can thus explore rhythm as a mathematical combination, delving deep into this relationship by gathering data relating to different songs, such as time duration, beats per minute, and the songs' year of release. Students can then try describing the relationship between song length and tempo, and try to analyse any patterns they see across songs dating from different eras.

Sporting probabilities

Combining maths with fun activities can help create lively discussion, promote healthy competition and encourage teamwork. When teaching probability, one activity you could introduce students to is the Horse Racing game. Begin by placing 11 horses on a grid (represented by pieces of paper, card, counters, miniatures or whatever else you might have to hand). Each horse is assigned a number from 2 to 12. Students roll two dice, and the total will determine which horse gets to advance forward by one square.

The activity is designed to be played in pairs, and ends when the first horse reaches the finish line. After all pairs have finished the game, the class comes together and the pairs reveal which numbered horse came first in their race. From this data, the students should be able to determine which horse won most often across the class (the most likely outcomes being horses 6, 7 or 8). A discussion can then be had around there being multiple ways of scoring a total of 6, 7 or 8, hence the increased likelihood of those horses

winning the race, versus there being only one way of making a 2 or 12.

Novelty games

Finally, there's the 'Crocodile Dentist' game. Students take it in turns to press down on a tooth in the crocodile's mouth. There are 13 teeth altogether, with a mechanical lever inside the crocodile's mouth that will make one specific tooth act as a trigger for snapping the jaw shut.

On the first turn, the chance of the jaw snapping when a tooth is pushed is 1 in 13. As more teeth are pushed down, that probability steadily increases. If three teeth have been pushed down, the odds of the jaw snapping shut on the next go are now 1 in 10.

Silly though it may seem at first, the game nevertheless affords an opportunity to discuss independent probability, whilst still being fun and keeping students engaged.

Discussing the mathematics that underlie some of the pastimes, hobbies and games that our students partake in can be enlightening for them, and enable them to better understand the relevance of maths in their everyday lives in ways that go far beyond the textbooks – and which could well be beneficial for their future performance and outcomes.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ama Dickson is a maths teacher and contributor to Collins' series of maths revision guides; she also regularly posts maths instruction videos to TikTok as @mathscrunch



travelbound

Travelbound brings curriculum learning to life. With over 30 years of experience, 24/7 emergency support and hundreds of destinations to explore, we make school trips that are genuinely impactful.

From exploring STEM careers at Space Camp in Alabama to discovering the cultural context behind their Spanish lessons in Madrid, we show your students how their subjects work in the real world.

**You give them the tools,
we give them the vision.**

Where learning is seeing for yourself

Let your students find out what they can truly achieve in their subjects by giving them access to experiences they wouldn't get in the classroom.



Trips catering
to all key stage
curriculums



Itineraries
tailored to
your needs



Comprehensive
safety
frameworks

**Explore curriculum trips that bring
your subject to life with Travelbound.**



Travelbound.co.uk | 01273 244 572



**Experience
Education**

ed edwindoran
SCHOOL TRIPS

M masterclass
SPORTS TOURS

SkiBound

travelbound

World
Challenge

JCA

The Holy Grail OF BEHAVIOUR

We can keep chasing the One Behaviour Initiative to Rule Them All – or learn to accept that managing behaviour means attending to school culture as a whole...

There's a sacred ritual that takes place in schools every September – usually after the safeguarding update, but before the fire drill reminder. It's the announcement of The Holy Grail – that this year, *behaviour will improve*.

Not vaguely improve. Properly improve. With 'consistency', 'high expectations', 'relentless routines' and all those other phrases that sound tremendous in a PowerPoint presentation but implode on contact with Y9 after lunch.

The ECTs and optimists depart as true believers. The more experienced leave with one eye on the photocopier. Only the battered know the truth – that by October, this initiative will be found cowering under a desk.

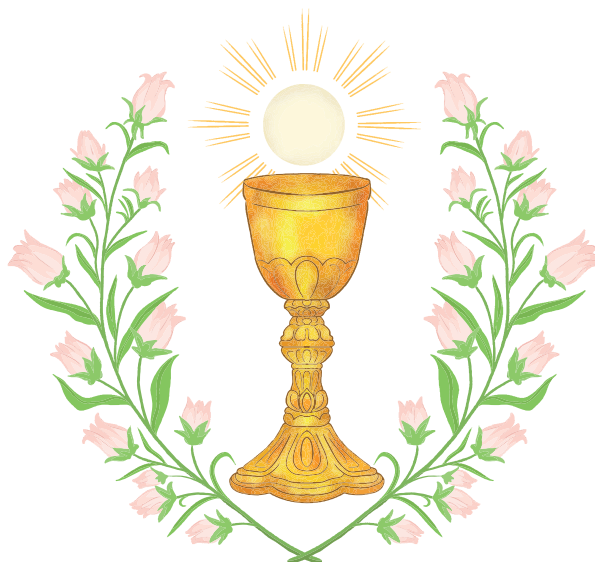
Close to heresy

Behaviour remains education's Holy Grail – something everybody's searching for, without being able to agree on what it looks like. Nationally, the conversation around behaviour is one of education's loudest, supported by government-funded surveys painting pictures of endlessly disrupted lessons.

Naturally, schools go looking for answers. SLTs visit other settings, attend conferences and return with a host of systems, acronyms, scripts, restorative questions, various non-negotiables and, if things are really bleak, a 'behaviour reset'.

But here's the thing – *poor behaviour is rarely caused by the absence of a clever initiative*.

I appreciate that's



dangerously close to heresy. In education we're very fond of believing that the next policy will solve all the problems of the last one, but 'policy' and 'culture' aren't the same thing. An initiative isn't a level of authority.

Full moral weight

Around 10 years ago I sat through one of those September launches. We were going to fix behaviour by '*Concentrating on small changes, one at a time*' – an approach inspired by a senior leader at another school, which is how educational ideas achieve legitimacy. They migrate from building to building until nobody can be sure if they ever worked at all.

The first target was shoes. Not swearing, not defiance. Shoes.

For six weeks, the full moral weight of the school was brought down upon footwear. Incorrect shoes meant isolation. That led to 150 children being directed to a room designed for 30, under the banner of 'strategic implementation'.

The problem wasn't that the idea was absurd – schools have run on absurdity for years – but that the pupils understood us better than we understood ourselves. "*They'll give up in a few weeks*," one pupil was heard to say. And they were right.

By half term, the initiative had been declared a success and attention turned to ties. Then shirts, then something else. By July, classroom behaviour was worse, uniform was worse and everyone had learned a valuable lesson. That if you wait long enough, the adults will blink.

Schools aren't machines

Last year I visited a different school where behaviour was excellent. The pupils were polite, the corridors were calm. A teacher could ask a pupil to step outside and receive apologies, rather than a legal treatise on human rights.

One might assume that this school was in possession of A Great Lost Behaviour Policy – precise, robust,

laminated, possibly guarded by monks, but no. The policy was actually pretty vague. The protocol had holes. Some staff didn't know where to find it. On paper it shouldn't have worked, but in reality, it did.

That's the *really* uncomfortable part. See, schools aren't machines. Behaviour sits inside a wider culture that's affected by intake, the credibility of the leadership, parental support, staff confidence, community norms, SEND provision, sanctions and the thousand tiny moments in which pupils decide whether adults mean what they say.

This doesn't mean schools are powerless. Clear routines matter, as do consistency and consequences, but we can't keep pretending that behaviour is only affected by school initiatives.

Maybe that's why they feel so hollow. Not because the problem is imagined, or because teachers are cynical for sport, but because we've all seen this film before. We know the bit where someone says 'non-negotiable' and everyone writes it down, as if it means something.

If poor behaviour were simply a matter of schools needing the right initiative, we'd have solved it by now.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

'I, Teacher' is a secondary teacher, teacher trainer and writer challenging binary teaching narratives; for more information, visit tinyurl.com/ts-ITC or follow @i-teacher.bsksy.social

Watching isn't CHEATING

Let's stop treating literary adaptations as 'lazy substitutes' for reading and start recognising them as the powerful teaching tools they can be in the right hands, says **Fiona Evans**...

I once had a Y10 boy tell me, quite proudly, that he'd 'read' *Never Let Me Go* by watching the film the night before his test. To be honest, I was impressed with his last-minute commitment, because I knew he'd barely engaged with the text in class all term – and he wasn't the only one.

I began to wish that we'd watched the film as a class, and used that experience to deepen their understanding of the book. It seemed like an opportunity missed.

A 'guilty secret'

For too long, the viewing of film adaptations in the context of studying literature has been treated as a guilty secret – something students do behind our backs, rather than something good English teachers will build into their planning.

I've heard colleagues previously describe it as 'the lazy way in,' as though watching Baz Luhrmann's adaptations of *The Great Gatsby* or *Romeo + Juliet* is somehow beneath a skilled teacher. I'd argue the opposite.

Film and TV adaptations are, in fact, one of the sharpest tools we have for teaching not just plot and comprehension, but the higher-order thinking we're desperate to get more of – understanding of authorial intent, use of inference, identification of underlying themes. You're just as, if not more likely to provoke excellent critical analysis discussions in class by opting

to use film alongside the text, rather than just the text alone.

Let's start with an obvious win – pace. A film can get a class from 'Who's *Boo Radley*?' to 'Right, we all understand the plot' in under two hours, compared with the weeks it can take some classes to trudge through the same territory on the page. That's not a shortcut to be embarrassed about; it's a valid entry point.

Once students understand the plot and narrative arc, and can put a face to every name, you've freed up enormous cognitive space for them to focus on language, structure and themes once you get to the text itself.

“Once students understand the plot and narrative arc, you've freed up cognitive space for them to focus on language, structure and themes”

Crucially, film can also do something for reluctant or anxious readers that can be a struggle on the page – *make them care*. Watching and empathising with the students in Hector's class in *The History Boys* creates an emotional hook that some students will need before they can commit to reading hundreds of pages of words.

Objects of critique

This is where timing matters. There's no single right answer as to whether viewing the film should come before,

during or after the text. It depends entirely on your purposes. Watching a film first can work brilliantly as a way of front-loading plot, character and setting, so that struggling readers don't have to decode and comprehend simultaneously.

Watching alongside reading works well for close comparison and checking understanding, while watching *after* reading the text will often be the richest option for your strongest readers, since this turns the film into an object of critique. What did the adaptation lose, gain or get completely wrong? Why might the filmmakers have gone with the choices they made?

Nor do you necessarily need to watch the film in its entirety. A single, carefully chosen clip followed by some searching questions can do more analytical heavy lifting in 15 minutes than an hour of unstructured viewing. Save full screenings for when you want that sustained emotional and narrative experience; use highlights when you want to focus on something specific, or when certain portions of a film won't be appropriate or suitable for some students.

Less gatekeeping

There are many plays on the English literature syllabus that deserve to be seen and heard, and not just read off the page. 'Shakespearean film adaptation' is its own rich seam, and there's never been a better time to mine it. The recent film of *Hamlet* starring



Riz Ahmed, for example, relocates the play to London's South Asian community, while keeping Shakespeare's original language intact – a bold choice that actually works incredibly well, instantly making Shakespeare feel relevant and exciting to today's students.

Historical and social context is another area where film quickly earns its keep. A few well-chosen minutes of costume, setting and social interaction can accomplish what several lessons of teacher explanations around history and context might struggle to get across.

But the argument I'd make most strongly, as a former SENCo, concerns inclusion. Every class you teach will have a spread of reading ages, vocabulary and confidence that a single printed text simply can't serve equally.

Film doesn't erase that gap, but it does narrow it. Students with EAL, dyslexia or low reading confidence can access plot, character and theme through a medium that doesn't gatekeep according to decoding speed – which means they can join the analytical conversation at the same point as everyone else, rather than three chapters behind.

It should also be noted that activating subtitles can turn a passive viewing into something closer to reading,

letting students spot places where the script departs from the source text and pick up on vocabulary that might otherwise wash over them. It can also be a great tool for helping students learn quotes (when there's fidelity to the text, at least).

Instinctive inference

At KS3, adaptations of novels like *Holes*, *Goodnight Mister Tom*, *Wonder* and *Noughts and Crosses* are brilliant supports for teaching the basics of setting, character and theme. What's interesting is how students can often infer meaning from a film more instinctively – by reading a character's face, picking up on visual clues, sensing tension from a musical score – than they can from a paragraph of text. Asking "*How did you know he was lying, when nobody said so?*" can make this explicit and provide a direct route into teaching inference on the page, since you're naming a skill they already have, rather than installing one from scratch.

None of the above should ever replace reading, but to treat viewing a film as anathema to English literature teaching is misguided, and does both our students and the subject a disservice. Used intentionally, it isn't 'the lazy way in' – it's a way in that works.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fiona Evans is a former English teacher, literacy specialist and SENCo, now CEO of the education charity Into Film, which provides a media streaming service for schools, organises the annual Into Film festival and regularly produces teaching resources for schools – find out more at intofilm.org

YOU CAN BE VIEWING...

There are many 'book-to-screen' adaptations to explore via the **Into Film+** and **Into Film+ Premium** services for schools, including...

CELEBRATED BRITISH AUTHORS

You'll find faithful adaptations of timeless works from a range of British authors, such as William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, and Roald Dahl. These include *Macbeth* (2015), *Oliver!* (1968), *Pride and Prejudice* (1940), and *Matilda* (1996). Our selection of fresh interpretations and retellings meanwhile includes *Wonka* (2023), *Emma* (2020) and Armando Iannucci's *The Personal History of David Copperfield* (2019).

SET TEXTS

There are plenty of other GCSE and A Level texts that film can help bring to life within the classroom, some with links to other subjects such as history, MFL and performing arts – titles like *Atonement* (2007), *Journey's End* (2017), *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022), *The Color Purple* (1985), *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Lord of the Flies* (1990).

