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From the editor



The odds are good that you currently work in a state primary school having to contend with static revenues, rising costs and declining coffers. Even if not, it's likely that there's another just a few streets away that will be.

Last month saw the DfE announce that its long talked about plan to introduce a new national funding formula will finally happen in 2017-18, distributing a pot of £42.4 billion which will rise to £43.5 billion the year after. How much of a difference that makes to your balance sheets will depend on where you are, of course – and who the winners and losers are remains to be seen.

In the meantime, you'll find plenty of suggestions for making your budget go further in the issue you hold in your hands. School leaders have had to become increasingly hard-headed and commercially minded in recent years, but if your negotiating skills could do with some sharpening up, you can read Hayley Dunn's tips for better haggling on p70. You'll also find some pointers for avoiding IT contract rip-offs on p37, an argument in favour making your school's budget more transparent on p67, and an inspiring example of a head who went the extra mile for a much-needed building extension on p27.

That said, there's more to school life than money alone. Elsewhere, you can find out how to run a well-oiled social media machine (p48), how one school went about making its lunch break a more sedate affair (p57) and how to get the most out of your next conference engagement (p77).

Enjoy the issue,

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From the
makers of
Teach Primary

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PUBLISHER: Helen Tudor

PUBLISHED BY: Maze Media (2000) Ltd,
25 Phoenix Court, Hawkins Rd,
Colchester, Essex, CO2 8JY.

TEL: 01206 505900

aceville

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Helen Barker,
head of Kyra Teaching School,
Lincolnshire

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“When there’s a change, other priorities take over”



The former Education Secretary discusses her enthusiasm for character education and shares some reflections on her days at the DfE...

What prompted you to write a book on character education [*Taught, Not Caught: Educating for 21st Century Character*] and what’s the meaning behind the title?

I was very passionate about character education when I was at the DfE. Anybody working with young people, from small children up to sixth form, knows that in preparation for adult life they need to learn some strong character traits – things like resilience, self-confidence and self-belief, as well as respect, honesty and integrity.

The title is about the years-long debate over whether character can be ‘taught’, or if it’s something you ‘catch’ from the ethos of the school you’re in, the home you grow up in or the adults you interact with. The central argument of the book is that every institution has an ethos, so let’s explicitly think about the values that we’re building in our young people, and not just leave them to chance.

How do you develop that in a way which still allows for the range of personality types one finds among children?

When I was in the DfE we tried hard not to identify specific traits or values, because it’s got to be for each school setting to decide on what’s most appropriate for their pupils and community. The University of Birmingham’s Jubilee Centre, for example, breaks things down into four areas of virtue: ‘intellectual’, ‘performance’, ‘moral’ and ‘civic’. Others talk about ‘values’, some about ‘building grit’, and whether the latter can be particularly helpful for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

I visited various schools while writing the book, and I found that some went further – getting young people to think about how they’re learning, what they’ve

done and what they’ve learnt from their past experiences, which is also really important. This type of character approach explicitly involves the whole school – teaching staff, support staff, governors, leaders, pupils, even parents and the wider community as well. Everybody’s involved in setting the ethos.

Is the book a way of charting the impact of the work you did on character education as Education Minister?

When I was there we set up a grant scheme of £3.5 million, some of which is ongoing. The book is about examining those schools that won awards and what they’re doing, but there are many other



CAREER TIMELINE

1994
After graduating from Oxford University begins work as a solicitor, specialising in corporate law

Elected as Conservative MP for Loughborough
2010

2012
Becomes an Assistant Whip under the Coalition government

Appointed Economic Secretary to the Treasury (City Minister)
2013

schools across the country doing work in this area that didn't enter any awards schemes, but still know it to be very important.

The book also makes the case that there's been lots of talk from a Conservative government about 'one nation' education policies. If we believe this is important, and if the research shows that developing certain traits can lead to success later in life, why would we only want it happening in some schools and not others where we know pupils will really benefit?

Character education aside, what would you most like your time as Education Secretary to be remembered for?

I think my determination to have a coherent programme for making education excellent across the country. That's what we talked about in the White Paper in March 2016 and what Justine's since taken on with the Opportunity Areas – calling out those parts of the country where education isn't yet good enough, because it's deeply unfair. Not just for pupils, but also the staff and families who rely on those schools to set their young people up for life.

The White Paper was a key moment during your time as Minister. What do you make of the different direction that the DfE has since taken?

We said in May 2016 that we weren't going to compel schools to become academies in the timescale we'd set out. I think there's still very much a drive for more schools to become academies, but it's inevitable that when there's a change – obviously in Number 10, but also at the DfE – that other priorities are going to take over. We saw that with the push for grammar schools, which has now gone, so let's see what happens.

Is there a particular incident or anecdote you can recall that might help illuminate what daily working life inside the DfE is actually like?

One thing is that there are a number of former teachers working in the department. We had reference groups of heads and teachers coming in all the time to inform our policy development and



implementation. While I was there I made well over a hundred visits, as did all the ministers, to the different settings they were responsible for. Other members of the department, the permanent secretary and others also visited many schools.

On the basis of what you witnessed when researching the book, what do you see as the biggest issue currently affecting primary schools, and how would you go about addressing it?

I was visiting schools that had stepped up, made clear that character education was important to them and wanted to demonstrate what they were doing. I was touched by the fact that no school said no when I asked if I could come and visit. I hope this book is supportive to them, gives them a banner and can serve as a call to arms for parents and governors, so

they can say, 'We'd like to do more of this, because this is what helps pupils to be resilient and move on successfully'.

Did you observe different approaches in different parts of the country?

Absolutely. What struck me when I was Secretary of State and more recently was the myriad different ways in which people are delivering the curriculum and inspiring young people. We sometimes hear the negative side of the education debate, but actually, across tens of thousands of schools, there is great teaching, character building and knowledge building going on, and that should be celebrated.

 @NickyMorgan01

 nickymorgan.com

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Minister for
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Parliament's
Treasury select
committee

2017

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WHO? Department for Education

WHAT? MAT Development and Improvement Fund

HOW MUCH? £50,000 to £100,000

APPLY BY? 11.59pm, 26 November 2017

WHERE? tinyurl.com/mat-dev-fund

FUNDS? New MATs of two or more trusts planning to form within the next 12 months, and existing MATs planning to take on at least two additional schools and improve them, also within the next 12 months. Only approved academy sponsors are able to take on sponsored academies – if necessary, academy sponsor applications can be submitted at the same time as applying for the MAT Development and Improvement Fund.



WHO? BT Group

WHAT? Community Fibre Partnerships delivered by Openreach

HOW MUCH? Up to £30,000

APPLY BY? Ongoing

WHERE? communityfibre.openreach.co.uk/grant

FUNDS? Communities within the 5% of the UK currently lacking fibre broadband coverage. Grants are available to contribute to the cost of new fibre infrastructure, on the proviso that said infrastructure will serve a local Ofsted registered (or equivalent) school or other learning establishment.



WHO? British Science Association

WHAT? British Science Week 2018

HOW MUCH? Up to £300 (Kick Start grant) or £700 (Kick Start More grant)

APPLY BY? 12pm, 13th November 2017

WHERE? tinyurl.com/bsw-2018

FUNDS? A 'Kick Start grant' for schools looking to run an activity to coincide with British Science Week, or a 'Kick Start More' grant for larger events and activities that involve both students and members of the local community. Both are open to schools in the UK meeting at least one of the following: over 30% of pupils eligible for pupil premium or equivalent; over 30% of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds; and/or situated in a remote and rural location.



WHO? Garfield Weston Foundation

WHAT? Regular Grants programme

HOW MUCH? Up to £100,000

APPLY BY? Ongoing

WHERE? garfieldweston.org/apply-to-us

FUNDS?

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THE **PSM** GUIDE TO... **School improvement**

RUN A SUCCESSFUL OUT OF SCHOOL SERVICE

Kirsty Jackson explains what primary schools should be aiming for when operating a wrap-around service – and the secret to achieving it...

According to the Office for National Statistics there are currently 4.9 million mothers with dependent children in work in England 2017, up from 3.7 million in 1996 – so is it any surprise that there's been such an increase in demand for out of school clubs? When evaluating its own 'Extended Schools and services' research (see tinyurl.com/dfe-ext-schools), the government stated that primary schools need to either offer wraparound childcare themselves, or else signpost parents local providers to help them balance their work and family commitments.

There might be little legislation around before/after school care, but it's still vital that primary schools are able to offer a high-quality wrap-around service. At Kids Collective, we've been providing out of school care across Cheshire and South Manchester for over 13 years and seek to maintain exceptionally high standards that far outweigh those set by the DfE. As such, we believe there are certain areas that primary schools should focus on when providing quality care of their own.



VARIETY

Children should be offered diverse opportunities for relaxing and having fun, both indoors and outdoors. A choice of activities should be made available for different age ranges, alongside a variety of resources and equipment to support the all-round development of all those children present.

DEFINED AREAS

These might include a quiet place with books and cushions, an ICT area (containing a tablet, laptop and potentially a games console) and a 'Junior Area', for older children who might prefer socialising with their friends.

OWNERSHIP

Encourage the children to actively direct the club and give them a sense of ownership. Provide forums in which the children can speak, be heard and share opinions – examples might include a school club council, a suggestion box or a comments book.

EVALUATIONS

Aim to consistently evaluate how your service is doing, and actively seek the views of parents, staff and children so that it's responsive to their needs.

SUPERVISION

There's no minimum requirement for qualifications in this sector, but it's best practice for the manager of an out-of-school club be qualified to level 3 or above in childcare or playwork, and to possess experience of working with children. All staff should undergo mandatory training as part of an induction process – key areas include basic safeguarding, health and safety, food hygiene, behaviour management and paediatric first aid.

STAFFING

Aim for higher than the statutory staff-to-children ratio of 1:30. Kids Collective works to 1:15, which gives staff more time to supervise homework, manage free-flow play between indoor and outdoor areas and speak with parents. Working to higher staffing ratios will ultimately bring about a higher quality service.

Kirsty Jackson is group development manager at the out of school care provider Kids Collective

 @elmscotgroup

 www.kids-collective.co.uk



"I'M PROUD AND I'M SURPRISED"

One deputy head shares the transformative effect that High Expectations teaching has had within her village primary

We're a school in Leicestershire with 201 junior pupils, and for the last couple of years we've been doing work around removing the ceiling on learning. We want to maximise the learning trajectory of every child, ensuring that there are no limits on their learning, regardless of starting point and background.

It's an area I love researching, and as I was Googling away one day I came across the work of Professor Christine Rubie-Davies in New Zealand. On the off-chance, I emailed her, explaining what we'd been doing, and asking if she had any recommendations for how to put her theories into practice. It turned out she liked what we were doing, so we kept in touch. After an initial meeting, the chance came in September this year for her to visit our school and talk about High Expectations practice in person. We'd just converted to an academy and formed a MAT with three other schools (the Oval Learning Trust), and I thought an after-school event would be a good opportunity for them to get involved.

The professor arrived at the end of the school day, and met first with some of our pupils who presented her with some work they'd prepared. Since it was a twilight session, we wanted to put on some nice refreshments with a 'high tea' theme to go with 'High Expectations'. The Professor's visit gave us a real awareness of the factors influencing teacher expectations and behaviours. Through a combination of ongoing CPD, monitoring

and coaching activity, our aims therefore currently include the following:

- That children have a teacher who believes in and empowers each one of them
- A working awareness of factors that influence teacher expectations and behaviours.
- Lesson design that enables all children to be equitably and optimally challenged.
- Goal-setting as an ambitious, active classroom practice that engages learners.
- A positive classroom climate in which all children are treated equitably
- Teachers being supportive of the children, and children supportive of each other.
- Body language and classroom dialogue that fosters optimal relationships and promotes self-esteem.
- That pupil premium children achieve and progress in line with their peers.

The impact it's had is already clear. I recently had a Y2 pupil knock on my door, and holding his maths book he was desperate to tell me, "Mrs Price, look at this – I didn't think I could, but look at this work. I can do it." His exact words then were, "I'm proud and I'm surprised."