BEYOND THE CANON

Our service can further highlight other forms of popular storytelling – graphic novels, YA fiction – that open up new worlds and new ways of learning to young people. Not just superhero tales, such as *Wonder Woman* (2017) and *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (2018), but also examples of cultural storytelling from around the world, such as *Persepolis* (2007).



Michael Prescott is Curation Lead at Into Film

Putting on A SHOW

The logistics involved with mounting a school production can be daunting – so here's how to succeed without antagonising colleagues, exhausting students or worrying parents...



It's 3:30pm on a cold Tuesday in November. In your hands is the script for this year's school production. Students have started appearing in the doorway of your drama studio (or school hall, or canteen), and the sense of anticipation is high.

Meanwhile, your email inbox continues to be pounded with notifications – requests for curriculum information, parental queries about coursework, an email from a member of SLT noting that 'One of the maths teachers is cross about the noise you made' during a recent and somewhat intense Y7 physical theatre lesson...

The length of your to-do list is scarcely believable, yet funnily enough, the school production isn't on it. That entry has a sub-list of its own...

1. Make your production part of the school

The educationalist Elliot Eisner once noted that whatever can't be measured

in schools will often be pushed aside. Given an increasingly packed term-time calendar, pressures around performance measures and secondary students facing growing academic and social anxieties, the school production can quickly seem less important and best pushed aside – particularly when the prospect of staging it feels less like an enrichment opportunity, and more like an endurance challenge.

And yet, few things have the potential to build a school's culture, advance students' sense of belonging and boost confidence quite like a school show. So how can we deliver a quality performance on a limited budget, without pushing the cast to breaking point, inducing panic in parents or alienating colleagues?

The answer involves strategic planning, empathy and pragmatism. A school production doesn't exist alone – it occupies physical

space, consumes student (and staff) energy and requires considerable reserves of goodwill across the school if it's to succeed. The quickest way to damage a show's chances of success is to treat it as the *only* event on the school calendar.

Yes, it's important, but then so too are all those other learning opportunities being delivered both in and out of classrooms. Instead, the production should be treated as a key cog in the ever-growing, busy machine of a secondary school.

Long before the first audition, sit down with the school calendar and map out your schedule against the wider school timetable in negotiation with whichever member of SLT guards it. Check your rehearsal dates against any mock exams, parents' evenings, trips and other key events. It probably goes without saying, but don't schedule a demanding tech rehearsal the night before the Y11 Science GCSE mock examination.

2. Keep a register

Over a decade ago, I was left aghast by my line manager's demands for a register showing attendance at rehearsals. They're the norm these days for many reasons – not least safeguarding. They can also provide useful evidence of participation in extracurricular activities.

While 'attendance' doesn't necessarily equate to 'engagement', it does provide a measure that many schools will now expect, and could help to secure future funding, support and recognition of the efforts you and your students are putting in.

3. Look after your colleagues

If your upcoming rehearsal in the hall means that you'll be disrupting an after-school revision session or some other event, negotiate early and try to offer potential solutions. If you plan on using a colleague's classroom for costume changes or prop storage, see that said

classroom is returned to an immaculate state before school begins the next day. It's important for interdepartmental harmony – and just good manners, really...

4. Reach out across the school

Instead of working against other departments, pull them into the creative process. Could the art department help with your set design? Could D&T assist with the staging? Do any of the school's physics teachers have a keen interest in sound and/or lighting?

This needn't be limited to teachers – students from across the school may be keen to contribute in various ways, too. Work on making it an actual *school production*, rather than just a 'drama production'. Through working collaboratively, you'll be that much more likely to create a sense of collective ownership and shared pride in what should be a community event.

5. Respect students' time

Give all students involved with the play and their families a clear, detailed production schedule from day 1. If a student is only going to appear in Act 2, Scene 2, don't make them sit on the hall floor for two hours waiting for their scene.

“Some of the most valuable things we do in schools are those things that are hardest to measure”

In years gone by, it would sometimes be argued that students with smaller roles could watch the play emerge, and get to feel part of the whole creative process, but time is more precious now. Expectations have changed, so respect students' time and let them know *exactly* when they'll be needed, so that they can plan around their homework and other commitments.

Drama teachers should also be mindful of students' curriculum progress. If a student's grades should drop, or their attendance and punctuality start to slip, they shouldn't be removed from the show. Have the production itself become part of their support structure instead.

Work with your colleagues and parents on creating appropriate interventions. When characters are off stage, consider allocating time for quiet study or homework within the rehearsal space. Drama teachers often have privileged working relationships with their students due to the nature of the subject. If the school

show can be used as an opportunity to support the development of a student across the curriculum, take it.

Maintain high expectations, but foster a culture in which mistakes are part of the creative process. Public failure, or even just the fear of it, can be terrifying for any of us, but especially teenagers. If forgetting a line or missing a cue is met with collective problem solving, rather than frustration, a sense of safety will be rapidly developed and sustained.

6. Keep parents on side

For parents, a school show can swallow their child, evenings and weekends, becoming an all-consuming monster at the expense of other interests and schoolwork. Consistency and clarity are therefore essential.

Parental anxieties will often stem from a lack of information, so establish reliable communications from the start. Use the school's usual communication platform to share any lyrics, rehearsal schedules and important updates, and ensure that parents know where to find the very latest information.

Be clear about rehearsal finish times and *stick to them*. If a rehearsal's scheduled to end at 5:30pm, don't let it roll on to 5:45pm. Parents waiting outside in dark, cold school car parks can quickly lose any enthusiasm they might have for the show if you're not careful.

Be transparent about any attendant costs from the outset. If parents will be

expected to source aspects of costumes, such as base-layer T-shirts, give them plenty of notice beforehand. Keep a well-stocked costume cupboard of spares so that you can discreetly supplement any missing items.

Finally, invite parents to become active participants by coming up with low-pressure ways in which they can help – perhaps by volunteering to sew on a few hems, or by helping out with refreshments.

7. Remember why we do it

It's opening night. The lights in the school hall have been extinguished, the overture has begun and all those weeks of logistical juggling are now finally over.

Witnessing a quiet pupil transform into a commanding stage lead, or seeing students from different friendship groups work seamlessly together onstage reminds us why we spent all those evenings in rehearsal. Some of the most valuable things we do in schools are those things that are hardest to measure – even if we're increasingly expected to.

Staging a secondary school production amid a whole host of contemporary educational pressures is, undoubtedly, a monumental task – but by respecting our colleagues' time and space, protecting our students' wellbeing and keeping parents firmly in the loop at all times, it's still possible to create an enriching experience that enhances the life of the school like nothing else.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martin Matthews is a teacher and lecturer in the North West of England



Beyond the gates

Expand your students' learning horizons with some advice and suggestions for your next school trip...



EXPERT VIEW

Be allergy-aware

Readers who undertook safeguarding INSET this September will hopefully be aware of 'Benedict's Law' – AKA The Schools Allergy Safety Bill – and its impact on school trips.

Earlier this year, on a school trip to Barcelona, one of our students had a severe allergy to nuts. This affected a number of important decisions each day – from factoring this in to our meals planning with the tour company, to the impromptu breaks we took while walking the city.

Our airline was great at warning other passengers on the flight, and our hostel was very helpful during breakfast service. Yet despite our restaurant meals all being planned in advance, with allergies information sent ahead of time, some

restaurants were more knowledgeable and prepared than others, meaning our dinners couldn't be left to chance. Your proximity to vulnerable students during meals could be crucial if a waiter offers ice cream for dessert, but is vague on whether it contains nuts.

Ensuring that all students understand the restrictions allergies can place upon food choice is similarly important when briefly stopping for drinks and snacks during excursions. As we've all seen from the summer we've just had, you really can't leave anything to chance.



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

CURRICULUM LINKS



Geography

Experience a bird's-eye view of London, and learn to locate and categorise the city's main features. Visit londoneye.com/schools



History

Learn about the inspiring myths and legends of Stonehenge through expert-led workshops.

Visit tinyurl.com/ts157-ST1



Humanities / MFL

With Rayburn Tours, schools can choose from numerous options to help their children see the world, whether as athletes, singers or students.

Visit tinyurl.com/ts157-ST2

OUR BEST SCHOOL TRIP

Off-Peak French Immersion

Farmor's School's Y9 French residential to Château de la Baudonnière, Normandy combined outdoor activities with cultural immersion. Taking their off-peak trip in October boosted GCSE uptake, avoided summer travel delays and reduced costs to parents.

"Taking them in October acts as a brilliant hook."

– Jo Wood, Languages Teacher, Farmor's School

Trip organised by Voyager School Travel – visit tinyurl.com/ts157-ST3 for more details



WHAT'S ON...

✓ HAMLET HAIL TO THE THIEF

(31 Oct 26 – 23 Jan 27) Barbican Theatre, London tinyurl.com/ts157-ST5

✓ BACCHAE SCHOOLS TOUR

(28 Sep – 27 Nov) | Touring as part of National Theatre Nationwide | tinyurl.com/ts157-ST6

✓ POWER, PERFUME AND SCANDAL

(05 Sep 26 – 22 Nov 26) |

Kensington Palace, London

RESOURCE CENTRE

Make your own way finding system
Lesson Plan – Key Stages 3-5



From A to B (KS3-5)

London's Design Museum has a free lesson plan based around the

creation of Britain's road signs, which tasks students with creating their own navigable wayfinding system and directing others around their home or school.

tinyurl.com/ts157-ST7



You've got this

Your next visit to a site of major historical interest can now include a hefty dose of whimsical competition, thanks to a

partnership between National Heritage and Taskmaster Education, which will see the latter supplying 'task packs' containing a series of fun, yet informative self-led activities.

tinyurl.com/ts157-ST8



Backdrop to a conflict

Give your students a primer on the Falklands War with this information pack produced by the Royal Armouries Museum, which includes video links, material sourced from

contemporary newspaper coverage and Veterans' testimonies.

tinyurl.com/ts157-ST9



VENUE SPOTLIGHT

Where learning is lived

A curriculum trip with Travelbound brings classroom learning to life. From exploring Spanish language with locals in Madrid, to understanding scientific principles at Space Camp in Alabama, Travelbound helps students experience subjects beyond the classroom.

Every trip is designed to support curriculum learning while

developing confidence, curiosity and independence. With over 30 years of experience, expert planning support and 24/7 assistance, we help teachers deliver inspiring educational experiences with confidence.

Find out how you can bring learning to life by visiting tinyurl.com/ts157-ST4

Take them for a ride

Struggling to get abstract scientific concepts to stick for pupils? Try a real-world case study with thrills and spills thrown in, suggests **David Bailey**...

Science is everywhere. Our lives are full of real-life examples of science happening right in front of us. Yet pupils often hear phrases like “gravitational potential energy” and “kinetic energy” without really understanding what they mean. Too often, they struggle with the abstract thinking needed to help them make sense of the world around them. They also don’t always understand how their learning in science is relevant to them. When science is taught, there is a tendency to start with the ‘nuts and bolts’ – the theory, the maths and the models. Lessons rightly focus on the ‘what’ and ‘how’, but in doing so, can tend to miss out the ‘so what?’; so, could it be time for a different approach?

Making it real

When pupils ask *why* they need to learn about particles, forces or chemical reactions, we often reach for familiar examples. We talk about boiling a kettle, riding a bike or cooking dinner. These examples matter, as they help pupils see that science is not simply something that happens in a laboratory.

Learning often works best when the example is familiar, accessible and connected to pupils’ experience, as the Institute of Physics pointed out way back in 2006. This is why the best lessons don’t just rely on pupils having experienced these things or

seeing them on the pages of a textbook. They actually bring them to life in the classroom or laboratory. Teachers who develop learning through practical experience provide the opportunity for pupils to experience things first hand – for example, making a pancake to show that some chemical reactions are not reversible – rather than assuming pupils have already experienced this elsewhere.

Exceptional examples

Sometimes, however, the best way into the science is through a more memorable experience, taking pupils beyond the everyday. Engineered environments like theme parks provide an excellent opportunity to see physics in action, although from experience it can raise a few eyebrows when you fill in the form that suggests a visit to Alton Towers Resort is an essential part of your curriculum!

If our lesson is talking about what happens to energy during a rollercoaster ride, for example, it makes pedagogical sense to give pupils a first-hand experience that they can remember and use to make sense of the process they are working to understand. And if a trip to Alton Towers Resort itself isn’t possible, then any way we can bring a taste of that experience into the classroom – such as Teachwire’s new Built for Learning resources, which use specially recorded video to bring attractions and landmarks into the classroom



“Engineered environments like theme parks provide an excellent opportunity to see physics in action”

– can increase the ‘sticking power’ of what we are teaching.

A shared starting point

For some pupils, a rollercoaster ride might be a familiar part of family trips to theme parks. For others, it might be something they have only seen in a video clip, a film or a game – or never even thought about at all. Creating a shared experience, whether through a school

trip or immersive classroom resources, gives everyone something concrete to draw on when they start grappling with abstract ideas such as energy and forces.

It is important that the experience doesn’t replace learning; rather, the learning should draw upon the experience in a meaningful way. This is where modelling can really help to make abstract concepts visible. Building on the experience of



the rollercoaster ride, we can use blocks, counters or labelled beakers of coloured water to represent energy transferring between stores. It is a simple idea, but a powerful one. Pupils can physically move the “energy” from one place to another and see that the total amount remains the same, even though its distribution changes. Conservation of energy becomes something they can handle before it becomes something they are expected to write about.

Think like an engineer

Real-world contexts can do more than help pupils understand an abstract scientific concept – they can also show them how that science is applied in the world beyond the classroom. Rollercoasters are designed, built, tested, inspected, maintained and operated. Engineers must consider factors such as the height of the first drop and the mass of the train and passengers. They must design braking systems that work reliably. On site, staff monitor wear, understand safety procedures and protect passengers.



Rather than simply telling pupils that this is what engineers do, we can use a real-world case study to ask them to tackle some of the same questions. Where will the train be travelling fastest? Why is the first hill usually the highest? What happens to the energy as the ride slows down? Suddenly, pupils aren’t just learning the science – they’re applying it to an authentic problem.

There is value, too, in hearing from the people who do this for real. Whether that’s an engineer speaking to pupils during a visit or workshop, or one of the experts featured in the video content accompanying the Built for Learning resources, they can explain not only what happens in an engineered environment, but

why particular decisions are made. That gives pupils a glimpse of the thinking behind what they can see – and of the many different jobs that turn scientific principles into something that works in the real world.

Of course, not every science lesson needs to involve a rollercoaster – actual or virtual. But giving pupils a real-world case study to attach an abstract idea to can make a powerful difference: an experience they can share, a model they can manipulate, a problem they can solve, or an expert who can show them where the science leads. The theory, maths and models will always matter – but crucially, with this approach, pupils can see what they’re for.

SIX WAYS TO MAKE REAL-WORLD CONTEXTS WORK HARDER

1. Use curiosity to engage pupils by making the most of an engineered environment
2. Create a shared starting point for learning
3. Ask better questions to reveal and address gaps in learning
4. Use discussion to develop vocabulary and oracy
5. Make the abstract visible using a model
6. Help pupils understand the world of work and make the learning feel purposeful



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Bailey, FCCT, is a managing director and senior school-improvement consultant who creates practical, real-world teaching and learning resources.

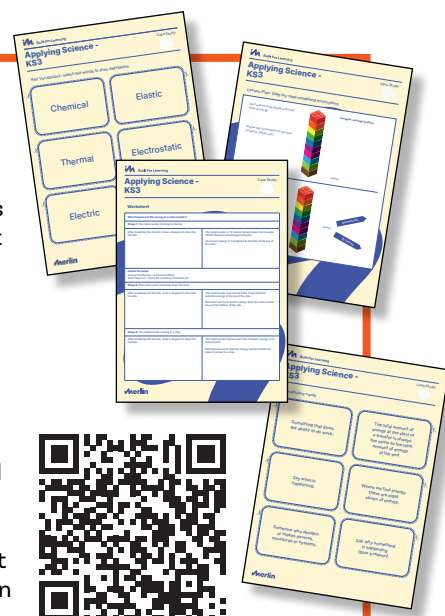
TRY IT TODAY – FREE lesson plan and video content!

Built for Learning is a growing library of classroom-ready multimedia resources from Teachwire, currently using Merlin Entertainments attractions – including Alton Towers Resort, Chessington World of Adventures Resort, Warwick Castle and more – as real-world curriculum case studies for KS2/KS3.

Every resource combines classroom-ready activities with specially filmed video from the featured attraction,

helping teachers give pupils a shared real-world context for curriculum learning – and access to the people who put that learning into practice.

To download the free KS3 Alton Towers Resort lesson, with activities exploring energy stores and transfers through rollercoaster engineering, and to discover the full Built for Learning library, just scan the QR code!



HEY, BIG SPENDER...

The DfE's announcement of an Inclusive Mainstream Fund to improve standards of inclusion is exciting – but how should you go about using it?

Imagine that an official from the DfE one day walks into 11 Downing Street. She asks the Chancellor's team for £1.2 billion to improve inclusion at every mainstream school in the country.

That team is well aware that spending on EHCPs has been rising steeply. The Ministers quietly love the idea of improving inclusion in order to reduce the need for EHCPs, but there's just one catch – the Treasury won't let mainstream schools spend that much money without an actual strategy for improving inclusion.

Inclusive by design

Upon returning to the office, our DfE official duly gets to work on producing an 'Inclusion Strategy Template' with accompanying guidance for schools on how to use it, setting out their multi-year plans for becoming *inclusive by design*, and using their funding to support that aim.

In school, you read the DfE's guidance and soon notice that the template overlaps with your accessibility plan – the main difference being that the new inclusion strategy must outline how your school intends to spend its 'inclusion funding', which includes a new annual Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF) grant and your notional SEN budget.

Due to this overlap, some will likely treat their inclusion strategy as a compliance activity. Your school doesn't want to be *that* school. Instead, see it as a form of rocket fuel for inclusion; a chance to make school awesome for *all* your children.

Doing things differently

The IMF grant is being promised to mainstream schools for three years. Your school's challenge is to turn every penny into pounds, so that you're able to offer true inclusion.

Not sure how much you'll have to play with? Your business manager will be best placed to confirm your actual IMF grant figure, as well as your school's notional SEN budget (which could exceed £100,000, even for a one-form-entry school). Basically, though, every

“Your school's challenge is to turn every penny into pounds”

school gets a lump sum of £3,000. The DfE will then add a rate of £14 for all pupils up to the age of 16, and £88 for every child with low prior attainment. For schools in areas with higher staffing costs, such as central London, the formula will increase your grant by up to 25%.

As you start to ponder all that you know about your school – students' attainment, attendance,

leadership, trends in SEND across your cohorts – your mind starts to take in the bigger picture – lunchtime fallouts, after-school clubs, your students' social skills.

You think about that one student who has 'refused' to attend school for five weeks – *'If I could use a time machine to travel back before then, what could we have done differently...?'*

You re-read your latest parent and pupil surveys. You then call up the EEF's

'Five-a-Day' guidance (see tinyurl.com/ts157-IMF1), which underpins your school's approach to inclusion. You also look up the DfE's recently published 'Rapid Evidence Reviews' on common SEND (see tinyurl.com/ts157-IMF2).

Next, you take a look at the Teachwire Inclusion Strategy Toolkit, which quickly helps you to see how your





tw teachwire TEACHWIRE DOWNLOAD

Download your FREE, editable **inclusion strategy** template at tinyurl.com/ts157-IMF



PE lessons and lunchtimes.

A TA surprises you by referencing ‘PowerPoint gluttony’, as she’s seen a correlation between the number of PowerPoint slides used in a lesson, and the frequency with which the children ask for movement or toilet breaks. Her ‘magic wand’ will meanwhile deliver more learning through drama in afternoon lessons.

You also make a point of asking your agency cover for their thoughts. Like bumblebees carrying pollen from flower to flower, supply staff can act as conduits for passing excellent ideas between schools. She describes how seating plans have helped her create a positive learning environment (even if said plans are hand-drawn). It seems as though everyone has some ideas to share.

should encompass everything that the school does, which is what makes ideas such as these so valuable (and also quite cheap).

Time to write

Your school’s inclusion strategy is now ready to write, and it’s a fairly straightforward process. Your intent can be copied over from your SEND policy. The barriers for children can then be streamed straight onto the page, thanks to the extensive scope of the listening exercises you’ve completed.

You proceed to outline how the school intends to tackle those barriers – such as providing CPD on how to help parents with their children’s SEN targets, or arranging cover for two TAs so that they can spend three days at a nearby special school, observe some excellent autism practice and bring it back with them.

You also make sure to include some quick, low-cost wins that will help build momentum and demonstrate shared ownership of the strategy – in this case, seating plans for supply staff and a ‘football charter’. You then make sure it happens.

Something like the IMF can feel both incredibly exciting and utterly daunting. Rather than rush into any decision-making, however, remember that you already have all the answers to inclusion within your school (and that Teachwire has a template to help you plan it out).

Best of luck!

question to everyone else – your fellow teachers, wraparound staff, lunch staff, support staff and school leaders. Many constructive suggestions are put forward.

Parents tell you that they don’t know how to help their child meet the targets of their SEN support plan. They’d like more strategies to try, but preferably ones that extend beyond just using educational games on a tablet.

Staff say that more training on complex autism will enhance standards of inclusion among younger cohorts. They also comment on the quality of the acoustics in the hall during

Don’t forget the kids

Crucially, you also put this magic wand question to your students. Some answers are beautiful, even if their impact on assessment outcomes will be negligible – “*We’ve a flagpole but no flag. Can we get a Ukrainian one to show my Ukrainian friends we care? It would be nice for them and their parents...*”

Other responses are concerned with broader barriers to inclusion rather than lessons, but can be similarly thought-provoking: “*We have a class charter, so can we have a football charter as well, so that people don’t argue as much?*”

Your inclusion strategy

reflections will feed into the creation of a great strategy.

Listen, listen, listen

You proceed to spend the next week asking the ‘magic wand’ question – “*If you had a magic wand and could change anything to make our school more inclusive, what would you change?*” When on gate duty, you ask that of parents. You then put that



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aaron King is a SEND advisor who supports schools, colleges and other organisations with improving their standards of inclusion; he also teaches Y6 on Thursdays

4 REASONS TO TRY... STEM careers experiences

Reveal a world of exciting careers to KS3/4 students with the Science Museum's hands-on careers programme

1 STEM CAREERS GALLERY

In *Technicians: The David Sainsbury Gallery*, students will get hands-on with job-related tasks and immerse themselves in a variety of STEM workplaces, from a pharmaceutical lab to a blockbuster film set.

2 STEM CAREERS WORKSHOP

In our free, 60-minute *Careers Uncovered* workshops, students will meet technicians from top organisations and find out what it's like to do their jobs. Students will take part in hands-on activities and find out about STEM careers that make a real difference.



3 GAMING CAREERS

Challenge students' problem-solving skills and explore careers in the gaming sector in our gaming gallery, *Power Up* - where you can also play through over 50 years of gaming history.

4 BUILD AN ITINERARY AND BOOK ONLINE

Check availability, build an itinerary and book your visit using our online booking system designed specially for groups. We'll also suggest relevant resources to download as you go.

Contact:

033 0058 0058

info@sciencemuseumgroup.ac.uk

sciencemuseum.org.uk/groups/formal-education-groups

At a glance

+ Book now for National Careers Week and build an itinerary for your visit on our website

+ Download our resources and gallery guides ahead of your visit



TEACH SECONDARY READER OFFER £500 OFF YOUR NEXT SCHOOL TRIP

Planning your next educational adventure?

Request a quote with The School Tour Company and receive £500 off your school's tour when you book.

- ✓ 1,000+ school groups every year
- ✓ UK, Europe & worldwide
- ✓ Curriculum focused, tailor made tours
- ✓ Dedicated Support Every Step of the Journey



READY TO START PLANNING?

Scan the QR code to request your quote

QUOTE: TEACH SECONDARY
to claim your £500 saving*



Our Phone
01244 722651



Our Email
sales@schooltourcompany.co.uk

Follow us



*T&C's apply

FOCUS ON: HUMANITIES

How this year's record-breaking temperatures could be a teachable moment; the benefits of committing historical dates to memory – and why your students need to start seeing history as less of a chain, and more of a web...

In the information age, who gets to tell the stories of how we've got to where we are?

THE AGENDA:

62 FEELING THE HEAT?

After an unforgettably hot summer, knowledge of heatwaves and their effects is more important than ever – and geography lessons are the perfect place for spreading the message...

65 REMEMBER THE DATES

Yes, students can and should memorise key historical dates in a post-Google world, says Catherine Priggs – and here's why...

66 TEACHING CAUSATION

Rebecca Chadwick shares her advice on how to help your students get a handle on the dominoes of history...



FEELING THE HEAT?

After an unforgettably hot summer, knowledge of heatwaves and their effects is more important than ever – and geography lessons are the perfect place for spreading the message...

2026 is on track to be the UK's hottest year since records began. Over June, July and August there were five heatwaves and 40 days of temperatures above 30°C, with a peak temperature of 38.1°C in Kew Gardens on 13th August.

Teachers will need no reminder of the scorching heat felt in their classrooms and accompanying Amber and Red warnings, with the latter presenting 'significant health' risks to the UK population. As geography teacher Lucy Fry said, *"My classroom hit 35°C this summer, and even at 8am it was rarely below 27°C."*

Pause for reflection

These heatwaves represent more than a few days of 'hot' weather. For example, the Climate Change Committee – which advises the UK government on climate risks – has specifically identified the risks to human health, wellbeing and productivity of increased exposure to heat in homes and other buildings.

The DfE has additionally provided guidance to schools on dealing with hot weather, noting how children are more at risk of becoming ill with heat-related issues compared to adults.

"One striking activity could be to measure the temperatures of different surfaces found across your school"

This year's heatwaves resulted in more than 1,000 schools closing or sending pupils home early, with many sports days, fieldwork trips and other activities being either cancelled or rescheduled. We might be well accustomed to 'snow days', but it seems we're now set to also become more familiar with the concept of 'heat days'.

These conditions are the consequence of the UK's changing climate, driven by the warming impact of greenhouse emissions on the atmosphere. This results in the UK experiencing hotter, drier summers, alongside warmer, wetter winters, and should give us pause for

reflection about how well teachers and pupils can cope with learning in heatwaves. Research has shown that taking an exam amid temperatures exceeding 32°C leads to around a 10% lower

likelihood of passing, when compared to exams taken in temperatures of 22°C.

Insufficient coverage

Geography teachers will also want to consider how well climate change is represented in the existing National Curriculum. Currently, the topic is entirely absent from the primary geography curriculum, appearing only at KS3 through study of *'The change in climate from the Ice Age to the present.'* Given geography's distinctive role in teaching pupils about consequences of climate change on the interactions between people and their environment, such coverage feels insufficient.

In its response to the government's Curriculum and Assessment Review, the Geographical Association advocated strongly for

changes that would strengthen teaching around climate change in geography lessons. The GA's response identified, for example, how the topic is essentially the 'curriculum heartland' for climate change, helping to cultivate the kind of green skills among young people that will be required if we're to take positive action on adapting to, and ultimately mitigating against the effects of climate change.