Cheryl Pryce is deputy headteacher at Albert Village Community Primary School

 albertvillage.leics.sch.uk

Good discourse needs more than data

You can tell Michael Tidd where he's going wrong – just don't use simple data to prove your point

I'm fond of the old saying, 'Live by the sword, die by the sword' – not least because the noun can be easily replaced. Let's substitute it with 'data'. Live by the data, expect to die by the data. Well, 'die' might be a bit strong...

That notion's struck a chord with me recently, particularly in social media discussions where teachers try using data to resolve disagreements on complex issues. Now, I make no qualms about stating where I disagree with common practice. I taught a guided reading carousel for three weeks before throwing my hands in the air and declaring the whole thing bonkers. I think the obsession with using pencils in maths is unfounded. The vast majority of marking that happens in primary schools strikes me as a waste of time. But these aren't incontestable truths. They're merely my opinions,

based on experience.

I'm happy for others to tell me where they think I'm wrong. Sometimes I even listen. But there's one surefire way of having me discount your argument, and that's when you rely on the simplicity of data to prove your point.

We've spent years as a profession trying to make those who would judge schools and teachers recognise that there's much more to good teaching and learning than simple test outcomes. (Though for me, that's another area of disagreement with colleagues; I think tests can be a good thing, and am glad of the Y6 SATs – I'm less persuaded by Y2). Underpinning that view is a recognition that data tells us only a tiny part of the picture.

In my final year of teaching at my first school, the data seemed to show that my class had made over four years of progress in maths in just one year. Even

my arrogance didn't extend to me believing that. We all know that we can make great strides with a pupil, only to see no reflection of it in the data, and that the reverse can equally be true.

If your argument for using a pencil in maths is that last year over 90% of your school reached the expected standard, that won't convince me. Frankly, if you think that 90% at the expected standard of anything is a persuasive argument, I'm more likely to throw out your views than my own.

The reasons for your excellent attainment could be myriad. Your school could have a high-attaining intake with supportive parents. Maybe your school never teaches anything but English and maths? Perhaps you don't realise how brilliant you are, and just put it down to pencils. Maybe you cheated? It's likely that none of these are quite true, but what's certain is that the data in your lovely graphs show tell me little about what works.

By all means, disagree with me.

Tell me you think I'm completely wrong. Show me the things you do that challenge my thinking. But if you fall back on simple numbers to try to prove your point, you're frankly tilting at windmills.

Michael Tidd is deputy headteacher at Edgewood Primary School in Hucknall, Nottinghamshire.

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How good are you at first aid?

Accident prevention may be a priority for many schools, but it's just as vital to have a robust first aid response in place, should the worst happen...

Each year, around 2 million children are admitted to A&E due to an accident. Accidental injury is one of the biggest single causes of death in the UK for children over the age of one, and while most of these accidents will happen at home, many occur at school – which is why it's vital that staff are able to identify, prevent and treat such accidents.

Under the current regulations set out by the Health and Safety Executive, all employers must ensure that there's adequate and appropriate equipment and facilities for providing first aid within the workplace. In schools, there must be access to suitably stocked first aid kits at appropriate locations throughout the setting and when off site. They must also put in place someone trained to provide first aid both on and off site (while ensuring there's cover in the event of their sickness or absence) plus an appointed person, and provide clear information on the school's first aid arrangements for its employees.

It's the headteacher's responsibility to ensure that these statutory requirements are met and that appropriate first aid training is provided. This training should be enough to ensure that staff are competent, have confidence in their ability to support pupils with medical conditions and can fulfil the requirements set out in individual healthcare plans. However, staff must never give prescription medicines or undertake healthcare procedures without appropriate training (which

may need to be updated to reflect changes to individual healthcare plans).

Beyond this, it's good practice to upskill all staff in basic first aid for common injuries and illnesses encountered in school, thus reducing the reliance on designated first aiders and potential delays. Unless first aid cover forms part of an employee's contract of employment with their school, those individuals who agree to become first aiders do so on a voluntary basis and must complete an HSE-approved training course.

REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE

A one-day Level 3 Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW) course for schools will comply with the HSE's requirement that in a low risk school setting there be a first aider responsible for every 50 employees (though pupils and other staff are excluded from these numbers).

Ideally, a one-day EFAW course for schools should cover heart attacks, head and spinal injuries, allergic reactions and asthma attacks, in a manner applicable to both adults and children.

The main duties of first aiders in schools are to give assistance to casualties affected by injuries or illness, make the decision to call an ambulance if appropriate and refer to other medical professionals. Needless to say, your first aiders must be able to attend immediately in the event of an emergency.

An appointed person, on the other hand, takes charge when someone is

injured or becomes ill, maintains first aid equipment (such as restocking first aid kits) and guides ambulance crews and other medical professionals to the location of the casualty. An appointed person won't need to complete training that complies with HSE regulations – a short practical or online course will suffice – which is why it's important to note that appointed persons are not first aiders. They shouldn't provide first aid treatment for which they haven't been trained.

That said, it's important that all staff (including lunchtime supervisors) are trained in recognising and giving immediate care to someone who is choking or experiencing an anaphylactic reaction. Emergency asthma inhalers have been widely available in schools for some time; staff should be able to spot when someone is experiencing an asthma attack and calmly manage the situation, referring as necessary.

As of October this year the same now applies to emergency adrenaline autoinjectors, which schools can obtain from a pharmacist for emergency use on children known to have a history of anaphylaxis. As such, all staff ought to be trained in the immediate recognition and treatment of acute allergic reaction and anaphylactic shock.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

When undertaking risk assessments and assessing their first aid needs, schools ought to consider their size, location and any issues that might arise from the premises occupying split sites or multiple levels. If there's more than one entrance to the school, emergency services should be given clear instructions as to where or to whom they should report.

Attention should also be paid as to whether there are any specific hazards or risks on site, which might include hazardous substances,

dangerous tools and machinery. Temporary hazards – building or maintenance work, for example – should also be noted and suitable short-term measures put in place. Pay attention also to whether there are any staff or pupils with special health needs or disabilities.

Schools should base their first aid provision on the result of their risk assessment and ensure that there's adequate first aid cover during breaktimes and lunchtimes. As well as encouraging lunchtime supervisors to have first aid training, it's good practice to extend this to any agreements you might have with external contractors (providers of school meals, for example) by ensuring that they provide first aid training for their employees.



ACCIDENT TRACKING

Organisations with 10 or more employees must keep readily accessible accident records in written or electronic form for a minimum of three years. Schools should also keep a record of any treatments given by first aiders and appointed persons. These should include:

- Date, time and place of incident
- Name (and class) of the injured or ill person
- Details of injury/illness and what first aid was given
- What happened to the person immediately afterwards (ie. 'went home', 'admitted to hospital', 'resumed normal duties', 'returned to class', etc)
- Name and signature of first aider or person dealing with the incident.



Emma Hammett is a registered general nurse and the founder/CEO of the first aid training provider First Aid for Life

[@firstaidforlife](https://twitter.com/firstaidforlife)

firstaidforlife.org.uk

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

A school's first aid kits and containers must all be marked with a white cross on a green background. There's no mandatory list of items that they should contain, but the HSE does recommend that at the very least, their contents should include the following:



- 1x leaflet/booklet containing general first aid advice
- 20x individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings (assorted sizes)
- 2x sterile eye pads
- 4x individually wrapped triangular bandages
- 5x safety pins
- 6x medium sized (12cm x 12cm approx.), individually wrapped, sterile and unmedicated wound dressings
- 2x large (18cm x 18cm approx.) individually wrapped, sterile and unmedicated wound dressings
- 1x pair disposable gloves.

Someone should be given the responsibility of frequently checking all first aid containers and restocking them ASAP after use. Extra stock should be kept in school, and items should be safely discarded after they've passed their expiry date.

DECLUTTER YOUR ENGLISH ASSESSMENTS

Fed up with marking against lists of exacting criteria? Just pick your favourite stories and take the rest of the day off, says Jon Brunskill...

I'd like you to close your eyes for a moment and think back to every piece of writing that the children in your class did for you last year. All of the stories, the setting descriptions, the information texts. Now I have a simple question: out of all of that writing, which piece was the best? It's not a simple question, of course.

Daniel Hahn, one of the judges of the International Man Booker Prize, believes that what makes a 'good' book is "a book that has found the unimprovable form of expression for itself." Although perhaps not on the same scale, each time we read a set of stories written by our children, I like to think of teachers as mini Man Booker judges.

My favourite piece from last year – the story to which I would award the mini Man Booker prize – was a narrative based on the Apollo 11 moon landing, written by a child in year 2. Notice how I said 'my favourite' piece of writing. There appears to be something hopelessly subjective about choosing the best writing in your class. And is this the same as 'securing age-related expectations'? What makes good writing, well, 'good'?

PLAYING FAVOURITES

The orthodoxy is for teachers to have a checklist of criteria against which they judge each piece of writing, before

plonking the child responsible into the corresponding band or level. There is a great deal wrong with this approach, which I won't get into here. Suffice to say that 'criterion-based' assessment is unreliable (people don't agree) and invalid (it doesn't identify 'good' writers or writing). The new interim assessment framework suffers from same problems that national curriculum levels did, and most new assessment systems do too.

Whilst wrestling with these problems, I stumbled across an innovative and radical approach to assessing writing that claimed to evade these flaws. Known as 'comparative judgement', it relies on a single piece of criteria: which is the best piece of writing?

Aided by a website called No More Marking (nomoremarking.com), the work of an entire class is electronically scanned, and then two pieces of writing are displayed side by side. The teacher then simply clicks on which piece of writing they deem to be the better piece. No criteria, no tick boxes, just the simple question that we're really interested in: which is better? Instead of judging against criteria, we are judging against another piece of writing – something humans are naturally good at.

More and more pairs of writing pop up, and teachers complete a few hundred judgements for each class, which takes around an hour or so. At the end of this process, an algorithm is used to rank all of



the children's work from best to worst, assigning a standardised score to each child (we set ours at 85-115 to marry with the KSI scores following the SATs).

This gamification of assessment made the whole process very addictive, and teachers were especially keen to learn and improve their 'infit' score, which tells them how consistently they are judging against themselves. The process had the added benefit of taking a fraction of the time compared with levelling each child's work and then moderating these judgements across the year group.

SURPRISINGLY CONSISTENT

Is it really possible to agree on which writing is better, though? After judging the Pulitzer Prize, Michael Cunningham wrote that "Utter objectivity is not only impossible when judging literature, it's not exactly desirable. Fiction involves trace elements of magic. It works for reasons we can explain, and also for reasons we can't."

It may be surprising, then, that the reliability of comparative judgement is so high; teachers consistently agree on

the ranking over 90% of the time. Although we may not be able to articulate why, we have an implicit gauge of what make good writing.

We enjoyed the same high levels of reliability during our experimentation with the scheme last year. This continued even when we invited other schools to submit work so that we could judge a much larger sample of abilities. The final results gave us an insight into how our kids stack up against kids in other schools – crucial information to which we were previously blind.

Coordinating across the schools was a bit of a pain but, thankfully, No More Marking has launched a 'sharing standards' tool on its website for this coming year which automatically compares your children's writing against kids from schools across the country.

BUT WHAT ABOUT NEXT STEPS?

Although we were delighted with the data that comparative judgement (or CJ, as the cool kids now refer to it) was giving us, we did wrestle with the 'now what' questions. For all its flaws, criterion-based referencing does give a teachers a clear roadmap of next steps or targets for children. We have addressed this by asking our children to take part in the CJ process themselves.

Following the judging, we display two pieces of real writing and ask the children which they think was judged to be better piece, and why. Such an approach transcends the tick-box approach. Piece A and B may both include expanded noun phrases, but the description in B is more precise and visceral ('the rusting, blood-soaked dagger'), whereas 'the incredible, wonderful door' in A makes little sense.

It's my hope that in future, No More Marking publishes exemplar pieces from each year group to give teachers a clearer idea of what good writing looks like across different genres for different year groups. I know that I would find top, middle and bottom exemplar year 4 stories infinitely more useful than a list of criteria which, to be honest, looks very similar to the criteria used by years 3 and 5.