The importance of climate change in geography is also supported by the public. A YouGov survey of 2,376 adults across the UK carried out in August 2026 found that 79% support the idea of climate change being taught as part of the geography National Curriculum.

The GA and geography teachers were therefore pleased to see the recommendations made in the Curriculum and Assessment Review's 2025 report, which included revising the geography curriculum so as to embed climate change more explicitly across different Key Stages, while enabling coherent and more detailed engagement with climate education at an earlier stage.

How hot is your school?

This autumn term should see the DfE publish its draft Programmes of Study for revisions to the National Curriculum*. After a period of public consultation, the finalised curriculum is due to be published in Spring 2027, and on track to be taught as of September 2028.

Whilst teachers await the DfE's proposals, it's useful to review the opportunities geography pupils currently have for investigating climate change and its impacts in the geography classroom and beyond.

One striking activity could be to measure the temperatures of different surfaces found across your school. This summer, colleagues at the Royal Meteorological Society used an infrared camera to record the temperatures at different locations within a school's grounds. They found that artificial surfaces, such as rubber playground surfaces and astroturf, recorded extremely high temperatures in excess of 70°C.

As well as highlighting the impacts of heatwaves, this kind of on-site fieldwork can help identify some possible solutions for addressing the impacts of climate change. The aforementioned infrared cameras further showed how the cooling shade provided by

trees and bushes was enhanced by the vegetation's transpiration, leading to a reduction in temperatures across the school's grounds.

Accounting for the weather

Asking pupils to investigate the impact of heatwaves, and what can be done to reduce their impact will also be supportive of the work schools can undertake by drawing up their own Climate Action Plans.

These Plans will typically encourage a range of actions, which can include nature-based solutions aimed at controlling heat increases, alleviating flood risks and improving air quality. The Natural Education Nature Park programme is currently providing eligible schools with grants of up to £5,000 for improving the biodiversity of their grounds, such as planting trees to provide additional shade.

The summer term is also when geography teachers tend to schedule their fieldwork, often for reasons related to timetabling and other logistical considerations. Many teachers use centres run by the Field Studies Council (FSC), which hosts visits from over 100,000 pupils each year.

In the wake of the heatwaves, the FSC has begun incorporating some

practical changes into their field courses to account for the hotter weather, such as moving certain activities to alternative (and potentially cooler) times of the day, while ensuring consistent access to drinks and shade.

The FSC has also acknowledged that many of the different habitats pupils will visit through fieldwork are being altered by climate change, which will in turn influence how and when pupils might be able to study these sites.

Disproportionate impacts

Geographers will also be mindful of spatial differences in the impacts of heatwaves at the local, national and global scales, and how this can be reflected in their schemes of work. Such considerations might include, for example:

- How the familiar topic of urban heat islands assumes new relevance when a

temperature difference of over 10°C can be recorded between the hot spots of Central London's heat island and its (relatively) cooler suburbs

- The need for case studies of tourism in the Mediterranean to consider the impacts of summer temperatures exceeding 40°C and resulting wildfires
- How heatwaves exert a disproportionate impact on global gender inequalities through their intensification of the physical, social and economic inequalities experienced by women and girls

This term signals both the start of a new school year and a change of seasons, from summer to autumn and then winter. As we all cool down from the heatwaves, let's take the opportunity to re-examine the importance of climate change as a topic, and think more deeply about how it can be better embedded into a revised geography curriculum.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

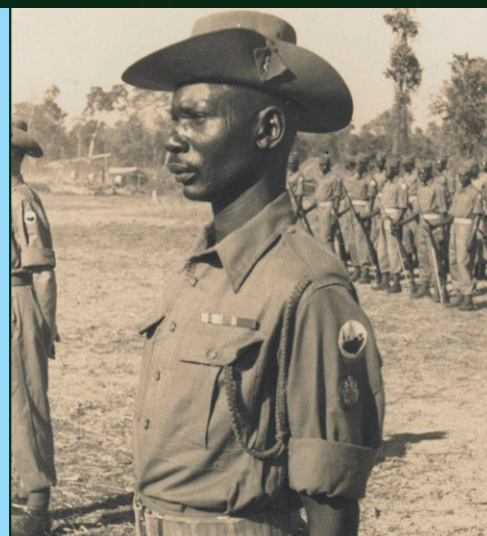
Steve Brace is chief executive of the Geographical Association; for more information, visit geography.org.uk

NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM

SUPPORTING SECONDARY HISTORY

- Investigate the past through our collections
- Participate in a workshop or study day
- Explore our online resources

The National Army Museum supports the teaching of key areas of history taught at KS3, GCSE and A-level.



Find out more about our resources, workshops and study days across a range of periods including the British Civil Wars, the British Empire, the World Wars, the Holocaust and the Cold War.

Scan the QR code for more information about our offer including:

Free onsite workshops
Free virtual workshops
Free KS5 study days
Free online resources



Introducing a NEW Core 14-16 RE curriculum

**Rigorous, dynamic and ready
to teach**

**Packed with classroom ready resources
that save time and inspire students**



Scan the QR code to
get your **FREE** sample.

Dynamic Core RE is a brand new curriculum that provides extensive resources to reduce planning time, deliver engaging, high-quality, meaningful, non-examined RE with ease and confidence.

This curriculum helps prepare young people to understand the diverse beliefs and worldviews that shape our society. Equipping them with the knowledge, understanding and critical thinking to live well in a plural world.



**Classroom-ready resources you can trust.
By RE experts, for RE teachers.**

RETODAY
Educate • Equip • Empower

Remember the dates

Yes, students can and should memorise key historical dates in a post-Google world, says **Catherine Priggs** – and here's why...

If Google can tell us anything in seconds, why bother remembering anything? Do pupils really need to know the dates 1066, 1215, 1453, 1789, 1871 or 1991? Should history teachers require them to do so?

We could ask the same question of other subjects, of course. We haven't stopped teaching multiplication because calculators exist. That's because the point of learning multiplication isn't to simply enable pupils to produce answers in the absence of a calculator. Its value runs much deeper.

Through learning multiplication facts, pupils develop mathematical fluency and an increasingly intuitive understanding of quantity and numerical relationships. Multiplication facts become part of a rich internal structure of mathematical knowledge that pupils can draw upon intuitively and flexibly.

A resource for thinking

The significance of this for history is not that historical knowledge is acquired or constructed in the same way as mathematical knowledge, because it isn't. The important parallel is that in both subjects, knowledge held in long-term memory can become a resource for thinking, rather than something that must first be Googled.

Google can tell pupils that the Battle of Hastings took place in 1066, but it can't make 1066 part of the mental architecture they use to understand the past. A Google search will give you a date, but it can't tell you what that date means.



A history curriculum isn't a collection of isolated stories. Knowing that the Battle of Hastings happened in 1066, Magna Carta was sealed in 1215, Constantinople fell in 1453, the French Revolution began in 1789, Germany was unified in 1871 and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 creates a chronological skeleton.

But even then, just knowing a list of dates isn't enough. The purpose of school history shouldn't be to equip pupils to fare well in a pub quiz. The purpose of knowing and remembering particular dates is to *provide somewhere for other dates to live*.

Reference points

William's victory at Hastings in 1066 marked the end of Anglo-Saxon rule in England and ushered in a new ruling class. In 1215, Magna Carta articulated limits on royal power. Constantinople's fall marked

the end of over 1,500 years of Roman rule. German unification had profound short and long-term consequences. The Soviet Union's collapse in 1991 changed the global geopolitical landscape.

These dates are all useful reference points because they signal important shifts. The dates themselves are fixed, but the work they do in pupils' thinking is not. They provide reference points for understanding different aspects of the past – royal power, people's rights, revolution, statehood, international relations.

These particular dates are, of course, not uncontested. History is interpretation. The narrative shape of a history curriculum means that different dates will be selected because they're important for different reasons. The point isn't that history curricula should furnish pupils with the same fixed dates, but that they should furnish pupils with *some* dates. Ones that have

been deliberately chosen because they help pupils understand the past.

Chronological anchors

In this sense, dates shouldn't be taught as numbers but rather as 'chronological anchors' that sit inside pupils' heads, giving them the independence and flexibility to make spontaneous connections.

Dates alone won't equip pupils with a period-sensitive understanding, but they can serve an important role in enabling pupils to organise that information. To appreciate how England changed after 1066, students will need to know who felt those changes and in what ways. Individuals' stories of protest and demonstrations across Poland, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia and Germany in 1989 will help pupils better appreciate why the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

The danger isn't that children will forget what happened in 1066. It's that they may lose the ability to *think historically*, because they lack the concrete historical knowledge necessary to make connections, recognise why something might be remarkable and contextualise new information. Knowing dates allows pupils to carry the past with them.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Priggs is a secondary history specialist, education consultant and director of Catherine Priggs Education Ltd

Teaching causation

Rebecca Chadwick shares her advice on how to help your students get a handle on the dominoes of history...

Causation is one of those historical concepts that sounds simple – until you try to teach it. It's the question that sits at the heart of the discipline: why did this happen? But that 'why' is a tangle of human decisions, chance, structure and consequence.

Causation, in the simplest terms, is the idea that every event or development was influenced by something that came before. Yet that definition barely scratches the surface. History rarely works like a neat equation where X leads directly to Y. It's closer to a web – full of overlapping threads, unintended consequences and competing interpretations.

Connection and contingency

I learned this the hard way. In my first few years teaching, I'd find myself giving students the same explanation for every major event – *"This happened because of..."* – followed by a list of causes. It felt neat. It was logical. But when I read their essays, every cause carried the same weight, every paragraph ended with *"This was a cause of..."* and I realised I hadn't taught them causation at all – I'd taught them description.

Understanding causation requires chronological awareness, yes, but also a sense of connection and contingency. It's what allows students to move from reciting facts to analysing forces. To ask not

only what happened, but why, how and whether it could have been different.

Causation is also the gateway to debate – the point where historical thinking becomes argumentative. When a student can weigh the importance of economic, political and social causes, they're doing what historians do: interpreting the past through evidence.

But teaching this skill takes time, structure and a lot of modelling. Over the years, I've built a set of hacks that help students move beyond 'one cause, one consequence' thinking and into the rich, layered understanding that history deserves.

Understanding causation is often where students begin to truly think like historians, but because it requires weighing, comparing and linking ideas, it's not always intuitive – especially for younger or less confident learners.

Below are several practical approaches I've used to make causation accessible, engaging and rigorous:

HACK1 - Make causation concrete

Abstract thinking is hard for many students, so start with the tangible. Before tackling the causes of WWI, I build a row of dominoes. We tip the first one, and students watch the chain reaction unfold. Then I ask, *"Which domino mattered most?"*

In that moment, causation stops being theoretical. We can talk about the 'trigger' (the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand) versus the 'underlying causes' (militarism, alliances, imperialism, nationalism – the classic 'MAIN' framework).

Students immediately grasp that not every cause carries equal weight. To make this stick, I sometimes give them scenarios outside of history – *"Why did you come to school late today?"* The answers range from *"My alarm didn't go off,"* to *"My mum was stuck in traffic."* They see how multiple causes can operate simultaneously.

In practice:

- Use metaphor and modelling. Physical demonstrations like dominoes, Jenga towers or branching flowcharts can turn abstract relationships into visible thinking.
- Return to these metaphors often, especially when revisiting topics across time. Students will begin to transfer the logic of causal thinking from one unit to another.

HACK2 - Layer, but don't list

When students first attempt causation essays, they tend to list: *"One cause was... Another cause was..."* and so on. The challenge is helping them to connect causes; to see interplay and hierarchy.

In practice: I model this by using causal webs, rather than bullet points. We start by categorising causes (political, economic, social, religious),

"History rarely works like a neat equation where X leads directly to Y – it's closer to a web, full of overlapping threads and unintended consequences"

Challenge	Solution
Students treat all causes as equal.	Teach significance ranking: “Which cause had the biggest impact, and why?” Use Diamond Nine activities to order importance, then model writing with comparative connectives: “Although nationalism was significant, it was militarism that created the conditions for war.”
Students conflate cause and consequence.	Use explicit dual columns during planning – one for causes, one for effects – and build transition sentences: “This caused...which in turn led to...”
Students see causation as linear, not complex.	Introduce cyclical models (feedback loops). For instance, “Industrial growth caused urbanisation, which increased demand for further industrial growth.”
Students forget chronology.	Integrate retrieval questions that anchor causes in time: “Which came first – the introduction of conscription or the alliance with France?” Repetition embeds sequencing.

then use arrows to show links between them. For example: “The Industrial Revolution (economic) → increased urbanisation (social), which → intensified demands for reform (political).”

Each arrow is an opportunity for a connective phrase: ‘as a result’, ‘this led to’, ‘consequently’, ‘therefore’. Over time, I fade the scaffold, moving from webs to paragraphs – but the structure remains in their reasoning.

Moving into plenary tasks taken from Judith Hochman and Natalie Wexler’s book, *The Writing Revolution* – such as ‘because, but’ and ‘so, also’ – helps to get

students to consider the impact of different events in the unit. How does one lead to the next?

HACK 3 – The challenge and the solution

Causation brings predictable stumbling blocks, so I’ll teach the challenges alongside the strategies to overcome them, as shown in the table above.

HACK 4 – Use the language of analysis

One of the best ways to build causal reasoning is through language. I introduce evaluative phrases as early as Y7. “The most important reason was...”, “A short-term trigger was...”, “A long-term cause might have been...”

By embedding this vocabulary from the start, students develop the language of judgement – a skill that pays dividends at GCSE and A Level.

In practice: After analysing the Peasants’ Revolt, I ask:

- “Which cause mattered most?”
- “Was it short-term or long-term?”

- “Could the revolt have been avoided?”