Of course, the elephant has not left the room. Statutory assessment remains stubbornly criterion-based. It would be tempting to continue to fall into line, but we have made the choice to do the right thing, not the easy thing. We want to focus on great writing, and helping our children produce it. In this endeavour, CJ has transformed the way that we think about writing at our school.

Could it do the same for you?



Jon Brunskill is head of curriculum and year 4 teacher at Reach Academy Feltham

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“I suddenly became Mister Unpopular”

Following an Ofsted inspection, headteacher Zak Willis' school was rated inadequate. Here's what happened next...

I'm in something of a unique position. Having been at the helm of a school that went into Special Measures, not only am I still in post almost a year later, but it appears to be everyone's expectation that that should be the case. Few of my colleagues have been given such opportunities. Indeed, some have elected not to take them.

So it's with not a little humility that I can reflect on the time and events that have passed since the bombshell dropped. There are a number of aspects involved in managing the outcomes of a Special Measures inspection – and to be honest, I got some of them wrong.

MANAGING ANGER

I had expected great sadness on behalf of a staff who simply didn't deserve the outcome they got. I expected demands from the governors, and derision from the community. What we got instead was a great sense of anger at the system and the perceived unfairness of it.

Staff were deeply annoyed at what they saw as inadequacies within the report itself. There was also much ire directed towards an LA that had told us, just two weeks prior to the inspection, that all was well. The governors simply failed to recognise the school they were so proud of. One long-standing governor, normally a calming hand on the tiller, wouldn't come into school for a month, as she was so angry. We were one controversial vote away from an appeal. I myself voted with the 'against' camp.

At first, the community were enormously sympathetic ('You must be

gutted, Mr Willis') before they too entered an angry phase. Two hours after the report went public, one of our most vocal parents was in my office, his copy of the report covered with notes and wrung repeatedly into a tube, pointing out where inspectors had contradicted themselves: "That is not my children's school, and not what you've built all these years, Mr Willis."

And then there were the children. We gave copies to years 5 and 6. Year 6 in particular were furious. "They don't know our school," they said. "We love it, and this isn't it."

A LACK OF ENERGY

My message to each group was the same – I cannot lead a school fuelled by anger and hate. Yes, unpleasant things had been said, some justifiable. So let's listen, reflect, and put things right. We have to accept and move on – otherwise we risk languishing in this pit for far too long.

Then you have to manage the energy (or more precisely, the lack of it). At this point I must commend my staff, who have been wonderful. They've continued to work hard for the children, attended brilliantly and have been both vocally and quietly supportive of me in many ways. Mysterious bottles of wine would appear on my desk on a Wednesday morning with cards or messages.

Yet it was easy to understand why their energy levels would dip significantly following each new visit or 'review' by members of the local authority, who had now become almost permanently resident in our school. What made this even more difficult was the way in which every review left us with nothing tangible to go on, no road map to follow. Each new test, whether it was in relation to safeguarding, assessment, teaching or learning, came back with much the same response – 'we don't see the problem'. Our safeguarding had even been used as an exemplar at a Citywide conference, so it can't have been that bad.

Our teaching and learning was pored over for days by an outstanding (according to both Ofsted and myself) headteacher, who simply couldn't see the point. After the first morning she turned to me and asked with her characteristic frankness, "Exactly what am I doing here?"

Convincing my amazing colleagues to trudge on through all these events was difficult, but they managed it. I think three

“Staff were deeply annoyed at what they saw as inadequacies within the report itself”

things helped. One, the unfailing support of a governing body who refused to get involved in recrimination, only in the way

forward. Two, a community that came together and put its weight behind a collective forward push. Three, open and frank discussions between staff at all levels, with a willingness to admit where things could improve.

TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

Two days after the report went public, the academy order arrived in my inbox and I started getting bombarded with calls from the RSC's office. From the initial staff announcement on that gloomy January day there had been a cloud of uncertainty hanging over the school – and things weren't about to get any easier.

The Chair of Governors – who had been exceptional throughout – and I decided to be proactive and sought dialogue with other academy chains, many of whom were open as to what they could reasonably achieve and their expectations. Yet we knew that that these discussions were potentially futile, that decisions were being made several rungs up the ladder according to a different, more sluggish schedule.

The one occasion when I became truly aggravated was when it became apparent

that I was getting all this information second or third hand.

The point came, however, when I had to get on with the business of leading and charting a route forward. Any potential conversion wouldn't take place before 2018, and we were still responsible for getting the school ready for the coming year.

I decided to try and implement a School Improvement Plan that would make the transition as smooth as possible for everyone, staff included, with the aim of giving them as much protection as I could. Major changes had to be planned in crippling financial circumstances, and unsurprisingly I suddenly became 'Mister Unpopular'.

Barring some really difficult personal moments and conversations, that's largely my story. I'd love to tell you it's plain sailing, but you know it's not. There were some highlights – notably the way in which we managed to improve our


outcomes in almost every department, especially Key Stage 2 – but it's not an experience I'd wish to repeat.

Far from being negative as to what the future holds, however, I'm optimistic. I'm certain, largely thanks to the way everyone responded, that we have the capacity and the collective hunger to get back to where we should be very soon.



Zak Willis is headteacher of Badock's Wood Community Primary in Bristol

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Matt Pullen – Managing Director UK and Ireland for AkzoNobel, makers of Dulux.

“My vision for the school is for children to develop a lifelong love of learning...”

...independently and creatively. Using Smarter Spaces to overhaul our school hall has had a huge impact, going beyond our initial aims of revamping the space and working towards achieving the Artsmark.

It has helped to continue our vision and has completely changed the way the school feels. The children love the space and its bright colours; they want to be in the hall and are eager to learn!

Mrs Sue Collins – Executive Headteacher, St Mildred's Primary School, Broadstairs

“Before, the room was boring and grey.”

Now it has a rainbow, which is my favourite bit. The rainbow is important, because it's nice to look at and it makes me feel happy. I like the 'paint' carpet and all of the coloured seats too.



“I like having a stage.”

Dressing up is my favourite thing to do, because we can pretend to be different people. There are also lots of masks and different outfits. I find it really fun to draw and paint and make things!

Pupils at St Mildred's

“Creative use of space does not have to involve large sums of money...”

...to have an overwhelmingly positive impact. Our research has shown that creating a 'smarter space' is a brilliant opportunity for teachers and learners to work together to design inspirational spaces and come up with creative solutions to problems.

Fie Rason – Senior Project Manager, The Schools, Students and Teachers Network (SSAT)

“In making learning better, every detail matters...”

...and making over a learning space can also makeover the way we organise our learning, our zones and our protocols. As more research worldwide explores education it becomes clear that better learning spaces produces better learning in so many ways.

Professor Stephen Heppell – Education Expert



At Smarter Spaces, our mission is simple: to help teachers and children thrive through the power of design and colour in schools. Across the country, we help transform schools and classrooms into environments that are not just visually appealing, but also support teaching and learning.



Interested in finding out more about how your school can get involved in Smarter Spaces? Visit duluxtradepaintexpert.co.uk/education, or follow @Smarter_Spaces on Twitter!



What a new union can do for you

Mark Wright – Director, AMiE

With the joining together of the ATL and NUT unions, schools can access more support and a louder voice than ever, says Mark Wright

The National Education Union came into being on 1st September this year, following the amalgamation of the ATL and NUT unions. So what does that mean for leaders and managers in primary schools?

Well, the new union is now the biggest education union in Europe and the fourth largest in the TUC, with over 450,000 members. Size matters, of course; it gives us a bigger voice with decision makers and enables us to provide stronger support, professional development and advice around issues that matter to leaders. But that's not the only, or even most important element in a successful trade union.

The key to success is addressing the issues of both members and the system alike. It's about having a comprehensive and inclusive approach, which is part of the NEU's DNA. Having more schools where the majority of staff are in the same union will enable leaders to lead successfully in a collaborative and collegiate manner, with the full support of the union.

School leaders in the NEU will receive separate expert support where required, while the emphasis will be on learning, so issues are less likely to arise again in future. Having leaders belong to the same union is a step in the right direction, away from the sense of 'us and them', though we will continue to work collaboratively with the other headship unions.

The essence of what we do in this sector should always be based on the principles of effective learning, which should not be confined to classrooms



but extend across the organisation. This is the way to improve staff wellbeing and ensure that pupils are well balanced.

It's for these reasons that we're focussing our activity on two key campaigns. We'll be lobbying for increased school funding, so that leaders can provide high quality education for pupils, while also working to support professionals in reducing their workload. We hope to achieve the latter by addressing both in-school issues and government-driven initiatives that increase meaningless work. That includes working to change the primary assessment regime, stopping proposed additional tests and pressing the government to do more to address the recruitment and retention of teachers and leaders within primary schools.

Over its six-year existence, AMiE (now the leadership arm of the ATL section of the National Education Union) has garnered a track record for working in a mature and professional manner and led the way in developing ethical leadership in education. It's used publications, training and advice to show how leaders and managers can fulfil their professional responsibilities in an ethical way, providing professional respect combined with appropriate challenge to those colleagues they lead.

As the NEU, we're committed to making education a great place in which to work, teach, lead and learn. We'll champion all those who work in education, and empower professionals to work together to inspire learning in generations of children and young people. Having a dedicated leadership section gives us a solid base from which to develop leadership policy and professional expertise, and make greater demands of the Government.

School leaders face unprecedented challenges. Having to lead and manage colleagues during a period of rapid change, while poorly thought through education policy is simultaneously imposed from above, makes an already difficult job that much harder. As a strong voice of reason for leaders, and a source of targeted support for their needs with a focus on effective education, the NEU is a game changer.

Mark Wright is the director of AMiE – ATL's leadership section of the National Education Union

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amie.atl.org.uk

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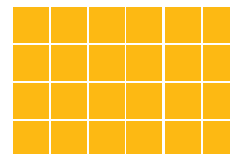
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KEEP YOUR PREMISES UP TO SCRATCH

If you're struggling to stay on top of your premises management, start keeping that vital info in one place

Remembering when you last had your fixed electrical wiring tested, or when your last lighting protection test was taken isn't easy. Keeping all this information in one safe, accessible place can help SBMs ensure they're compliant and save time flicking through last year's files for vital information. It's also a huge help when reporting and evidencing.

My own spreadsheet system consists of several workbooks: '3-Year Premises Improvement Plan'; 'Premises Maintenance'; 'Contracts & SLAs'; 'Health & Safety Staff Responsibilities' and 'Policies'. The hardest part of this is creating it in the first place, because that's when you'll need to flick through those old files and consult your MIS for specific dates – but once that's done, maintaining it is simple, and you be assured of knowing exactly where to find the information that at some point will be asked of you by governors, auditors and health & safety officers.

3-YEAR PLAN

This is a rolling document, updated annually, that lists your priorities for premises improvements over the next three years. It should detail the relevant items, areas in school, estimated costs (plus contingency) and timescales.

Make sure it shows the dates of when improvements were carried out, the chosen contractor and final cost. This

part of the spreadsheet is especially helpful when producing premises and financial management reports for governors.

PREMISES MAINTENANCE

Here, I list all the maintenance works that need to be carried out and indicate whether they're 'statutory' or 'good practice'. I use Excel's 'conditional formatting' function to highlight all the statutory tasks, so that I can quickly see what needs to be done under the law. The Education and Skills Funding Agency's 'Essential School Maintenance' document (see tinyurl.com/efa-maintenance) is a useful tool for this. Update the spreadsheet whenever a task is completed, so that the details are easy to obtain when compiling reports for governors.

CONTRACTS

Remembering when contracts started and when they're due to end can be a logistical nightmare, so record them in your PM document. This workbook should include all the items or areas the school has a contract or SLA for, the start/end dates and specific contractor. It should also show whether or not it's a rolling contract, and detail the reason(s) why that contractor was chosen. Having this to hand means you'll be ready to respond promptly come the next internal audit.