Each question pushes them towards analytical reasoning, rather than descriptive recall.

HACK 5 – Connect across time

Causation isn’t limited to individual events. Once students grasp the skill, use it to draw connections across eras. For example:

- “How did the causes of WWI compare to the causes of WWII?”
- “How did industrialisation in the 18th century shape Empire in the 19th?”

These synoptic comparisons strengthen schema and help to build the kind of big picture understanding that underpins historical literacy.

Final thoughts

Teaching causation is teaching thinking. It’s what moves students from memorising to reasoning; from seeing history as a series of accidents to understanding it as a series of choices, contexts and consequences.

There’s something magical about that moment when a student says, “So the assassination didn’t cause the war – it just lit the fuse.” You can almost hear their mental model shift.

Helping them reach that point is the essence of our job – not just teaching what happened, but showing how history itself happens.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

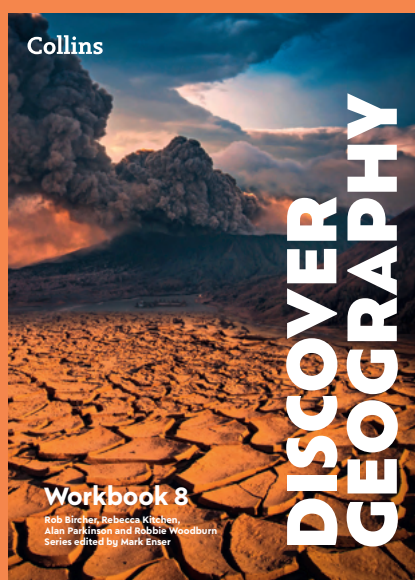
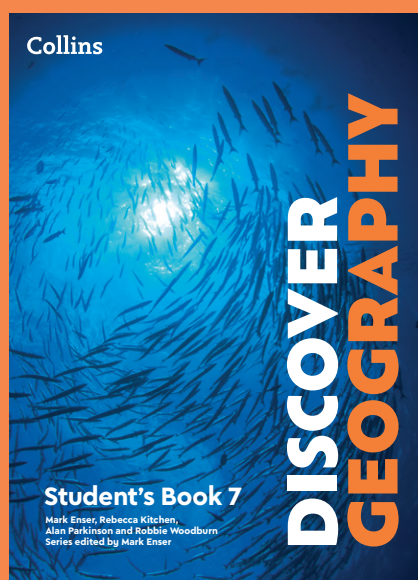
Rebecca Chadwick is an experienced teacher, leader and examiner for history, having taught for 10 years in a range of settings and worked at both AQA and Edexcel to support schools’ GCSE delivery.

This article is based on an extract from her book, *Teacher Hacks: History*, which is available now (£16, Hachette Learning)

Collins

DISCOVER GEOGRAPHY

Empower KS3 students to think like geographers and explore positive, sustainable and equitable futures



For KS3 Geography, Cambridge Lower Secondary Humanities and IB MYP Individuals and Societies

Scan the QR code or visit
collins.co.uk/DiscoverGeography



A different kind of study

Mark Enser explains why the new geography curriculum will also need a new pedagogy...

By the time you read this, the new draft National Curriculum for geography should be out, or close to it. Whatever form it finally takes, the direction of travel signalled so far by the Curriculum and Assessment Review points one way – towards a stronger, more explicit focus on disciplinary knowledge, particularly at KS3.

That's a real opportunity for geography departments, but before you rewrite your scheme of work in earnest, it's worth asking – what has to be true in the classroom for that opportunity to actually land?

Powerful knowledge

First off, it helps to be clear as to what 'disciplinary knowledge' is aiming for. Geography educators have long argued over what makes knowledge 'powerful' in this sense. It's not just knowing facts about places, but understanding how geographical knowledge is produced, and using it to reason, explain and judge.

A curriculum that takes this seriously will try to avoid two familiar traps: reducing content to lists that must be memorised, and use of 'skills' activities so generic they could belong to any subject. The promise of the new curriculum is that it will hold knowledge and disciplinary thinking together, rather than emphasising one over the other.

There's a further layer worth highlighting, because it's why all this matters beyond exam results. Knowing something and being able to do something with it aren't the same thing. A pupil can know that coastal erosion reshapes a coastline; what matters is whether they

can *use* that knowledge to judge how a community should respond, be it through protection, adaptation or retreat.

This distinction (sometimes discussed in geography education as 'geo-capabilities') reframes powerful knowledge as more than content to be secured. It becomes the basis for a set of freedoms that include the capacity to think geographically, weigh up competing perspectives on real issues and reason about how places might change in the future. Powerful knowledge, in this view, isn't an end in itself, but rather the thing that makes those capabilities possible.

The catch, however, is that this kind of capability isn't automatic. A document can get the knowledge right, while the classroom gets the thinking wrong. A scheme of work can specify enquiry, evidence and geographical concepts in exemplary detail, yet still be taught as a sequence of facts to memorise. The knowledge on the page is disciplinary. What happens in the room isn't.

Getting the balance right

This is the gap pedagogy has to close. Dialogue is one route in – structured talk, where pupils weigh stakeholder positions on real planning issues, using evidence rather than opinions – does more work than a straight 'for or against' debate, forcing pupils to reason with geographical evidence, rather than simply state a view.

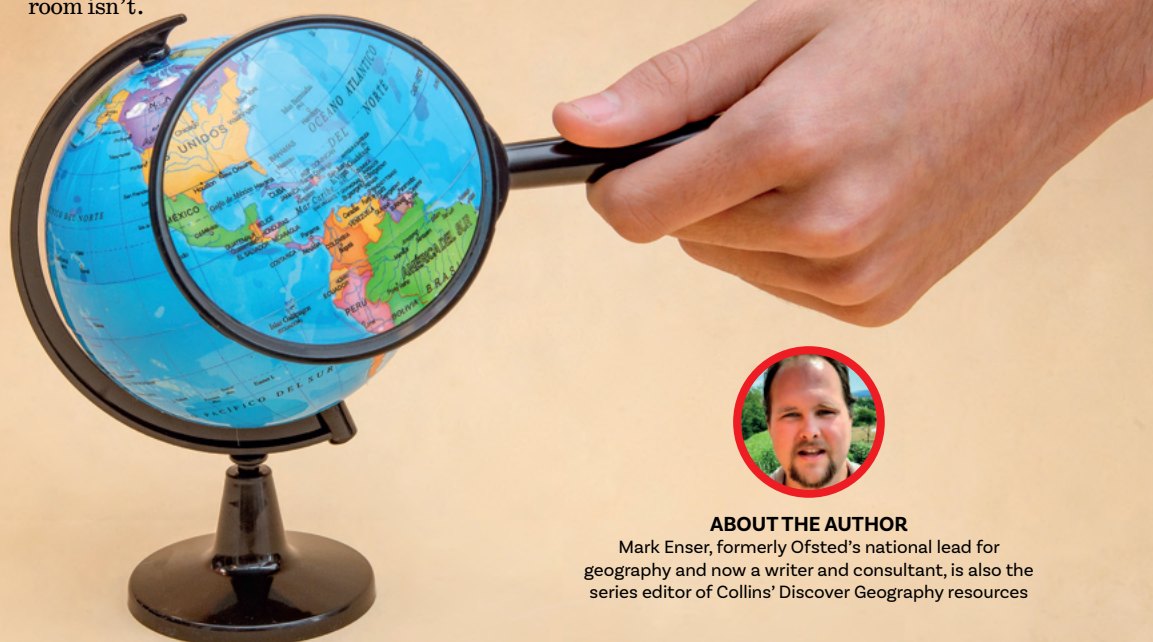
Geographical enquiry does similar work through the questions a lesson is built around. *'Is tourism good or bad?'* invites opinion. *'How do the impacts of tourism vary between stakeholders and across scale?'* requires pupils to use concepts and evidence to construct their arguments. This difference isn't stylistic; it changes what pupils actually have to do to answer.

Cognitive science contributes a third piece: making sure the knowledge pupils need is secure enough to be used flexibly. A retrieval task that asks pupils to 'define infiltration'

is testing recall. One that asks them to explain 'how infiltration affects flood risk in two different places' is testing something closer to geographical thinking, but it only works if the underlying knowledge has been built to be retrieved that way in the first place.

None of these techniques are new. What matters is that they're chosen deliberately because the curriculum demands disciplinary thinking, rather than because they're examples of generic good practice. A new curriculum can specify the knowledge, but not the thinking pupils perform with it when in the classroom. Getting that right will depend on departmental decisions around dialogue, enquiry design and how knowledge is built to be used, not just covered.

The new curriculum presents us with an opportunity to change geography for the better. Whether it's realised will be decided lesson by lesson, not by the document itself.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Enser, formerly Ofsted's national lead for geography and now a writer and consultant, is also the series editor of Collins' Discover Geography resources

Exploring who we are

Support your pupils' studies of the events, environments and beliefs that shape our collective story with these helpful learning materials and resources

1

National Holocaust Museum

Help your students approach Holocaust education with confidence, care and deeper understanding. The National Holocaust Museum's secondary programme supports teachers with thoughtful, curriculum-linked learning for KS3, GCSE and A Level.



Designed and led by experienced teachers, the sessions use survivor testimony, artefacts and enquiry to deepen students' understanding of Jewish identity, responsibility, propaganda, conspiracy theories and anti-Jewish racism. Programmes can be delivered at our Nottinghamshire museum, in school or online, with flexible workshops, exam-focused sessions and free teacher training available. Support meaningful, age-appropriate learning that helps students reflect on history and its relevance today – book today by contacting **01623 836 627**, emailing **bookings@holocaust.org.uk** or visiting **holocaust.org.uk**.

2

Royal Geographical Society

This autumn, the Royal Geographical Society is bringing geography to life with a packed programme of events for teachers and students.

From getting started with ArcGIS, to exploring how to teach sensitive issues in geography, there are opportunities to develop your practice and confidence. Bring your students along to our A Level study day, with expert led sessions exploring key areas of the KS5 curriculum, or join Good COP, Bad COP for a practical workshop taking students inside the room where it happens. Plus, plenty of other events all designed to enrich curriculum knowledge and inspire geographical thinking. Book now by visiting **rgs.org/events**.



3

Historic Royal Palaces

Historic Royal Palaces offers school groups unforgettable learning experiences in some of Britain's most iconic palaces. Using the palaces and their stories as inspiration, our schools programmes are designed to excite pupils and make history more real and immersive.



Curriculum-linked sessions for KS3/4 help spark curiosity, deepen understanding and make learning truly memorable. With subsidised school entry and expert-led sessions, Historic Royal Palaces makes it easy for you to give your class an inspiring day of outdoor learning. To find out more, email **learning.info@hrp.org.uk** or visit **hrp.org.uk/schools**.

4

CND Peace Education



CND's Peace Education programme engages thousands of school students from Y5 to Y13 across England with issues relating to peace and nuclear weapons. We empower students with knowledge on these subjects, so that they can come to their own conclusions on these crucial matters.

We can offer cross-curricular workshops and assemblies, award-winning peace education materials, and ITE/CPD training for teaching staff. In 2025-26, we worked with over 3,500 students and 300 trainee teachers. One student, who recently participated in CND Peace Education workshops, remarked that they were "Informative and really fun – an engaging way to learn about big topics". For more information and booking details, visit

cnduk.org/education or email **peaceeducation@cnduk.org**

5

Strictly RE



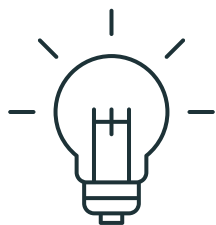
Now in its 14th year, Strictly RE has become the must-attend event of the year for RE professionals.

Join us for an unforgettable experience at the UK's biggest RE conference, where you'll gain valuable insights, practical strategies, and inspiration to enhance your teaching practice.

Strictly RE 2027 will offer something for everyone. Don't miss this opportunity to elevate your professional development, network with industry leaders, and contribute to the vibrant community of religious education enthusiasts.

Early Birds make greater savings! Book before 31st October 2026 and get £15 off your ticket. For more details and booking information, visit **natre.org.uk/strictly-re**.

THE NEXT BIG THING



“NATURE, OUTDOORS AND ADVENTURE”

Why the time has come for schools to start viewing outdoor learning as an essential part of their education offering...

[THE TREND]

In our education system, outdoor learning has traditionally been seen as the icing on cake, rather than part of the cake itself – a reward or treat, or perhaps a short-term intervention aimed at encouraging bonding or specific curriculum outcomes. Up until now, it's not typically been seen as a consistent, vital and integral part of the education process.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

As we move further into 2026, however, it appears that there has been a fundamental shift in how outdoor learning is now being perceived by the Department for Education. 'Nature, Outdoors and Adventure' has been officially identified as one of five core categories that schools will be expected to offer as part of a new Core Enrichment Entitlement, as detailed in the government's 2026 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving' Schools White Paper.

This is in response to a growing body of evidence which recognises that time spent outdoors results in higher academic achievements, more engaged pupils, improved mental and physical wellbeing, and a raft of crucial 'Skills for life'. The expectation is for schools to have this new offer fully embedded by 2028.

WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

The weight of the data regarding the academic benefits to be had from spending time learning outdoors is becoming overwhelming. Pursuits previously often seen as 'fun' additions to school-based learning are increasingly gaining recognition as tools that lead to significant improvements in traditional academic contexts.

The American Institute of Research identified that children who attended outdoor classes saw their attainment increase by 27%, with those increases being maintained for several weeks. Likewise, researchers at the University of Illinois identified a 48% increase in engagement when lessons were conducted outdoors.



Contact:

ross.kelly@coventry.gov.uk

coventry.gov.uk/coventryoutdoors

In a 2026 study, the Forest School Association further found that outdoor education has a direct impact on attendance, with a documented correlation between outdoor learning and lower rates of absenteeism.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Quality outdoor learning provision requires trained staff who are well-versed in a variety of approaches, and who possess thorough subject knowledge and understanding. We're committed to raising standards across the sector, and ensuring that high quality training is available to schools across the country.

For the past three years, we've been the only organisation to offer the 'Level 5 Outdoor Learning Specialist' qualification with a focus on schools-based learning. With that programme now in the process of being retired, we're moving towards delivering 'Outdoor Learning Specialist' qualifications for TAs and subject leads at levels 4 and 5 respectively, thus ensuring that the Core Enrichment Entitlement provides the highest quality outdoor learning possible, and that outdoor learning professionals are recognised as being an essential part of any Outstanding school.

GET INVOLVED

Coventry Outdoors is a traded service of Coventry City Council, specialising in providing high quality outdoor learning to pupils nationally, with a focus on the academic impact of learning outside the classroom.

We offer a full suite of qualifications and resources that enable schools to provide sustainable, impactful and inspiring outdoor learning programmes. Our nationally available CPD programmes include 'Outdoor Learning Specialist' apprenticeships for teaching assistants and Level 5 qualifications for outdoor learning subject leads, alongside a range of programme delivery specialisms that include the WILD Passport, Wilderness Therapeutic Interventions and Forest School qualifications.

Within the Coventry area, we can also offer a host of curriculum-linked outdoor learning opportunities and alternative provision pathways.

PAST MASTER

Celebrate the rich, artistic legacy of David Hockney with these lesson ideas suggested by **Hannah Day**...

If you've spent any time in an art classroom, you'll have likely seen students exploring the works of one of the most important British artists from the last hundred years. From the 'splash paintings', to his joiners, etchings, portraits and landscapes, the range of his work was vast, varied and always celebratory. He was, of course, David Hockney.

With so much to cover, rather than a chronological exploration of his life as an artist, I want to take the time here to explore one key work, and the great connections that it has – both for Hockney and other creatives – so as to reflect in a way that can provide you and your students with some exciting and intricately woven themes. So with that in mind, we must journey back to the world of 18th-century London...

Hogarth's journey

The eight paintings by William Hogarth collectively known as 'A Rake's Progress' present us with the cautionary tale of Tom Rakewell – a wealthy man who chooses to squander his privilege, wealth and love before eventually finding himself in the Bedlam asylum for the mentally ill.

Hockney drew on this narrative for two of his most accomplished and complete works – his 1961-63 collection of etchings and 1975 Glynedebourne stage and costume designs – but before we get to those, we need to dwell a little on Hogarth.

Hogarth was an unlikely candidate for one of Britain's most important artists. His family drifted in and out of

poverty throughout his early life, which included his father spending a spell in a debtor's prison. Having missed much of his education he went on to become an apprentice at a silversmiths' and engravers' at the age of 16. The good fortune of securing that post at such an early stage of his life, and the very real fears of poverty in that pre-social security world, would have quickly taught him just how precarious life really was.

"Anyone can fall – and it's a grubby world when you do..."

During his mid 30s, with many years of experience now behind him, Hogarth spent two years working on a collection of eight paintings, and a further year creating his etchings. The passing years since commencing his apprenticeship seemed to have not dampened his sense of morality, with the paintings appearing to scorn the wasteful, destructive lives of those who wanted for nothing. He understood

clearly that anyone can fall, and that it's a grubby world when you do. This moral narrative, coupled with the etchings' striking, angular, hatched style feeds into the other works we'll be discussing later on.

Lesson idea – create your own narratives

Topics such as morality, privilege and poverty, the precarious nature of life and changing fortunes sit well within the narrative format. Swapping between oil paints and acrylics (or, perhaps even better, collage, with reference to the artist Cold War Steve), and moving from engravings, to etchings to pencil sketches will give students different ways of exploring their narratives, which could maybe comprise three paintings rather than Hogarth's original eight.

These could include a starting situation, a key event and the outcome of that event. Otherwise, you could let students choose which part of the Rake's story really speaks to them, or has most contemporary resonance. Who might 'The Rake as the Heir' be, or 'The Rake as the arrested'?

Being a student project, teachers are advised to

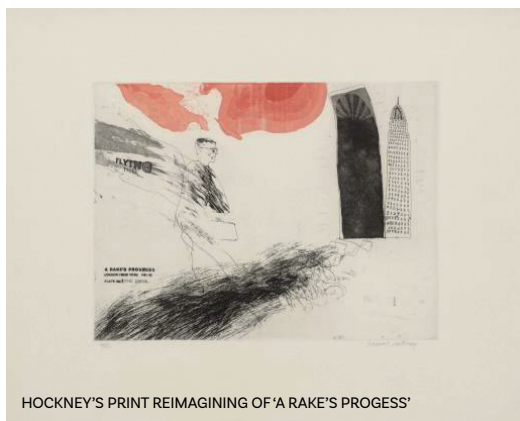
present the relevant images and carefully consider whether to remove the third in the series (for obvious reasons), rather than let students search for them freely. A more helpful approach could be to select the sections for yourself in 'before and after' pairings, asking students to think about what might have occurred between the paintings, or reflect on those key moments when Rake could have chosen a different path, but didn't (as in paintings IV, VI or VII, for example).

Either way, this very human story is one that students will still easily recognise from a modern perspective, and presents situations that could prompt a wide range of rich discussions. A whole term of 'A Rake's Progress' would be time well spent indeed – but we know that when something resonates with creatives, it soon becomes ripe for development and reconsideration.

Unashamed and celebratory

In 1951, Igor Stravinsky turned 'A Rake's Progress' into an opera bearing almost the same name – *The Rake's*





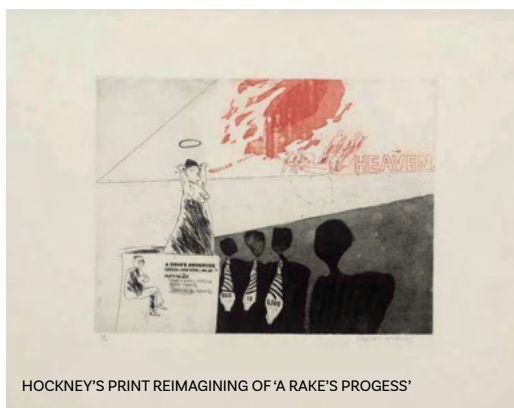
HOCKNEY'S PRINT REIMAGINING OF 'A RAKE'S PROGRESS'



A RAKE'S PROGRESS 1 - THE HEIR BY HOGARTH



DAVID HOCKNEY PICTURED IN 1977



HOCKNEY'S PRINT REIMAGINING OF 'A RAKE'S PROGRESS'

Progress. One can almost hear a 'sharpness' in the music, by way of an aural interpretation of Hogarth's visual style.

Enter stage left a young David Hockney, who began work on a print edition of Hogarth's narrative in 1961, when he was just 24. Exhibiting a similar series of contrasts between light and despair, Hockney's version ultimately expresses his own transition to adulthood, his take on the narrative remaining faithful to Hogarth's in some places, while deviating from it at others. Unlike the Rake, who finds only ruin at the end of his 'perversions', Hockney instead finds a warm welcome and sense of belonging within the burgeoning world of the alternative underground.

That this work – produced at a time when homosexuality was still very much illegal – feels so unashamed and celebratory in its depiction of life as a young gay man is astonishing. What could easily have been dismissed as perversion for many was, in fact, a warm, joyful expression of his life, which

would be further echoed across his other early paintings from this period.

Hockney was then invited by Director John Cox to design the sets and costumes for his production of Stravinsky's opera. The subsequent 1975 Glyndebourne production saw Hogarth's liner graphics and limited colour palettes combine with Stravinsky's disciplined sounds and Hockney's set design to form a work of total expression – not recreating, but rather bouncing off the old, and in the process creating something new. It was an immersive 3D experience, a living Hogarth.

Lesson idea – Graphical explorations

Here, students could explore stage design and costumes. By focusing on a character or a specific part of the story, they can create distilled, focused expressions. Just as Stravinsky and Hockney strived to create something new from Hogarth's existing work, your students could attempt something similar. What are their own experiences of wealth and poverty? Would they

celebrate, or choose to question a world that remains as divided as Hogarth's was? What might the story involve if it were set in 2026?

Looking back at Hockney's costume sketches for the opera offers yet another route for our students' investigations. Unique combinations of old and new, the structural style of the costumes' cuts were 18th-century in design, but featured instantly recognisable colour palettes largely made up of black, green, blue and red. Those were the colours most readily available to use with printing presses at Hogarth's time, but read as instantly new and fresh during Hockney's.

Hockney carefully observed the scales of the graphic patterns from various places in the auditorium, so that the visual reading of them would be effective regardless of where audience members sat. We could even move out from costume design to consider the graphic work for the production's accompanying programme or poster – the options just keep coming.

The story of Rake is a story

TELLING STORIES

If you and your class wish to further explore how narratives can complement works of art, here are some other examples...

WAR AND REVOLUTIONS

Francisco Goya's 'The Disasters of War' (1810–1820) is another collection of etchings. Through a huge 82 plates, Goya explores war, famine and the political promises of the times. In Eugène Delacroix's 'Liberty Leading the People' (1830), a single image is packed with revolutionary narrative.

SOCIAL STORIES

Jacob Lawrence's 'The Migration Series' (1940–41) consists of 60 panels. Beginning and ending at a train station, the series charts the everyday lives of African-Americans during the early 1940s, showing the daily realities of crowded housing and poor working conditions.

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Perhaps the most repeated story of them all, Albrecht Dürer's 'The Large Passion' (1497–1511) consists of 12 woodcuts. For a more contemporary take, see Chris Gollon's 'St John on Bethnal Green Commission' (2000–2009).

that's still taking place now. Hockney's exploration of it led to many other pieces of work, and with them, a huge depth and variety of topics and media for your students to explore. The biggest challenge is almost deciding where to start.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hannah Day is a teacher of art, media and film studies

EDUVENTS

THE HOME OF TRUSTED EDUCATION EVENTS

JOIN THOUSANDS OF **EDUCATORS** SEARCHING FOR CPD EACH MONTH.



ONLY EDUCATION
EVENTS.



SEARCH BY ROLE,
SUBJECT, FORMAT,
& LOCATION.



FREE TO SEARCH.
ALWAYS.



IN THIS ISSUE

- + How to prep your English class ahead of the mocks
- + The school on a mission to produce more female leaders
- + Why being a 'boringly predictable' teacher leads to better pupil behaviour
- + Is learning about AI as important as learning maths?
- + The SEND interventions with a shakier evidence base than you might have thought
- + Paper craft artistry through the ages

CONTRIBUTORS

LAUREN JONES

Secondary English teacher and AQA Literature examiner

DR FIONA MILES

Head of Loughborough High School

ROBIN LAUNDER

Behaviour management consultant and speaker

HANNAH DAY

Art, media and film studies teacher



Thinking about ...

ENGLISH MOCKS

There's a myth that many English teachers will be familiar with: *'You can't really revise English.'* In fact, English is one of the easiest subjects to revise if done properly, as it's a predominantly skills-based subject that rewards thinking skills over memorised content.

Those who do revise will often narrow their focus to lists of unconnected quotes; a safety blanket of *'If I know at least 10 quotes per character'* or *'I learnt all the quotes for this theme'* that will beat the system. This is the approach often advocated by the quick-win YouTube gurus, who maintain that students can answer *'Any questions with these top 10 quotes'*...

As an English Literature examiner marking up to 700 papers each summer, I can immediately spot the students who have followed this well-intentioned, yet shallow approach, versus the genuinely well-prepared, deep-thinking students whose teachers have carefully guided them to success.

THESIS-FIRST

Most students know that they should write an introduction for their essay answers, but many simply provide a basic rewording of the question: *"Macbeth is an ambitious character..."* or *"Shakespeare shows he is ambitious throughout the play..."* Instead, instil a 'thesis-first' approach to students' revision, so that their intros are more akin to, *"Shakespeare uses the tragic hero Macbeth to demonstrate the destructive power of ambition..."*

A strong thesis accomplishes three things at once – it answers the question, focuses on the writer and maps out the essay. That single change can transform a shaky intro into a roadmap for coherence and a way of securing higher marks.

Next, we need to address the dreaded 'zooming in' moment. This now ubiquitous phrase across Language and Literature papers remains something of a puzzle. Students clearly know they need to do *something* with individual words, hence the popping up of phrases like, *"If we zoom in on this adjective 'black,' we can see it is dark and mysterious..."* While this is a way into discussing language (no bad thing), it's also a limiting technique that can result in students struggling to say anything interesting about their chosen adjective or verb, and instead define it out of context.

They would do better to lead with the 'big idea' and perhaps pick a few words that support said idea, rather than worrying about 'zooming in' on one. For example: *"Scrooge's innate goodness, hinted at by the use of 'oyster' and the references to 'fire' and 'glow,' all foreshadow his ability to change."*

MAKE LIKE A MAGPIE

Turning to the Language papers, the single biggest confidence boost we can give less able students ahead of the mocks is to remind them not to treat parts A and B as separate entities. I advise students to 'magpie' five unusual, interesting or ambitious words from the reading section for use in their own writing. They can then note any techniques or structural features they felt worked well in part A to magpie for part B. This simple tactic boosts vocabulary, lifts tone and gives less confident writers a way into those daunting 40-mark writing tasks.

Ultimately, mock exams should be diagnostic. If you can prioritise thesis-led planning, purposeful close reading and using parts A and B of the language papers productively, then your mock results will reveal real gaps in understanding and provide you and your students with clear next steps.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lauren Jones is a secondary English teacher and an AQA Literature examiner

FOCUS ON... FUTURE FEMALE LEADERS

When we think about leadership, we'll often picture someone loud, confident and charismatic – the person happy to stand at the front of the room and make their voice heard. Yet by presenting this model of leadership to young women, are we inadvertently telling some girls that leadership isn't for them?