HEALTH & SAFETY

This tool will be particularly helpful for other members of staff in the event of the SBM's absence or departure from the school. It should list the various areas of H&S responsibility – from fire alarm tests and risk assessments to gym inspections – and which member of staff is responsible for ensuring compliance in each.

POLICIES

This should list all of the school's policies relating to premises and H&S, accompanied by hyperlinks to the relevant documents, and must be made accessible to all staff.

Caroline Collins is head of school business strategy and resources at Miles Coverdale Primary School

 [@caroline_261](https://twitter.com/caroline_261)



Asbestos removal in schools isn't seen as a pressing issue – but given the scale of the problem and the response up to now, it should be...

Among headteachers' numerous duties and responsibilities, it's fair to assume that managing the presence of asbestos in their school won't feature near the top of their 'to do' list. Yet they have a legal, and some would say moral, duty to ensure that any asbestos within their school premises is managed properly.

Asbestos is a natural mineral previously used in many areas of construction, principally as a thermal and noise insulator. Before its dangers fully emerged, it was classed as a 'magic mineral'. Unfortunately, when asbestos become friable it releases very small fibres which can penetrate deep into the lung and remain there. These fibres can subsequently cause cancers of the lung, including one type only known to be caused by asbestos exposure – mesothelioma.

One of the reasons it took so long for asbestos to be associated with these diseases is the cancers' long latency period, which can be anything from 20 to 50 years before diagnosis. Average life spans after diagnosis are just eight months, with successful treatment and recovery very rare.

The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (see tinyurl.com/asbestos-reg) confer duties to record exactly where asbestos is, the state it's in and any plans to remove it. This information should be checked on a regular basis, usually annually or when circumstances change.

Successive governments have, in effect, largely ignored the issue, outside of cases where individual schools have suffered

major exposure. The Health and Safety Executive, which advises the DfE, states that if asbestos is in a good condition it should be left alone, but there are a number of problems with this approach.

The DfE lacks any centrally stored data concerning the prevalence and condition of asbestos in schools. It's estimated that 85% of UK schools have some asbestos in their buildings, some of which will have been present for 50 years or more – and hence subject to weathering, refurbishment and boisterous pupil behaviour. They may have access to help in dealing with the issue, but that will depend on the resources and expertise of their LA or academy trust.

If the government could gather better asbestos data, it could proactively plan a phased removal of asbestos and roll out better staff training and awareness on how to conduct the process on their premises.

That raises the issue of resources, but there are two important considerations. Firstly, a proactive approach will prioritise the most dangerous cases of asbestos removal, thus lessening the risk of exposure. Secondly, we must face up to the fact that removing asbestos is expensive – and unlikely to get any cheaper with time.

John McClean is Chair of the Joint Union Asbestos Committee and secretariat of the Asbestos in Schools Group

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 juac.org.uk

Workable washrooms

Paul Thorn breaks down the essentials of what schools need to know about installing toilet facilities

There's lots of guidance and many regulations surrounding school toilets, but it can be confusing, contradictory, (and often dull). Here, I'm going to summarise the main points you need to know in order to design and install a safe, practical and compliant school washroom, without having to do too much homework.

Toilets in Schools Guidance (DfES)

The Toilets in Schools Guidance from what was then the Department for Education and Skills (tinyurl.com/dfes-toilets) was originally issued in 2007, but is still worth referring to for the useful advice it gives regarding specific products. It states that:

- Wash troughs are more appropriate than individual basins, because they are more visually pleasing, easier to keep clean, and reduce the risk of intentional flooding by pupils
- Urinals – especially trough urinals – are best avoided, because they can contribute to a disorder known as 'shy bladder syndrome'
- Background noise within the washroom should be ideally increased to 55db to ensure aural privacy
- Washrooms should be located opposite staff rooms and offices to facilitate regular passive supervision
- All toilets blocks must contain a wheelchair-accessible cubicle and an ambulant cubicle for disabled pupils who are able to walk



Standards for school premises

More recently, the DfE has issued Advice for Standards on School Premises (tinyurl.com/dfes-school-premises) – an advisory document that's less prescriptive than the old Toilets in Schools Guidance and intended to give schools 'More flexibility in how they use their premises'. These simply state that where toilets are concerned:

- Handwashing facilities should be installed close to every toilet
- Washrooms should be well lit and ventilated

- Washrooms should be situated in areas that are easily accessed by pupils and easily monitored by staff, without diminishing the privacy of pupils



Paul Thorn is the MD of school washware supplier, School-Toilets.co.uk

@Washware

school-toilets.co.uk

British Standard Sanitary Installations

This British Standards BS 6465-1:2006+A1:2009 regulation sets out the ideal number of fixtures per washroom as follows:

PRIMARY UNDER 5S



There should be one handbasin for each toilet or urinal; urinals should constitute no more than 2/3 of boys' fixtures. These regulations also state that staff toilets should be provided separately, with the one exception that toilets for disabled staff may also be used by pupils.

PRIMARY OVER 5S





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Could you manage your own **BUILDING PROJECT?**

What would you give for an improved learning space and better office facilities at your school? For one head, it was no holiday for a year...

Around 2013, Mellor Primary School had a problem. It had been a couple of years since the school had converted to a standalone academy, becoming the first in Stockport to do so. However, while popular, there was a limit to how much it could increase its admission numbers by, in a way that was sustainable for the long-term future.

The only practical solution was to make more room, which is how headteacher Jim Nicholson and his team came to embark on a three-year project to build an extension to the school's existing 1996-era building. Contained within this extra space would be a redesigned office

area, to meet the administrative demands presented by an increased pupil population, alongside an expansion of the existing hall that could accommodate the larger school population in its entirety and additional toilet facilities.

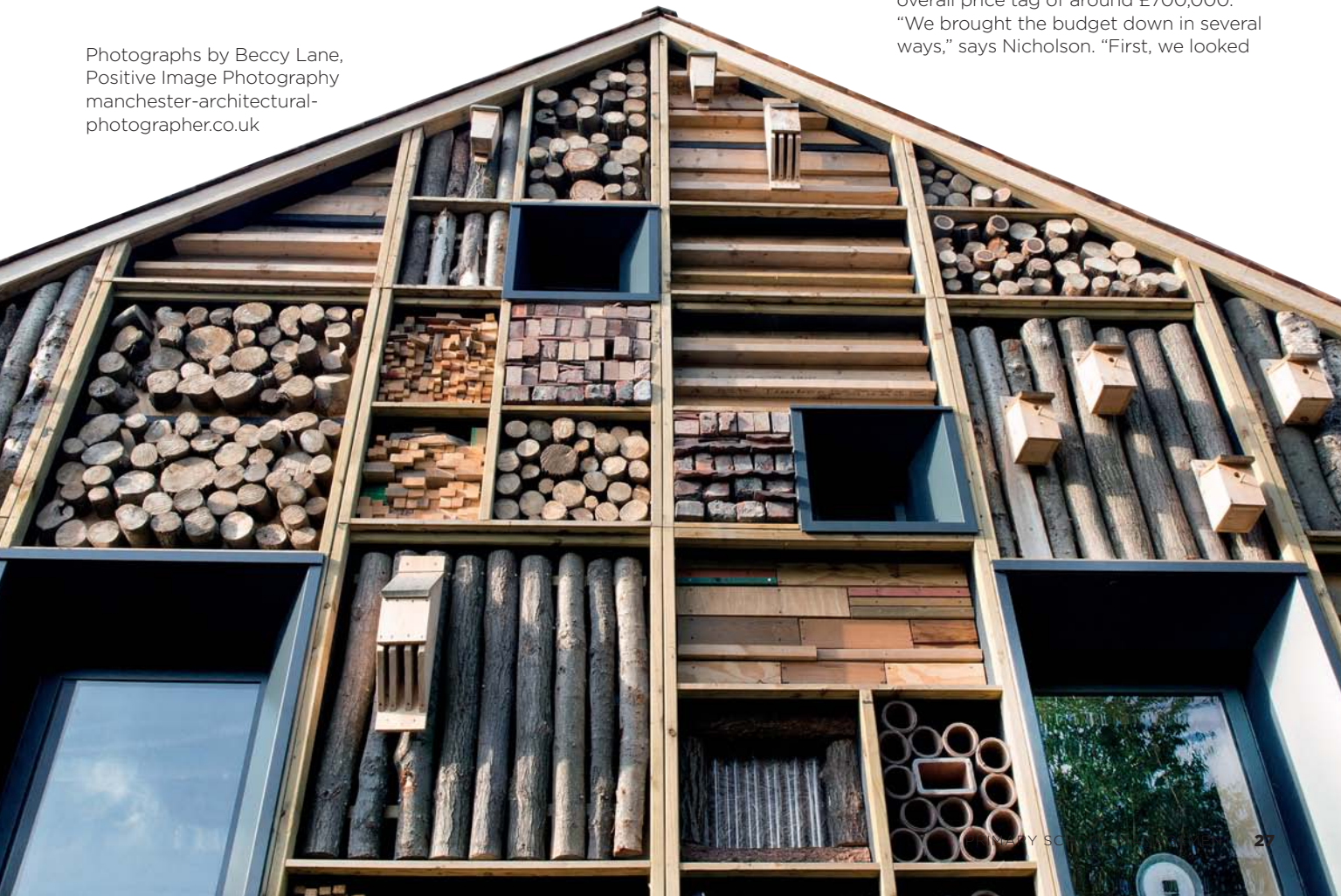
The extension also needed to host an extra classroom, a school library, a dedicated space for the school's frequently used out-of-school care provision and rooms that would mean one-to-one support and small group tuition would no longer need to be held in the school's corridors.

BRINGING DOWN THE BUDGET

Nicholson and his team went to considerable lengths to keep the costs of the project down as much as possible. "When we went to initial tender, the cost implications were running at £800,000 plus – there was no way we were going to be able to afford that," he remembers.

The school ultimately managed to secure £546,000 in funding from the DfE, plus an additional £40,000 due to the increase pupil places that the school would be able to offer. There was one snag, however – other extensions built to a similar brief and specification carried an overall price tag of around £700,000. "We brought the budget down in several ways," says Nicholson. "First, we looked

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for costs that we could cover ourselves. For example, we project managed it all alongside our architect." Through their combined efforts, the final construction budget came in at £590,000.

The architect in question, Sarah Wigglesworth Architects, helped to devise a particularly novel part of the extension that resulted in one of its most notable features – an exterior Habitat Wall made up of compartments filled with various found and recycled materials sourced by members of the local community. To tie in with Mellor Primary's Forest School programme, some of the compartments were set aside for planting and to serve as insect hotels.