Traditional notions of leadership, often shaped by what we see in the wider world, can appear quite stark. As the headteacher of an all-girls' school and a self-professed introvert, I believe that strong female leadership can be demonstrated in many ways, rather than by conforming to one idea of what a leader should look like.

That doesn't mean we should shy away from developing confidence and the ability to speak up, since there will be times when an 'extrovert hat' is needed – but being reflective and thoughtful can also be a real leadership strength. Taking the time to reflect and consult can support better decision-making.

QUIET INFLUENCE

I see these qualities in our girls at Loughborough High School every day. Leadership can be about empathy, collaboration and quiet influence. A girl supporting her friends as a Wellbeing Prefect, bringing peers together in a newly formed co-curricular club or resolving a disagreement will be demonstrating just as many leadership qualities as someone confidently delivering a speech.

For me, developing future female leaders starts with helping girls recognise that they don't need a badge



or title to lead. Some of the most effective pupil-led initiatives I've seen have come from girls who would never have put themselves forward as Head Girl or House Captain, yet these pupils have launched fundraising projects, created arts events and established their own societies.

I recently observed, with great pride, a group of our girls leading a campaign for change. The girls wanted to change the names of our Houses, which had carried male names for more than a hundred years. What impressed me was how they led it – by consulting, building support and bringing the wider community with them. My role was to coach them through the change management process, rather than impose a solution. In doing so, they developed an understanding of leading meaningful change.

LOWER-STAKES OPPORTUNITIES

We also need to recognise leadership that doesn't *look* like leadership. In group work, the leader may not be the person talking most, but rather the pupil who's bringing different ideas together, defusing disagreements and helping the group move forward.

I particularly enjoy seeing our girls find their voices –

loud or quiet – and learn how to use them effectively. Debating, public speaking and performance can all develop confidence, but so too can lower-stakes opportunities when girls are taking their first steps. Confidence develops through experience.

Schools therefore need to provide varied opportunities both inside and outside the classroom. Through the Combined Cadet Force, societies, community projects and House events, the girls at our school can discover their strengths and develop leadership skills in different contexts. One of our Y13 girls, for instance, was appointed to the rank of Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) in our local CCF – the highest non-commissioned rank a cadet can achieve.

Ultimately, I don't think there's one 'right' way to lead, since different situations require different approaches. Our responsibility, as educators, is to help girls see their strengths and learn when to listen, collaborate, challenge and step forward.

My aim isn't to create a generation of girls who all lead in the same way, but to give every girl the opportunity to recognise her potential to lead – and the confidence and experience to find her own authentic way of doing so.

DO THIS

BE PREDICTABLE

ROBIN LAUNDER
PRESENTS HIS TIPS FOR
OVERSEEING BRILLIANT
BEHAVIOUR...

When you're boringly predictable, your students will know where they stand with you. They'll understand your expectations, and be able to work to them. They'll understand your boundaries, and be able to keep within them. They'll understand your way of doing things, and readily do things your way. In short, they'll understand how you function as a teacher, which will give them a sense of reassuring stability.

Conversely, if you're inconsistent, erratic and changeable, you become a barrier to learning. At best, you'll lose your students' respect; at worst, you'll fill them with anxiety as they try to second-guess which 'you' they're going to get.

So be the same person on Monday morning, Friday afternoon and all points in between – and be the same person with every one of your students.

Robin Launder is a behaviour management consultant and speaker; this column is adapted from his book, *Brilliant Behaviour in 60 Seconds or Less* (Routledge, £18.99)

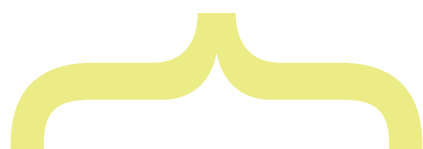


DR FIONA MILES IS HEAD OF LOUGHBOROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

74%

of students using AI are concerned about the accuracy of its information

Source: Survey of 2,591 UK students and 248 teachers by the tutoring and revision service provider Up Learn



The Micro:bit Educational Foundation has called on schools to give as much priority to the study of AI as traditional core subjects, such as maths and English.

The non-profit organisation is best known for taking on development and oversight of the BBC-developed micro:bit computing device and coding platform. The Foundation is now warning that “*Britain is in danger of raising a generation of AI and tech consumers rather than creators*”, unless steps are taken to provide young people with more opportunities to engage and experiment with AI technologies from an early age.

According to Tom Doust, Chief of Learning at the Micro:bit Educational Foundation, “*Just as we teach children to read and think mathematically, we also need to support them to understand how technologies, like AI, are increasingly shaping their lives. This involves building knowledge and confidence to ask good questions and recognise the limitations of AI systems.*”

To that end, the Foundation has launched an AI platform of its own aimed at micro:bit users called CreateAI. Via a web-based interface, students will be able to ‘train’ machine-learning models via physical actions that can include waving or clapping, prior to running them on a micro:bit device.

For more information, visit microbit.org



HOT TOPIC... BIN THE FIDGET SPINNERS?

Every SEND specialist at a mainstream school will have their go-to interventions that they turn to for different cohorts year after year – but if it came to it, would their effectiveness stand up to rigorous scrutiny?

Ormiston Academies Trust recently teamed up with the professional development platform Steplab U+0028steplab.co/uk) to carry out an evidence review of 10 commonplace SEND interventions, and as the hackneyed clickbait language would have it, *the results may surprise you.*

Following analysis conducted by Peps Mccrea, Steplab’s director of education, and Dr Jennifer Barker, National Director of Learning at Ormiston Academies Trust, here’s how those 10 interventions fared:

Zones of Regulation: Independent trials found no significant effect on behaviour or self-control

Ear defenders: Viable as a targeted fix for a specific noise barrier, but not as a general SEND intervention, and could result in lowering students’ tolerance for classroom noise

Working-memory training: Led to improvements on trained tasks, but didn’t transfer to academic outcomes or ADHD symptoms

Weighted vests and blankets: Found to not be an evidence-based practice for autistic students

Sensory diets / sensory circuits: Insufficient evidence was found to justify their routine use

Brain Gym: Its educational claims were found to be unsupported,

compounded by a neuroscientific framing that amounted to pseudoscience

Coloured overlays / tinted lenses: Systematic reviews have tested whether overlays can cut ‘visual stress’, but the effect disappears under proper trial conditions

Fidget spinners: A trial of 233 children found that fidget spinners lowered maths and listening performance, regardless of ADHD status; a separate study found that spinners reduced a child’s own attention

Universal mindfulness: Has shown no benefits, and may in fact cause harm; the MYRIAD Project tested a mindfulness curriculum across 84 schools and 8,000+ students, but found no benefit to wellbeing or depression risk – students already at higher risk of mental health problems felt worse

Learning styles: Testing found no benefit to matching lessons to a preferred learning style, but when told a child was, for example, a ‘visual learner,’ parents, teachers and children would judge them as more academically able, despite no such difference existing.

Peps Mccrea commented: “*These interventions are popular because they’re visible; otherwise schools can feel like they’re doing nothing. However, there’s just not enough evidence to show that they work, and the mindfulness curriculum even pointed to creating harm for students most at risk. Every hour spent on something unproven is an hour that could have been focusing on excellent teaching.*”

13%

of secondary students were taken out of lessons and placed in internal exclusion at least once during the 2025/26 academic year; in 2022/23, the proportion was 5%

Source: Data analysis by MIS provider Arbor (arbor-education.com)

Need to know

Schools will be keen to hear that another means of boosting students' attendance, learning and motivation may have been found – positive teacher communication. According to new research carried out by UCL Institute of Education and children's health charity Words Matter (wordsmatter.org), over 9 in 10 young people say that positive communication from their teachers makes them more motivated to attend school (93%) and helps them to learn (94%).

The researchers surveyed more than 1,000 young people and 600 secondary school teachers, and facilitated follow-up discussions with over a hundred participants. One of the questions asked of the students was what actions were most likely to make them feel confident and encouraged, the responses to which ranged from 'patience, fairness and understanding' (42%), to 'being treated with respect' (38%), and 'being listened to' (38%).

At the other end of the scale, 25% said they had experienced harsh words from teachers, while 34% said their experiences with teachers had contributed to them not wanting to come to school, rising to 54% among young people with SEND.

Study lead, Professor Vivian Hill, said of the findings, "With persistent challenges around student attendance, motivation, and wellbeing, this research offers a hopeful message – that the path to stronger student outcomes lies not in sweeping reform, but in the small, everyday interactions between teachers and students."

THE ART FILES... THE POWER OF PAPER

Hannah Day explores the connections and contrasts between two artworks sharing similar themes – one older and one contemporary...

**Chinese Paper Cutting, British Museum, (c. 9th to 10th century)
Lotte Reiniger, 'Sleeping Beauty' (1922)**

Two of the world's most ancient cultural forms are connected in this month's Art Files – paper, created around 105 CE, and fairytales, which date back as far as 4,000 BCE. So what connects them?

Chinese paper cutting often took folk tales as its subject matter. It was believed that the kind of paper flowers shown above (which date from the Tang Dynasty) were scattered by celestial nymphs known as Apsaras. One of the Apsara's roles was to guide the souls of fallen warriors to paradise, hence the discovery of some paper flowers inside tombs. The pictured example was recovered from a sealed library – had it not been preserved in such a way, it would have corroded centuries ago.

The most famous Apsara stories include those of Urvashi, Menaka and Rambha, which tell tales of love and beauty, communicated via symmetrical floral motifs that connote order and harmony.

Lotte Reiniger adored folk tales. Her 1922 film *Sleeping Beauty* (pictured below) pre-dated Disney's first feature film, *Snow White*, by some 15 years, and utilised papercutting to produce a particularly magical form of moving image.

Her abiding love of Chinese paper cutting and fondness for fairytales, combined with rapid developments in filmmaking technology at the time, led to her creating over 30 animations.

Reiniger's work is ripe for exploration with students. Apps such as 'Stop Motion' can make stop-frame animation tasks far easier than they used to be, while the flexible nature of the paper cutting process allows for stories that can be inspired by any number of tales, ancient or otherwise.

What stories did your students grow up with? Whether you want to explore Oni, Baba Yaga or the Green Man, the resulting connections, paired with stop-frame and paper, can make for compelling tales...



HANNAH DAY IS A TEACHER OF ART, MEDIA AND FILM STUDIES



On the radar *AI expectations*

A majority of teachers are now making regular use of AI tools in the workplace, but most have yet to see any appreciable benefits in the number of hours they're actually working.

That's the conclusion of a new report produced by the team behind the annual Bett edtech exhibition, based on the result of a YouGov survey of 1,033 UK teachers. Among the 80% of respondents who stated using AI as part of their daily workflow, 51% agreed that it had 'eased their workload', yet just 35% said that this had translated into them working fewer hours as a result. 55%

believed themselves to be working the same hours as before, while 4% said they had since found themselves actually working more.

In terms of the tasks now being passed to AI, 76% of respondents said they had used it to assemble lesson plans and produce worksheets and other resources, while 39% confirmed that they had used it to draft letters and emails to parents or write pupil reports. There seemed to be far more caution around using the technology for assessment purposes, however, with just 8% confirming that they used AI to

mark or grade pupils' work.

"Teachers are using AI more than ever, but their enthusiasm for it is cooling," observed Duncan Verry, Bett's Portfolio Director. *"They tell us it saves them time on particular jobs, but most say they are not working fewer hours. The time comes back and something else fills it. Teachers are still reaching for AI – but they have just stopped expecting quite so much of it."*

The full report, 'Working it Out – The State of AI in Education 2026' can be downloaded via tinyurl.com/ts157-LL3

TRENDING

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

AT EASE

The Combined Cadet Force Association has made membership free for all school-based Combined Cadet Force (CCF) contingents, and is also offering schools complimentary access to insurance, grants, awards, volunteer support and a wider support network to help them deliver a successful cadet experience.

combinedcadetforce.org.uk

TECH-FOR-GOOD

Entries are now open for the seventh annual Samsung Solve for Tomorrow tech contest, for which schools, colleges and individuals aged 11 to 18 must help turn a problem that's important to them into a 'tech-for-good solution'. Teachers have the option of delivering a Solve for Tomorrow project through a single lesson, over six lessons or via self-guided study. Depending on how far they advance, teams may receive mentoring from Samsung volunteers and access to prototype funding, before eventually pitching their solutions before a panel of industry experts. solvefortomorrowuk.com

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT... THE PISA 2025 RESULTS

This month saw the release of initial findings from the latest OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test held every three years. Over 760,000 15-year-old school students spanning 91 countries sat the combined science, maths and reading test in 2025, making it the largest Assessment to date.

The results present something of a mixed picture, with PISA 2025 recording the lowest average performance in the Assessment's history. The main focus this time round was science, which saw a relatively modest fall in average scores across all OECD countries since 2015. In contrast, average reading scores saw a much more pronounced decline, having



fallen by 28 points since 2015, equating to a loss of 1.5 years of learning. That said, the UK did at least find itself ranked among the top 10 highest performing education systems across science, maths and reading, alongside the likes of China, Estonia, Korea, Japan and Singapore.

Another notable takeaway

from this latest Assessment was the apparent impact of AI use on outcomes, with those students claiming not to use AI when drafting text for written assignments outperforming those who said they did. The results further highlighted the effects of digital distractions more generally, with over 1 in 4 of

all student participants acknowledging that they learnt alongside classmates who were regularly distracted by digital devices in most, or all of their science lessons.