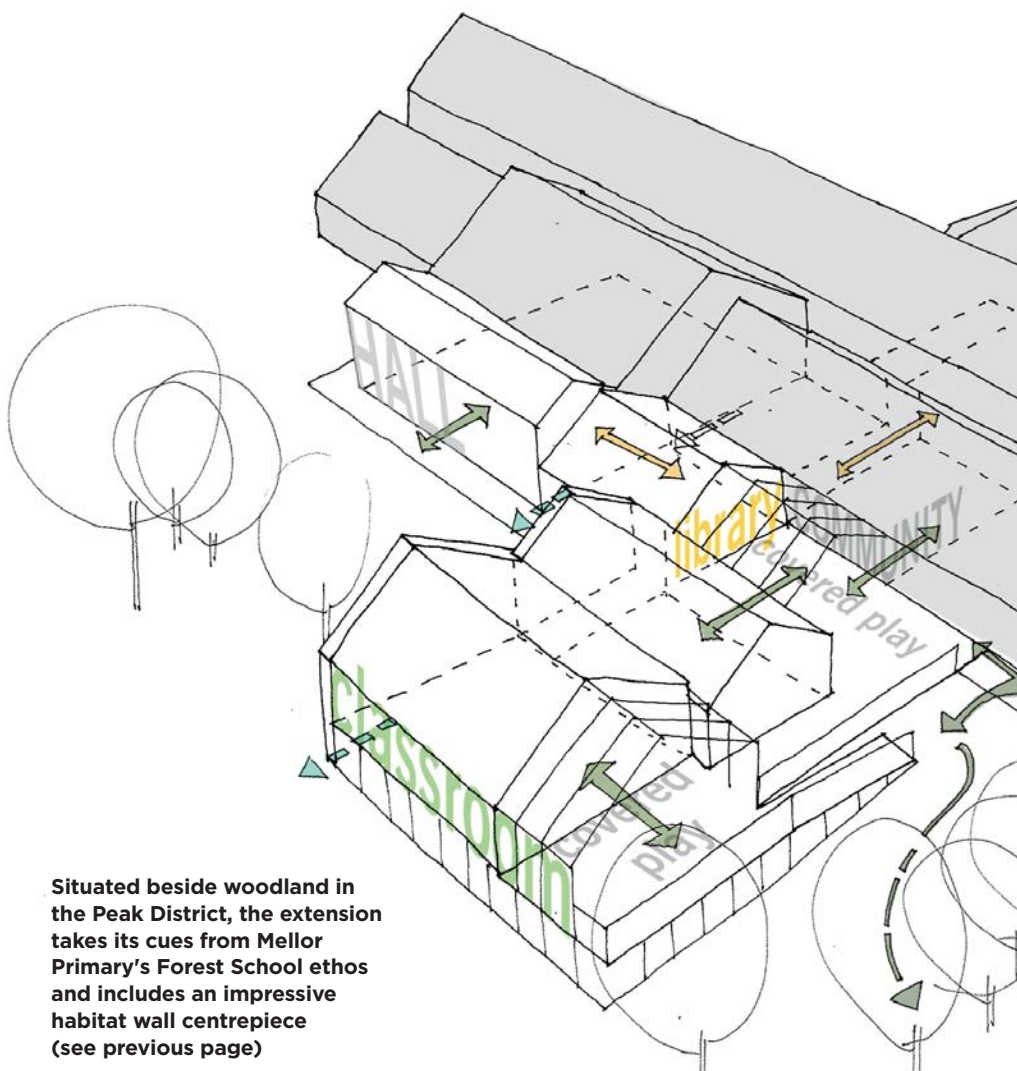
Needless to say, the scale of the project and the work involved made for a challenging 2013/14 academic year. "It was a massive undertaking both for the governors and myself," Nicholson concedes. "The human impact was quite significant. I had hardly any holiday over the whole year, and there was the knock-on effect it had on staff."

Changes that staff had to contend with during the construction phase included the temporary loss of 12 parking spaces and a portion of the hall. "In terms of our teaching, the children were very



The project enabled the school to be sustainable for the future and offer a learning environment that children love. It's changed the school significantly. The admin team now have a working space which is considerably better for them in terms of their wellbeing – overall, it's been a win-win situation for us.

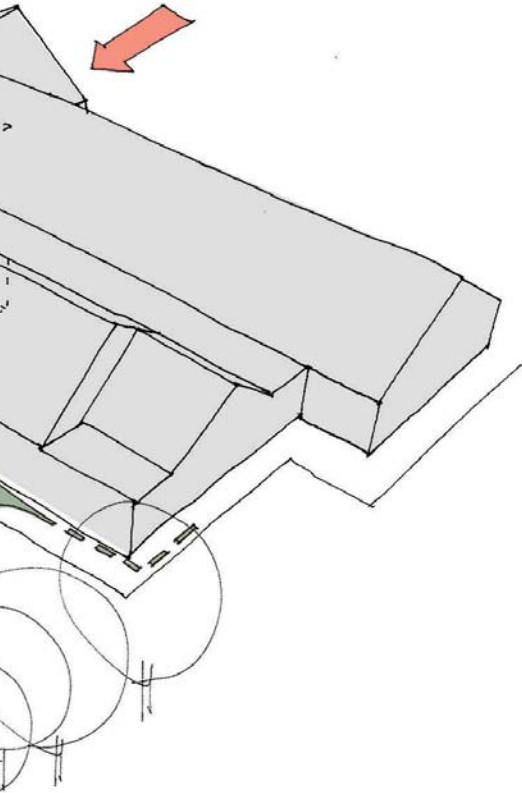
**- JIM NICHOLSON,
HEADTEACHER**



Situated beside woodland in the Peak District, the extension takes its cues from Mellor Primary's Forest School ethos and includes an impressive habitat wall centrepiece (see previous page)

Images courtesy of Sarah Wigglesworth Architects





The building's construction makes use of natural and reclaimed materials, including straw bale insulation, timber off-cuts and even car tyres

adaptable, considering they'd been put into a different learning space" Nicholson adds, "but we knew that this was going to be a short-term measure for a long-term gain. We just had to adapt."

A PEACEFUL SPACE

So how does the end result compare with the initial brief? "There were very few significant differences in the overall concept," says Nicholson. "One thing we couldn't afford to do was put glass on a canopied area outside the classroom, so polycarbonate was used instead. Some of the exterior fixtures and fittings ended up being plastic rather than aluminium, and we had to compromise slightly on the window frames, but we still had some very good windows put in. Spending time on sourcing suitable materials at an affordable price was something that our team did very effectively."

In terms of the extension's impact on the pupils, perhaps the largest is that it's enabled Mellor Primary to shift from having mixed age classes to single form entry. The school's curricular and support

possibilities have also broadened, thanks to the increased room.

As Nicholson notes, "Across the school we now have spaces for teaching music, small one-to-one interactions, counselling sessions and meetings with parents. The Y6 children have now got a beautiful learning space, which is incredibly calm. It's a very peaceful space to learn in. Our outcomes for children across the board this year were all above national for outcomes and progress. The children have a quality environment that's not just a breezeblock building."



Mellor Primary School

mellor.stockport.sch.uk

[@MellorPrimary](https://twitter.com/MellorPrimary)

Sarah Wigglesworth Architects

swarch.co.uk

[@sw_architects](https://twitter.com/sw_architects)

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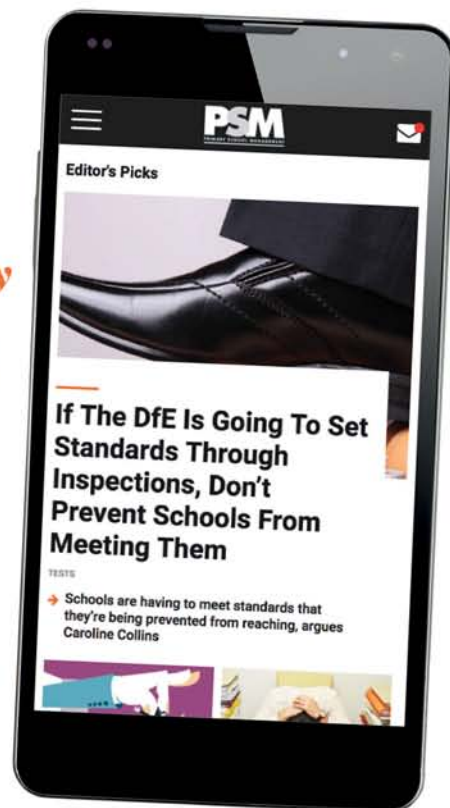
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Staff Management



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The right way for SBMs to approach their annual budgets
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How headteachers should handle unwanted media attention
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WHAT'S TRENDING

1

Sean Harford on 3-day inspections
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2

Revenue raising tactics
tinyurl.com/psmrevenue

3

Manage parents' parking habits
tinyurl.com/psmparking

4

Better recruitment drives
tinyurl.com/psmrecruitment

5

Tackling teacher workload
tinyurl.com/psmworkload

Can your buildings withstand a fire?

If you believe that current school building regulations adequately address both life safety and property concerns, you may be in for a rude awakening, says Jim Glockling...

Up until 2002, buildings were generally built prescriptively, with life safety often achieved using materials and products that held up well in fire situations, such as bricks and mortar. Post-2000, we saw the emergence of 'fire engineering' as a discipline; a necessary change to support the construction of buildings that any modern society needs. This change meant buildings could be constructed and engineered in many different ways, so long as the 'life safety

ambition' was preserved. You could summarise it as essentially 'Evacuation before collapse.'

Think about what that means. It took us from a place where life safety would be assured via good property protection, to a situation where life safety could be assured by other measures. It's possible now to use building materials that perform less well in fire, on the proviso that travel distances are adequate and notification systems good enough so that people of all physical abilities can get out in time.

A not atypical construction method is the use of structural insulated panels, which in their rawest forms can consist of 10 inches of polystyrene, with timber boarding either side and fire protection afforded by layers of plasterboard. That's very different to a brick wall.

Think like a business

In terms of life safety, buildings are designed to, and do, perform very well, regardless of what they're made from, yet we must also remember that schools are in the business of providing

education. If you specify a building simply in terms of form and function, you may well get one which is a beautiful, fantastic learning environment – but some construction materials and methods will be better than others. The government attempted to encourage the provision of sprinkler systems in schools, but being non-mandated, it has largely failed to gain traction and even then needs careful consideration against the building methods chosen.

Right now, if you don't ask for anything else beyond standard building regulations, your building will be 'safe', but it might not be as 'resilient' as it could be. The fire and rescue services have no responsibility whatsoever for the protection of property, so it's entirely down to individual businesses and owners to introduce measures protecting their business.

Current regulations also don't take account of all the challenges we see. For example, fire ingress – a fire starting outside the building – isn't currently addressed within our building regulations. At all. In school environments, arson can be a very real threat. The lighting, deliberately or accidentally, of wheelie bins at the curtilage is a significant fire challenge for any building, even ones fitted with sprinkler systems.

School leaders ultimately need to think longer term. Consider how likely it is that your building will survive an adverse event such as fire, if it can be kept operating, and if there's any way to avoid disrupting the education of those pupils who will require it.



Dr Jim Glockling is technical director of the Fire Protection Association



Liven up your DRAMA SPACE

Holly Barradell presents a 10-step guide to enhancing your hall facilities, in a way that'll help to improve your performing arts provision

1

STAGING ISN'T JUST FOR DRAMA

One of the requirements in the English Primary National Curriculum is for pupils to be "Competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate." There's no better way of doing this than by using a stage, along with a lectern and a sound system.

2

BLOCKS HAVE MANY USES

The same goes for the curriculum's requirement that pupils be able to 'perform' and 'listen to' music. Simple rostra blocks can be rearranged into different shapes and sizes to form simple staging that will capably support both. 'Block stages' can additionally be used as tiered seating for the children during assemblies.

3

OTHER SUBJECTS CAN HELP YOU

Consider asking the school's art club (or possibly a class following a particular unit of work in art) to paint designs on canvas that will edge the staging blocks. This will cover gaps and prevent audiences from being able to see under the stage. The designs can be changed as frequently as needed.

4

YOU CAN CUT THE CLUTTER

Staging that flattens down can be easily stored to one side of the hall or in a cupboard without taking up too much space (depending on how large your halls or cupboards are, of course). Staging blocks tend to be hollow, which lets you handily store smaller items underneath them, such as props and costumes.

5

SEATING DOESN'T HAVE TO MEAN CHAIRS

Once your staging is set up, you might be wondering what to do with your audience. Get creative – try using bean bags, benches and blocks, as well as chairs. Keeping things varied can be a nice way to differentiate and provide help for students with additional needs to sit more comfortably.

6

BUDGET LIGHTING = MORE LEARNING

You don't need to go to the expense of having lighting bars hung from the ceiling. Apart from anything else, this will often prevent students from accessing them and learning about them. Go for more cost effective boom bars or T-bars, which will let students learn how to rig lights, focus them and add colours and effects.

7

LEDS CAN HELP YOU SAVE COSTS

LED lighting might be costly to install, but it'll work out better for the school's utility bills in the long run. Adding multicoloured LED lighting can further save on the added expense of buying colour gels and gel frames, and help to deliver great sensory experiences and learning opportunities for your SEND pupils.

8

EXPERIMENT USING MODELS

Pupils can learn a lot about staging, lighting and direction with the aid of scale models. If you're confident enough (and have the time to spare), you can build your own. Otherwise, you can purchase model staging kits intended for schools that contain everything you'll need in one package, with prices starting at around £350.

9

PROJECT YOUR SCENE CHANGES

A simple freestanding tripod projection screen with a black border frame can be used on stage to create scenery and backdrops. By setting up a laptop with a PowerPoint and cycling through different slides, you can produce the effect of scene changes while providing a nice link to IT. It'll also be useful for presentations.

10

REWARD YOUR PUPILS' ABILITIES

Staging and LED lighting in place? Performances ready to go? Remember that the work your pupils put into performance design and preparation can be recognised from age 5 through Arts Award (artsaward.org.uk) – its 'Discover' and 'Explore' certification levels make for good additional rewards to any arts work happening in your school.



Holly Barradell is an Ofqual Drama Subject Expert, GCSE Drama examiner and specialist teacher of Drama from Years 1 to 11 at a MAT (Multi-Academy Trust) in Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

 @drama_holly





“BLOCKS MIGHT BE SIMPLE, BUT THERE’S LOTS YOU CAN DO WITH THEM”

HOLLY EXPLAINS MORE ABOUT THE DRAMA FACILITIES IN PLACE AT THE SKINNERS’ KENT ACADEMY & SKINNERS’ KENT PRIMARY SCHOOL – A MAT BASED IN WEST KENT – WHICH ARE COMPRISED OF A STRAIGHTFORWARD, YET VERSATILE PRIMARY HALL, AN OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATRE AND A DISTINCTIVE CIRCULAR (IN-THE-ROUND) STUDIO SPACE IDEALLY SUITED TO PUTTING ON PERFORMANCES AT THE SECONDARY ACADEMY...

I’m a secondary trained Drama teacher – we have a secondary Academy with sixth form and a primary school in a brand new building just down the road. As a specialist teacher, I visit the primary site each week and teach Drama to years 1 to 3, using a classroom for some theory work and do practical work in the hall.

CAREFUL POSITIONING

Our primary drama facilities include the basics – ‘stage blocks’ with adjustable legs, so that they can be positioned at different heights. I’m currently teaching a unit of work on “What makes for an effective still image?”, which covers facial expressions and body language, but also how someone’s positioned and whether they’re sitting, kneeling or standing. The blocks we have might be simple, but there’s lots you can do with them. They also enable me to demonstrate different types of staging, whether that be in the round, thrust, or an amphitheatre configuration.

MAKING USE OF A SHARED SPACE

The blocks are stored in the hall permanently, and used as staging for teachers when giving assemblies and for the choir to use when singing. Because they’re so light, they’re easy to move out of the way and against the walls when the hall is being used during lunch service, and back again afterwards. There’s good timetabling in place – I’m lucky in that when I use the hall for teaching drama, they don’t have to set up for lunch or a PE lesson. Aside from the blocks and a piano, it’s a very clear space, which is ideal for Key Stage 1 & 2 Drama.

THEATRE IN THE ROUND

The primary children occasionally visit our secondary Drama studio space [at The Skinners’ Kent Academy], which is quite unusual in that it’s a circular studio situated in the centre of the school, and a great space for performances. We’ve got a concertinaed partition wall which slides back and opens out into the Academy’s dining area, which can be used to seat an audience of up to 150 people, turning our studio space into the ‘Main House.’ The studio’s main lighting is ceiling mounted, and we also have T-bar lighting stands in either wing that the students are able to use to practise focusing and positioning lights.

LIGHTS UP

Give your next primary performance some extra pizzazz with these equipment and resource picks



Designed by experts in school storage, Grasnells’ STAGE is a high quality modular staging system that is light, robust, well finished and exceptionally easy to assemble. The cleverly engineered components will provide you with a sturdy form of staging that’s simple to put together, yet able to provide a strong platform for your performances, however you intend you use it.

grasnells.com



Supplied in a portable metal box, this scale model stage and performance set is intended to help teach pupils about theatre design, staging, lighting and positioning. The contents include 60 magnetic rostra blocks, four ‘actor’ manikins, a miniature working lighting rig and an upstage wall that can accommodate an iPad for displaying different backdrops.

theatre-inabox.com

Once you have your staging in place, you’ll need something to perform. Given the time of year, of interest might be *Christmas Counts – A Nativity You Can Count On* from Out of the Ark Music.



This 20-minute nativity musical consists of a script and eight songs, and comes supplied as a package containing a book, audio CD and annual performance licence.

outoftheark.co.uk

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Find out how explainer videos can give your lessons a lift

VideoScribe is the easiest and fastest way to create explainer videos on any subject. Built for blended learning and the modern classroom, this highly intuitive software makes teaching rewarding, fun and truly interactive. A powerful combination of spoken word, animated hand-drawn images, music, and sound effects boosts knowledge retention, inspires creativity, builds digital skills, teaches storytelling and prepares children for later education.

Whiteboard animation is a powerful medium for teachers looking for new ways to present subjects that engage and inspire. It's also a great tool for testing out the flipped learning technique, which you can do by setting homework to experiment with explainer videos on upcoming lesson topics. And its benefits have been proven by extensive research. Famed psychologist Dr Richard Wiseman found that information presented through explainer videos increased information retention by an average of 15%, compared to talking head videos.

Additionally, VideoScribe is a great tool for teaching SEN students. It's fun and absorbing and stimulates multiple senses. Students can create their own scribes as a creative way of learning and practising the curriculum. VideoScribe offers a range of pricing options for schools, including special licence packages and offers.



COOL PROJECTS

For older students, explainer videos nurture creative thinking about subjects while encouraging them to present a topic from their own unique perspective. Creating an explainer video to demonstrate their understanding will draw on multiple skills, including creative thinking, design and IT – all important for later education! Every subject tells a story.

Children of all ages can have fun making scribes and teachers can have fun watching them. Among our favourites is one from 8-year old Maisy on the topic of Britain, which she drew and narrated herself and can be viewed at tinyurl.com/vs-maisy. 14.4% of UK students have special educational needs. Explainer videos can provide children with the opportunity to communicate their knowledge in a way that better fits their learning style, compared with more traditional methods.

MEMORABLE MESSAGES

VideoScribe is also a great way of showcasing school activities to parents of current and prospective pupils. A quick explainer video of key dates for the year, or a summary of a school trip, can get your message across loud and clear. Much more effective than a note sent home from school that will most likely get lost at the bottom of a bag!

Explainer videos can be a useful homework tool. Conveying the key points of a lesson in the form of a quick, easily digested animated video will enable pupils to catch up and get to grips with the subject at home.

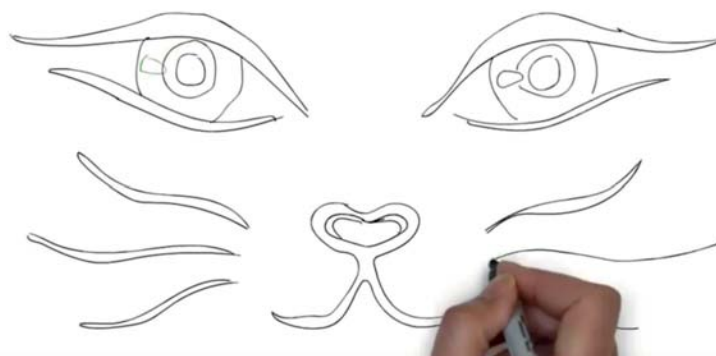
Furthermore, they're great for helping parents understand what their children are learning, thus enabling them to offer additional help with homework – something that can be vital at this stage of learning development.

LIMITLESS LESSON RESOURCES

Planning a term's worth of lessons is daunting, regardless of whether you've been in the profession for a few months or are a seasoned teaching professional. Finding new and exciting ways to present the curriculum is beneficial for both teachers and pupils, and with explainer videos this becomes easy.

Students can work through the Tudor family tree; watch the Bayeux Tapestry animate scene by scene; have a geography lesson that brings to life the rainforest's sights and sounds; or delve into the workings of the human body with an informative biology scribe.

Funding issues can sometimes hold teachers back from using new technologies, but by cutting down on printing and textbook costs, budgets can be freed up to invest in blended learning tools capable of teaching important digital skills, as well as providing resources for lessons.



For further details about VideoScribe contact 0117 332 0999, email ukedu@sparkol.com, visit videoscribe.co or follow @VideoScribeApp

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I wish the other children didn't make so much noise.

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Barefoot Computing Project is supporting primary teachers across the U.K with **free resources and workshops** in teaching computer science.

Technology is revolutionising our lives and it's advancing fast. Tech literacy is essential and **you play an instrumental role** in making sure that the next generation is fully equipped with the skills to become creators of tech, not just passive users.

A study from BT and Ipsos MORI shows that **78% of U.K. primary teachers believe tech literacy is as important as reading and writing**, and **97%** of them believe it's their responsibility to prepare children for a digital world. However, only **25%** agree they're equipped to do so.

The Barefoot Project is designed to help primary teachers become confident with the computing curriculum and concepts such as **logic**,

sequencing, abstraction and debugging – that underpin the digital world.

Teachers who have accessed Barefoot resources are more confident than their peers and supported by the **Department for Education**, Computing at School (CAS) and BT, all the resources are aligned to all U.K. curriculums.

So far, Barefoot has:

- **1.25 million** pupils reached
- **44,000** teachers supported
- **160,000** resource downloads

The first steps...

Simply register for free resources and lesson plans, or book a free workshop for your school, by visiting www.barefootcas.org.uk.

You will then be matched with a friendly, specially-trained Barefoot volunteer, who will run the workshop at a time to suit you and your teachers. The workshops are lively, hands-on and immersive, take 60 minutes and use real-world, practical examples.

What people say about us:

"We thoroughly enjoyed the Barefoot workshop and found it very useful, informative and helpful. It was great to be made aware of the many free Barefoot resources, as well as the clear opportunities to teach computing in a manageable and economical way."

Shane McQuillan Teacher at Pennington CofE School



Find out more: barefootcas.org.uk



BUYER? BEWARE!

When the time comes to sign that IT contract, make sure you're not paying more than you need to...

IT provision in primary school is notoriously difficult to get right. Most primaries can't afford in-house professional network expertise, so how do you negotiate the shark-infested waters of IT services? Before spending a penny, define your needs in the following areas:

VISION

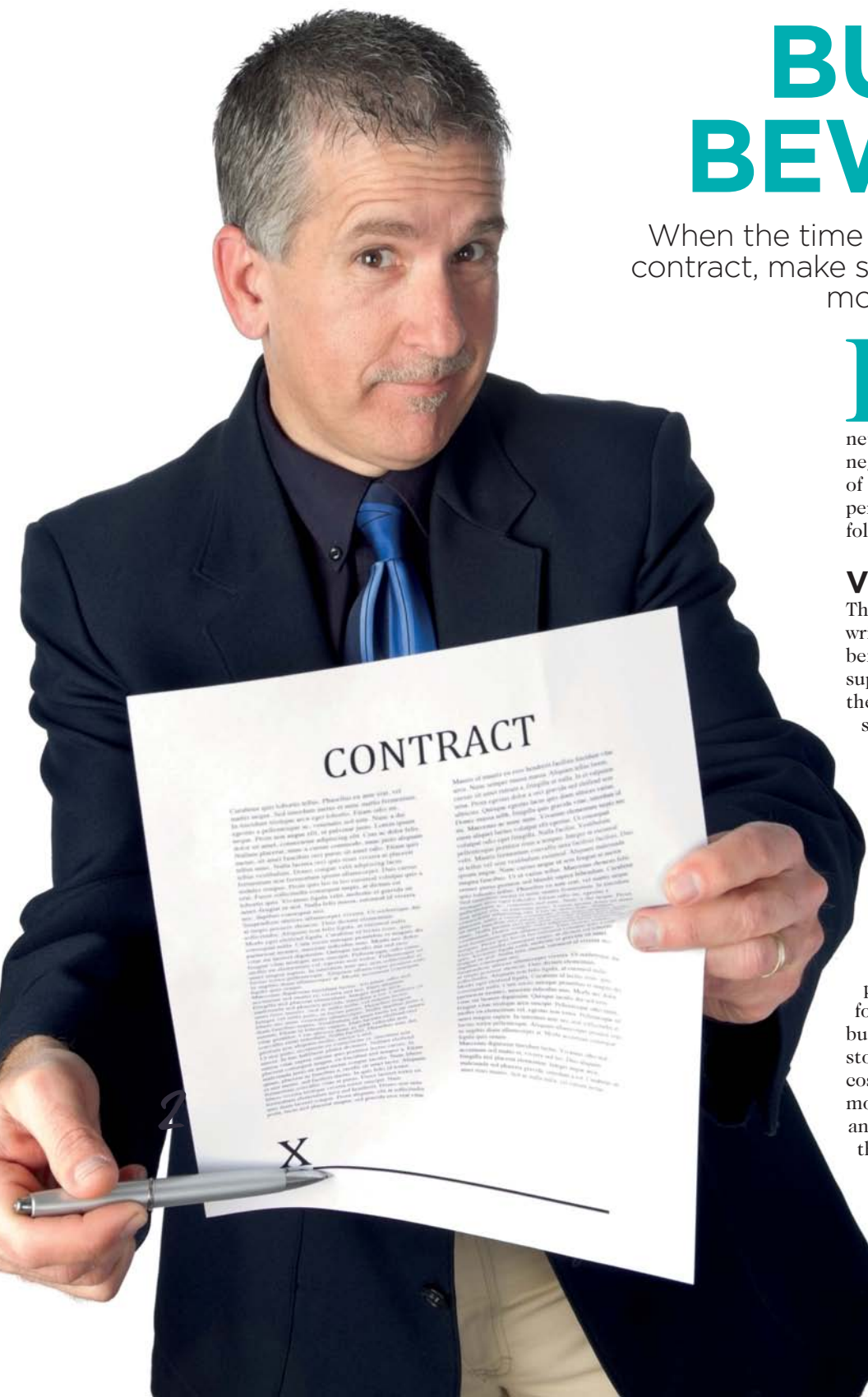
The most important thing is to write your own strategic IT vision before speaking to any external suppliers. It doesn't need to detail the technical how and where – it should just present a general vision of what you want e-learning and IT to look like in your school over the next five or so years. If in doubt, look to what the business world is doing and assume that education will generally follow about three to five years behind.

HARDWARE

Find out what hardware your potential suppliers will recommend for you. Remember that most businesses are moving to cloud storage, resulting in less need for costly on-site data storage. Tech moves quickly, so don't commit to anything for more than two to three years.

SAFEGUARDING

Be very clear about the need for absolute security in terms of data protection and safeguarding. Any content



filtering needs to be secure, flexible and context-driven – an off-the-shelf solution won't be enough. Check your liability for breaches, and familiarise yourself with the new general data protection regulation – the ICO has a useful guide at tinyurl.com/gdpr-ico.

COMPETITION

You're unlikely to be anyone's biggest customer, so find out what happens to you if the supplier gets a better contract or if they go bust. Don't rely on a single point of contact who knows your school really well – what happens if they leave? Beware also of any 'brand-specific' contracts.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ensure the supplier understands and can demonstrate the need to match your devices to your infrastructure. There's no point in buying 30 iPads if your WiFi and broadband can't cope with the extra traffic.

SUPPORT

When things go wrong, how quickly can they get to you? Check the service-level agreement for response times and penalties, and don't be sold any products reliant on highly specialist support. Always go for off-the-shelf, big brand solutions that can be supported by any IT provider; avoid situations where you'll be reliant on just one provider.

ADVICE

Ask a friendly expert to look over any proposals before you sign up – maybe a governor or parent who works in the industry. Google for online forums and user groups relating to the products you're considering.

BACKUP

Alternatively, you could do worse than talk to your local secondary about their ability to support you. They'll probably already be doing all the things you want to on a bigger scale, and could well be the most cost-effective and supportive option you'll find.

Hilary Goldsmith is director of finance at a secondary school in Brighton

[@sbm365](https://twitter.com/sbm365)

sbm365.wordpress.com



AVOID THESE 5 EDTECH ERRORS

If you want to get your school's EdTech recipe right, here are 5 classic pitfalls to steer away from...

THE RECIPE FOR A RELIABLE FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY SET UP USED TO BE SIMPLE – BUILD A COMPUTER SUITE, INSTALL IWBs IN THE CLASSROOMS, ADD A FEW LAPTOPS AND AWAY YOU GO. NOW, WITH SO MANY TECH-SAVVY PRIMARY PUPILS HAVING MOBILE DEVICES OF THEIR OWN, HOW SHOULD SCHOOLS RESPOND TO SUCH TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES WHILE STILL PROVIDING LEARNING THAT HELPS TODAY'S PUPILS BECOME TOMORROW'S SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL CITIZENS? YOU COULD START BY AVOIDING THE FOLLOWING...

1 PUTTING THE TECHNOLOGY FIRST
Never risk installing a 'solution' across the whole-school without trialling it first. Headteachers and senior leaders should begin by considering what's needed for good or outstanding learning. They should then develop a vision, and only then seek out the technology needed to deliver it. Once the solutions have been decided upon, devise a three-year technology strategy linked to your wider school improvement aims.

2 ASSUMING THE INFRASTRUCTURE WILL LOOK AFTER ITSELF
A number of EdTech projects fail due to poor infrastructure planning and insufficient technical support. If you're planning to increase the number of connected pupil devices in your school, you'll need to upgrade your WiFi system, while increasing the speed and capacity of your broadband connection. You should also ensure that any technical support you have in place will still provide a full and timely response.

3 BELIEVING THAT ONE SIZE FITS ALL
It's important to provide hardware and software that enables pupils to program and code using a range of different devices, not just one type or brand. Packages such as Code-a-Pillar and Blue-Bot and the kits available in Lego WeDo can be useful here.

4 PROCEEDING WITHOUT A TEST DRIVE
When rolling out new pupil devices, make sure your teachers get some hand-on time with them in advance. Familiarise staff with any new software or cloud-based systems you'll be using and give them time to adjust if they will entail a new way of working. Consider appointing an on-site technician, or assigning TAs, to support the integration of technology into your school's teaching and learning.

5 IGNORING SOURCES OF EXPERTISE
Teachers will often say, "The pupils know more about computers than we do" – so why not use this to your advantage? Consider setting up a group of pupil digital leaders who can help provide support and advice. We're aware of one school in which this was done, where the pupils asked for devices with a keyboard and mouse, after staff had assumed that they would rather pinch and swipe using tablet devices!

Dave Smith is computing and online safety adviser and business development lead at Havering Education Services; Dr David Whytey is the founder of Whytek Consulting

whytekconsulting.co.uk

haveringeducationservices.co.uk

Can Linux work in schools?

If your school has a shortage of pupil IT devices, and your ageing workstations and laptops are barely usable, there may be a cost effective solution...

Every teacher knows the feeling. You turn the classroom computer on, up blinks that 'updating' message and your heart sinks. You know that this could easily mean no access to the internet or shared server all morning.

Like many schools across the country, we have a number of laptops and desktop computers that take an age to turn on, and are often next to useless once they're 'ready'. We've taken the step of becoming a Google Apps school, and have gradually moved our resources from an on-site shared server to a Google-hosted 'cloud' space that everyone logs into with their own username. However, some of our Windows laptops were far too old and sluggish to access the new Google space comfortably – so I turned to Linux.

Linux is a free, open source operating system that comes in many different forms. You can have it permanently replace an older operating system already on your machine, or boot the machine into it temporarily by placing a specially configured CD or USB stick in the drive and turning on as normal.

If you wish, Linux can strip a computer down to a basic shared space that provides internet access, simple programs for tasks such as word processing and printing and little else. At the other end of the scale, Linux can function as a complete substitute for Windows, with all the features you'd expect from a modern operating system. You can buy brand new Linux laptops.

Take your pick

First, we had a staff discussion about what we wanted our older laptops to do. We decided that the essentials were internet access (as our Google logins could provide access to a suite of

programmes); the ability to print; access to learning software (for phonics, number play and other activities) and the possibility of using them as IWB display sources.

Linux is perfect for this, since there are so many different versions. Search online for 'educational Linux' and you'll find everything from the fully-featured Edubuntu (edubuntu.org), to 'bare bones' installations that offer fewer functions but run well on older hardware. A word of warning, however – with so many Linux versions out there, it's easy to get swamped in options. Remember also that some of the more feature-rich ones require the processing power of a modern machine anyway.

On our just-about-working laptops I installed a stripped-down version of Ubuntu (www.ubuntu.com) that lets us work with the internet, install printer drivers and run software for phonics games and the like.

Was it a successful experiment? I think so. On the whole, the children adapted quickly enough to Ubuntu's different interface and icons and could get online quickly, which meant they were able to access the apps and files inside their Google accounts. Of course, if your school doesn't use cloud computing you'll need to carefully consider how useful internet-only Linux machines will be – but for us, they were just what we needed!



Rebecca Stacey is the headteacher of Castle Carrock Primary School, Cumbria





TECH SUPPORT STARTS WITH LEADERS

How quickly could your school recover from an IT failure? Terry Freedman explains why that's a question that all SLTs should carefully consider...

Educational technology is regarded by many teachers as a utility, like electricity or plumbing. If everything's working fine, you probably give as much thought to firing up your computer and connecting to the school network as you do to switching on the lights as you enter the office.

But what happens when for some reason that technology doesn't work? That's where technical support comes in. As a school leader, you may think that the word 'technical' means this type of support has little to do with you directly – but you might be surprised.

WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES?

The role of your technical support person, or team, is to make it possible for

everyone in school to do what they need to do with the technology available. And it's up to the senior leadership team to decide what that means in practice.

For example, say a printer goes wrong. It has to be sent off for repair, which will take a week. Is that acceptable? If not, then what would be acceptable? Two days? A day? No time at all?

Let's say you decide that only no delay at all is acceptable. That's a management decision on your part, and it'll be up to your technical support to come up with ways of meeting that expectation. For instance, they might temporarily redirect your printing tasks to a different printer.

It's also up to the SLT to work with technical support in order to establish priorities. If this isn't addressed, technicians will tend to find themselves

doing the job requested by the last person who stopped them in the corridor, rather than the one that's most urgent. If an established protocol is in place, your technical support can be much more efficient.

WHO NEEDS TECHNICAL SUPPORT?

You might be tempted to think that with technology these days tending to be pretty good, and with so many teachers comfortable using it, technical support has become a luxury. But teachers aren't technicians and can't be expected to solve technical glitches. In fact, one could argue that even relatively minor issues, such as printer jams, represent a waste of time for



SYSTEM DIAGNOSTICS

- Ensure that your fault reporting system is easily accessible from any device and efficient – for example, by letting users enter details via a series of drop-down menus
- Avoid common errors by including a ‘tech tips’ section in your staff newsletter or on your website
- Set up a four-part system of technical support
- Ask for regular reports of how quickly issues are being resolved – this will keep external support providers on their toes, and give internal support a chance to show off their achievements

teachers, who could be marking or talking to children instead.

Fortunately however, there is a range of technical support solutions available, and not all of them are inordinately expensive.

The bespoke solution is to have a technician, or perhaps even a team, employed by the school and based on-site. The advantage of this arrangement is that they'll be immediately available if something goes wrong. When things are running smoothly, they can be looking at ways of making your technology setup easier to use, performing important but often overlooked maintenance tasks (such as running virus scans), and organising how-to classes for teachers.

Alternatively, you can sign up to a technical support service run by your LA or a private company. This works like insurance, in that you'll pay a regular subscription for support cover, but may never need to make a ‘claim’. When discussing terms, however, you could ask whether additional maintenance services, such as the aforementioned virus scanning, can be included. The main advantage of this sort of service is that if one person is off sick, there'll usually be a replacement.

A third option – albeit a potentially frustrating one – is to have a technician make weekly visits. On the plus side, you can be certain that someone will definitely be along, say, next Thursday. But if something goes wrong on a Friday, you'll have to wait almost a week for anything to be done about it.