The full 'PISA 2025 Results (Volume I)' report can be downloaded via tinyurl.com/ts157-LL5

GEOGRAPHY



Discover Geography Collins

Collins

A well-organised, dynamic collection of books offering a complete programme for KS3 geography study

AT A GLANCE

- Comprehensive guides for students and teachers
- Clearly laid out in years, chapters and sessions
- Easy to follow
- Visually engaging
- Clear lesson rationales and explanations for teachers

REVIEWED BY: HANNAH DAY



Entries for GCSE geography have been steadily increasing for over 10 years. Much of that growth can be traced back to a rising interest in social geography – the exploration of people, places and natural phenomena, which offers some fascinating opportunities for enquiry.

Collins Discover Geography is a well-organised and easy to follow collection covering KS3, with dedicated Student Books, Workbooks and Teacher's Guides for each year group. The Student Books are well laid out, enabling straightforward navigation across topics and concepts with a good sense of flow across the chapters.

Take Student Book 7, for example. Its six chapters effectively each act as half-term programmes, which are then further divided into sub-sections. These sub-sections feature a mix of explanations and illustrations that mesh together in a way that supports deep understanding.

The Workbooks indeed work as advertised, enabling students to work through the information contained within Student Books and express their answers via a layout similar to what they're likely to encounter in their final test papers, thus incorporating some invisible exam prep.

What I like most, however, are the Teacher's Guides. If an educator is to teach well, then they're going to need an appropriately embedded understanding of what it is they're actually teaching, in terms of both content and accuracy.

The Teacher's Guides' chapters all open with a 'Chapter Intent' area that highlights key areas for teachers to attend to, and potential activities and approaches available to them and their class. This way, teachers get an easy to digest, time-saving summary of the skills that the material will be calling on, expected prior knowledge, intended learning outcomes, possible curriculum links, common misconceptions, fieldwork opportunities and local geography opportunities.

I was especially pleased to see the 'misconceptions' section, which should allow teachers to clearly and explicitly lay out the facts that students will need to grasp before commencing their study of the topic in question.

In chapter 3 of Teacher's Guide, for instance, we're presented with a set of common misconceptions that relate to human migration – an important addition, considering the tenor of the media coverage and public discourse we're currently seeing around that particular issue.

The Teacher's Guides also include scaffolded activity explanations, but that's not to say that there's an overwhelming amount for teachers to get through. The information is concise and clearly laid out, so that it can be read and easily reviewed when time is limited. For those new to teaching, or who may have found themselves teaching geography while primarily specialising in history or RE, this

kind of guidance could be priceless.

Teachers need to feel sufficiently supported, and students need the confidence to know that what they're encountering in the classroom will adequately prepare them for the GCSE geography pathway, should they choose to follow it. These resources offer precisely that.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Acts as a clear guide through a variety of complex topics
- ✓ Well-organised content
- ✓ Visually compelling presentation
- ✓ Fully supportive of teachers' needs
- ✓ Serves as an excellent foundation for GCSE study

PICK UP IF...

... you want to teach a geography curriculum that's comprehensive, well-structured and appropriately attuned to teachers' needs.

RRP £12.99 - £100.00; for more information, visit collins.co.uk/DiscoverGeography



FlashAcademy® Secondary

A comprehensive online teaching programme and pupil-facing app to enhance your EAL support provision



AT A GLANCE

- An online EAL skills programme with curriculum-linked vocabulary adapted for secondary users
- Suitable for use in school and at home
- The teacher dashboard stores all assessment data and reporting
- Beyond the app, there is a wealth of CPD packages and practical resources available

REVIEWED BY: RUTH ASTLEY



For classroom teachers, unlocking the world of learning for children with English as an additional language is an essential task, but one that can be extremely labour intensive. The secondary version of FlashAcademy®, however, could make a real difference.

FlashAcademy® is an online teaching programme that comes with a comprehensive range of online lessons for pupils with EAL. Its potential uses extend far beyond that, though, to encompass many helpful resources and tools for daily use in the classroom.

FlashAcademy's app interface is easy to navigate and designed in an age-appropriate way for secondary-age users – not something you can always say of EAL resources. The extensive package of lessons and videos provides early acquisition learners with all the language and skills development they'll need throughout their secondary school journey. Helpfully, users can also access the materials found in the programme's primary version, enabling teachers to dip into an even more extensive range of curriculum-aligned language resources and ensure smoother rates of progress for students.

The learning journey students take is clearly mapped out via programmes intended for groups or individual learners. The inclusion of assorted learning challenges and games, complete with live leaderboards, will help keep pupils motivated and engaged,

and we're told that a custom lesson builder will be added in later down the line.

Powerful packages like this can sometimes be hindered by the design of their teacher dashboards, but that's not the case here. FlashAcademy's user-friendly dashboard interface makes all vital admin and information controls readily accessible, so that busy staff can easily use it to prepare lessons, assign tasks and set homework.

The programme's assessment functions are especially insightful, with the ability to baseline pupils before monitoring their subsequent progress across different proficiency bands. AI-powered marking features can provide teachers with highly detailed breakdowns of pupils' strengths and next steps for development, while also tailoring assessments to your particular setting's needs and cohorts. The grading systems provided are clear and precise, and could potentially serve as a valuable tools for tracking progress.

Then there's the extensive array of high quality training videos and materials intended to help teachers make the best possible use of the system, as well as the translated print documentation for parents and printable resource sheets for classroom use. One particular highlight are the 'learner profiles' spanning a huge spectrum of home languages. Each learner profile includes background information regarding the learner's home country and any notable

cultural differences; key language language distinctions between a pupil's first language and English; any specific difficulties there might be in learning English linked to the home language, and more besides.

FlashAcademy® is definitely worth investigating, as it could well fulfil many of your pupils' needs and give their learning of English a real boost.

**teach
SECONDARY**

VERDICT

- ✓ Easy to access and use
- ✓ Specifically designed to enable curriculum-aligned language acquisition for EAL learners
- ✓ Presents teachers with a wealth of CPD and support materials
- ✓ Ideal for tracking progress both in school and at home

UPGRADE IF...

...you want a programme for EAL learners that does everything you could ever need, all in one place.

For more information, visit flashacademy.com



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

Resist the plastic patriots



Against a backdrop of febrile culture wars, the need for teaching around personal and social ethics has become more urgent than ever, says **John Lawson**

Culture wars and divisive anger seem to be driving much of the political discourse these days. Social media and AI are changing our world rapidly, with those who fail to adapt at risk of being ruthlessly disenfranchised. Were Shakespeare writing today, the 'creatures of darkness' wouldn't be witches, but influencers babbling macho gibberish from Macbeth's Manosphere app.

There also seems to be rather a lot of faux patriotism in the air at the moment. Seeing a sea of British flags being proudly waved at major sporting events and on special national occasions evokes in many a tremendous sense of pride in the achievements, uniqueness and humanity of our United Kingdom, but I intensely dislike seeing flags being 'weaponised' – because yes, that is indeed what's happening.

Nationalistic delusion

Displays of the flag erected in public spaces by force, whether the people there want them or not, make me feel sick, rather than proud. I can still remember the thrashing I received at primary school for daring to ask my teacher why he insisted that everything made in Britain was the 'best in the world', because it was surely obvious to everyone that my dad's crank-handled jalopy was no match for a Ferrari or Cadillac. That's not patriotism – it's nationalistic delusion.

Many teachers are more than happy to promote the virtues of authentic patriotism, of course. The UK has plenty of achievements to be proud of, after all – but it's imperative that we teach our students the fundamental distinctions between nationalism and patriotism, particularly at a time when the former is being duplicitously promoted as the latter.

A nationalist will argue that in essence, we should be unconditionally proud of our country. Well, if our country's leaders decide to kill innocent citizens, should we still proudly wave our national flags from our imaginary moral high ground? Could any truly pious person knowingly defend an act of genocide? Or state-sanctioned torture? Or a system of effective apartheid?

Honest patriots, on the other hand, may well say that their country *should* be a beacon of justice and righteousness – because patriotism can, and indeed ought to be rooted in love, civility, charity, justice, compassion, honesty and mutual respect. When these are all absent from expressions of national pride, it's perhaps time to consider a reaction plan.

Jingoism versus pride

We also have to stop pretending that callous prejudice and transparent racism are somehow patriotic, because right now, it seems that far too many people are unable to distinguish between nationalistic jingoism and feelings of genuine pride for one's country.

There's much we can do to engage students positively in modern politics, including encouraging teenagers to explore non-partisan political ideas that have the potential to remain with them into adulthood.

I value liberalism and democracy not because they're perfect ideals, but because they're better than the alternatives, especially neo-fascism. If, as some have suggested, we should admire 'strong' leaders like Vladimir Putin and the recently ousted Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, then liberal democracies afford us the chance to vote for such individuals. Should they then threaten to become dictatorial, we can vote them out, as happened with Orbán.

But given the propensity of totalitarians to routinely rig or cancel elections, that's often not an easy task. Multiculturalism and European unity are worthy ideological causes for many of us, but I personally can't support deregulation, because we surely need robust regulations in

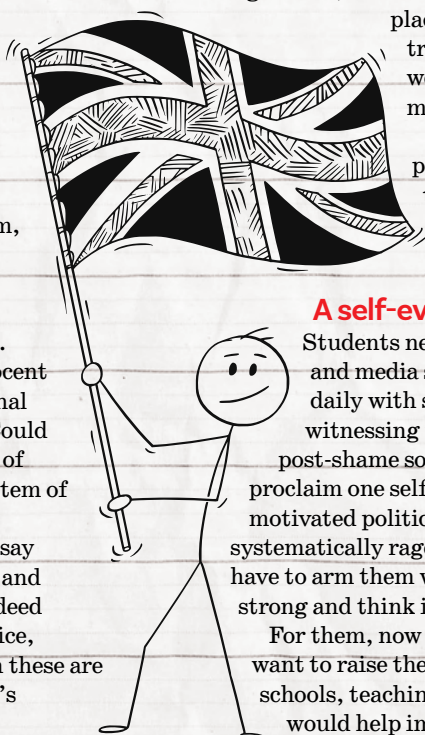
place for financial markets, cryptocurrency trading, law, food safety, buildings, welfare, medical practices, industrial machinery and a whole host of other areas.

We can debate who benefits most from privatisation, and whether public utilities, transportation and healthcare provision should be sold off, but wilful racism and prejudice? Those are indefensible.

A self-evident truth

Students need to understand basic political ideas and media spin because we're being bombarded daily with so much disinformation. We may be witnessing the gradual emergence of a post-truth, post-shame society, but let's not be afraid to loudly proclaim one self-evident truth – that some highly motivated political agitators are deliberately and systematically rage-baiting our students, which is why we have to arm them with the knowledge they'll need to stand strong and think independently.

For them, now is the only normal they know. If we want to raise the bar for political and moral literacy in schools, teaching teenagers personal and social ethics would help immensely.





A student-centred curriculum, resources and delivery.... why is all learning not like this!

~ Nicky Ashby-Guest, Lead Practitioner, Outreach, Training & Development, The Gallery Trust

Maths For Life delivers...

-  an **inclusive** and **equitable** maths curriculum;
-  a programme which **empowers educators**;
-  age-neutral maths which **students love**;
-  the **practical maths** students need to thrive;
-  **financial education** and **digital data handling**;
-  maths **contextualised for today's world**;
-  the ability to track **individual progress** in attainment and independence with **no associated timescales**; and
-  a **financially accessible** and **flexible** maths programme that has been viewed positively by Ofsted on multiple occasions.

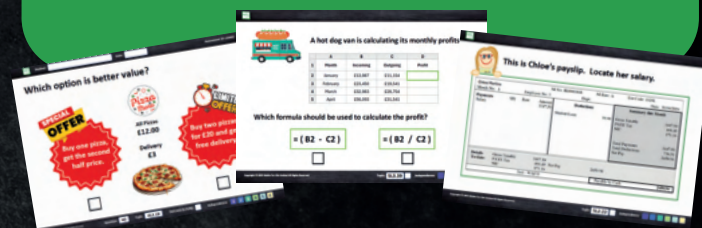


Preparation for adulthood

We focus on the maths students need to live and thrive in today's world. Taking a student from the beginning to the core maths needed for adulthood – finding and filling any gaps along the way.

We believe that the understanding of money, specifically the value of money, is key to unlocking independence and employment.

Money and basic financial education is a core objective within each level of our programme, as well as life and job specific skills including digital data handling.



NEW

Website and brochure

Recently launched, our website and brochure have been updated to reflect our company as it is today. Detailing our complete curriculum and wide range of products and services, designed to support you in teaching the maths your students need to live and thrive in today's world.

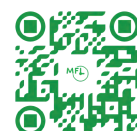
Reporting and accreditation system

Our reporting and accreditation system takes our assessments to the next level. Comprehensive reports are automatically produced, detailing a student's attainment, independence and progress against Maths For Life objectives. Celebrating achievements through certification.

NEW

-  We deliver **transparent prices** and offer a range of subscription plans and packages to ensure our programme is accessible. For full details please visit our website.

Want to know more? You can book a **Q&A session** or an **appointment to talk to a member of our team** via our website.



www.mathsforlife.com



learn@mathsforlife.com



SHAKESPEARE
CURRICULUM

in partnership with The Foyle Foundation

A photograph of a young man and woman in period costumes kissing passionately on a stage. The woman has long, wavy red hair and is wearing a white ruffled dress. The man has dark hair and is wearing a dark jacket. The background is dark and out of focus.

BE PART OF THE TEACHING SHAKESPEARE REVOLUTION

Everything you need to design and deliver your classes, all in one intuitive platform. New for September 2026 *Romeo and Juliet* in addition to *Macbeth*. Teachers at UK state funded secondary schools and SEND schools can sign-up for free.

[SHAKESPEARECURRICULUM.COM](https://shakespearecurriculum.com)