If your school's computers are all connected to a WiFi-enabled network you could look into remote support, whereby a specialist will examine (and hopefully fix) the problem while working from a different location, as well as keep your system in good working order. Granted, they won't be able to resolve a printer jam – but again, there are solutions for that.

A FOUR-PART SYSTEM

TAs can be trained to carry out low-level physical maintenance tasks, such as paper jams. Another option could be to appoint a group of Digital Champions – pupils able to help out with issues like keeping printers supplied with paper, helping other pupils log on and so forth. You could reward their efforts with digital badges or similar rewards.

Whichever solution you use, however, someone will need to be in overall charge of technical support. They'll need to liaise with outside technical support and help prioritise the work, but more importantly, they'll need to set up a four-part system similar to the one outlined below:

STEP 1: RECORD THE ISSUE

Make it as convenient as possible for teachers to report a fault and for technical support to record it. Recording issues is crucial, because it enables patterns to emerge – if a particular piece of equipment keeps going wrong regardless of who's using it, that might suggest a deeper problem. This might get missed if issues are dealt with but no records are kept.

STEP 2: DEAL WITH THE ISSUE

The priority for teachers and pupils is to be able to carry on working, not to have the problem fixed there and then. If a printer suddenly stops working, the issue can be dealt with by swapping the printer in the classroom with a spare straight away.

STEP 3: FIX THE ISSUE

Staying with that example, swapping out the printer obviously won't address what's wrong with it. It might need repairing, or even replacing – but the key point is that to keep things running smoothly, you must discern what's more helpful between taking action now and addressing the fault more permanently.

STEP 4: LOOK FOR PATTERNS

It's easier to observe patterns if jobs are recorded in a spreadsheet. That way, you can use filtering to check issues in particular rooms with certain equipment, or even on specific days, at the click of a mouse.



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KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR NET CONNECTION

CARMEL GLASSBROOK LOOKS AT HOW SCHOOLS CAN HARNESS THE INTERNET'S POTENTIAL FOR LEARNING, WITHOUT EXPOSING THEIR PUPILS TO ITS DARKER SIDE...

Modern technology offers many positives and quality of life improvements – but when it comes to keeping young people safe, it can also present a range of issues. Without preventative measures in place, young people can readily access content that's highly inappropriate for their age, and use the powerful communication tools provided by social media for the purposes of online bullying.

The growing prevalence of new technologies has coincided with an increasing responsibility placed on schools for safeguarding young people. Following publication of the DfE's 2016 statutory guidance on safeguarding ('Keeping Children Safe in Education' – see tinyurl.com/dfe-safeguarding), all UK schools are required to provide an 'appropriate level of filtering and monitoring.'

This requirement to do more – often with lower budgets – makes it tempting to look for a technological solution that can protect your young people when they're online. There are many software providers who'll promise to do this for you, but while such tools are useful, they can't be seen as the only solution. Ofsted don't simply want schools to tick a box and say 'We have monitoring' – they want schools to be able to demonstrate and understand its impact.



FILTERING VERSUS MONITORING

Monitoring and filtering are often talked about together as if they're part of the same package, but in fact they do two very different (albeit complementary) things. Filtering is designed to restrict or control the content a user can access on the internet, and works by preventing predetermined words, phrases and URLs from being delivered to the user.

Some filtering providers may notify you if users on your network attempt to access filtered sites, which can be helpful, but it's possible that you may only get that information weeks later. And even when they arrive, those notifications will often provide relatively little in the way of context.

Monitoring works differently. Rather than blocking data, monitoring systems operate in the background, actively

looking out for pre-set words and phrases. Unlike filtering, monitoring solutions will log all user activity, not just what they're accessing via the internet. That means that whether someone's using Google or working on a Word document, the system will be monitoring what's going on and will report back if anything unusual appears.

However, a common problem for schools and other establishments is the sheer volume of data this type of software generates. It's not uncommon for an individual member of staff to be responsible for reviewing the data that comes in, but in some settings this can amount to a full-time job.

Most monitoring software is clever at picking words out that have been disguised within other words – but amazing as it is, it can also be somewhat irritating. Take 'Pearson', for example – that's the name of a major educational publisher and assessment service used in schools and colleges across the country, but it contains within it the word 'ARSON', which (understandably) is a word of interest.

If a class of 30 pupils were to use a Pearson-provided learning platform for one 60-minute lesson, the average





monitoring software might capture the same violation once or twice every minute. By the end of the lesson you could potentially have 3,600 irrelevant captures to sort through, and that's just one example of the issue. There are many others.

Given the data volumes involved, it's entirely possible that schools could be spending thousands of pounds on such software but not getting the full benefit from it, which could in turn lead to learners being left with inadequate safeguarding measures to support them.

SHARING THE LOAD

To help tackle this problem, you can enlist the services of an outside organisation to offer a managed or partially-managed service:

MANAGED SERVICES

A fully managed service will not only install the software, but also monitor your captures for you. That might sound tempting, but be aware that in exchange, many such organisations will retain the rights to said data and be able to dictate the level of access that schools have to it.

In practice, this can essentially reduce the role of monitoring to something closer to a trigger for incident response, when it has the potential to be so much more.

PARTIALLY MANAGED SERVICES

A partially managed service involves having a third party look at your data within specific parameters. The service can notify a school in the event of any serious captures, so that even if no staff were able to check the data on a given day the school will still be covered, only with the freedom to use and learn from the captured data.

Putting effective monitoring in place needn't mean spending thousands of pounds on software and hardware. For smaller settings, it can simply mean appointing a member of staff to physically keep an eye on what students are doing while they're connected to the network. For larger settings where that simply isn't feasible, a technical solution is more likely to provide the answer.

Ultimately, what works for one school may not work for another. The most important consideration when it comes to monitoring is to use the approach that works best for your setting.



WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU?

BEFORE MAKING THAT IMPORTANT AND POTENTIALLY EXPENSIVE DECISION AS TO WHAT MONITORING SYSTEM IS RIGHT FOR YOU, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- What's your budget?
- How many users need monitoring in your setting?
- How often are you dealing with safeguarding incidents?
- Are there any cultural sensitivities that need to be taken into account?
- How much in the way of resources can you allocate to it?
- Do you want to be able to access your data?



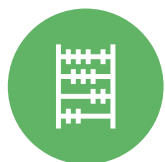
Carmel Glassbrook works for the Professionals Online Safety Helpline, which provides free online safety advice

to all professionals working with young people and is provided by South West Grid for Learning

If you have an online safety concern, the Professionals Online Safety Helpline can be contacted via 0344 381 4772 or emailed at helpline@saferinternet.org.uk

 @SWGfL_Official

 swgfl.org.uk



THE SMART *money*

National children's charity the Youth Sport Trust explains what the doubling of the Primary PE and Sport Premium funding means for you



Creating a sustainable improvement

Every primary school will have its Primary PE and Sport Premium funding doubled by government in this academic year. Guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) states that schools must use the funding to make "additional and sustainable" improvements to the quality of their PE, physical activity and school sport. The YST have set out some bold ambitions to improve children's experiences of PE and school sport for a generation.

30 active minutes, every child, every school day

One of the YST's goals is to create a transformation through this funding to support schools in achieving the government's ambition of 30 active minutes per day for every pupil. Using techniques such as active travel, active playgrounds and active classrooms can help achieve this ambition, and embed physical activity at the heart of the school day, outside of curriculum PE. How can we help schools to achieve this?

Practitioner resources

Active 30:30 (see below) is the YST's response, developed to help schools reduce sedentary behaviour and increase physical activity in children throughout the day. It also addresses how to influence the remaining 30 active minutes to be achieved through families, clubs and community groups. Made up of 10 sequential steps, our practitioner resources provide a range of guidance and practical applications for achieving 30 active minutes per day.

To find out more, call 01509 226 624, email solutions@youthsporttrust.org or visit www.youthsporttrust.org/active3030

YST ACTIVE 30:30

10 STEPS TO AN ACTIVE SCHOOL
 30 MINUTES, EVERY CHILD, EVERY SCHOOL DAY

Guiding schools to achieve the government ambition of 30 active minutes in school every day.

Benefits of Active 30:30:

- Increases physical activity outside of curriculum PE
- Influences remaining 30 minutes to be achieved by families, clubs and community groups
- Supports practitioners to create an active school
- Maximises impact of learning principles already established in school

For more information go to
www.youthsporttrust.org/active3030
 All prices exclude VAT

YST RESOURCES AND LEARNING

Includes:

- Practitioner guidance resource
- Action plan template
- Activity review wall chart
- Sample resource cards
- Engagement cube
- Timetable adaptation template
- Reward certificates
- Tips and guidance on how to share success and engage families

Resource pack
£99

Active 30:30 Champions athlete workshop
£900

YOUTH SPORT TRUST

Community Engagement

IS YOUR PUPILS' UNIFORM TOO EXPENSIVE?

Insisting on 'approved uniform suppliers' might seem like a sensible idea – but your parents may have good reasons for shopping around...

There are many practical benefits to uniform, but it's important to consider the impact it can have on families, particularly those from disadvantaged households. Not only do they have to buy school uniform, they must also purchase shoes, trainers, bags, stationery and so forth. The more complicated or costly the requirements, the more likely you are to end up with tensions.

While having one or two 'preferred suppliers' can help ensure that the children look smart and 'uniform', asking for branded items from a single outlet can place an unwelcome financial burden on parents. On the other hand, allowing parents to source their own items can result in disagreements over whether or not a particular item fits the bill.

The DfE has published non-statutory guidance on uniform that offers a useful starting point for decision making and further discussion – see tinyurl.com/dfc-uniforms. It states that, "No school uniform should be so expensive as to leave pupils or their families feeling unable to apply to, or attend, a school



of their choice, due to the cost of the uniform.” As such, it’s advisable for schools to observe some important points.

Consider the total cost of the uniform you’re asking parents to buy. If you insist on branded items, how does the cost of these compare to similar unbranded items purchased in a supermarket? Many supermarkets now sell very cheap ‘value’ uniform. If you allow unbranded uniform garments, such as plain polo tops, have a clear policy in place as to what these should look like. Consider sending parents a list of local stockists that will help them meet your requirements.

Shoes are often a point of conflict, so make sure your policy is clear and specific about exactly what is and isn’t allowed. Images of suitable footwear can be a helpful prompt.

Try looking into bulk buy offers that could make branded items cheaper. Can you agree a deal with a local supplier and pass the discount to parents buying directly from the school? At my preschool, we buy uniform items in bulk and sell them at cost price direct to families.

- Consider the practicalities for parents in purchasing uniform. If possible, ensure that there’s more than one local outlet which stocks your uniform so that there’s an element of price competition.
- Think about sizes – make sure your uniform works for both the smallest and the largest children.
- A number of schools now use pupil premium funding to buy sets of uniform for families who might otherwise struggle to afford it. This can be a great way of relieving a source of stress for parents and supporting attendance.

Sue Cowley is a parent, teacher educator and author of 26 books on teaching. She has helped to run her local preschool for 8 years.

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WIN PARENTS OVER

There’s an art to persuading parents to pick your school over others, at Bernadette John explains...

First impressions are hugely important. Get these wrong and parents won’t bother attending your open days. An unfriendly response to enquiries will be enough to put people off before they’ve even visited. Admin failures will sow doubts regarding your competence.

A website that lacks basic information about the head, catchment areas, special needs, open days and so on will leave a further poor impression. Make sure it’s up to date, and not displaying leavers’ destinations and school results from three years ago, and nine-month-old newsletters.

Choosing a school is an immense decision, and parents need to see that your school takes this seriously – which means the head taking a big part in the day. As one parent told us, “For group tours it’s worked best when the head has taken on the job – it’s good to meet the person running the show and gives a great first impression.”

The head must convey the ethos of the school and what makes you different. Parents have previously been left cold by tours, taken by receptionists or pupils on their own, which means they don’t get their questions answered.

Parents don’t want tours and open days to be too formal, but they do want to feel their child will be in safe hands. They will prefer an organised, structured day that affords a chance to see the school

operating as usual, and plenty of time to quiz key staff.

An unimpressed parent once told us, “One school let parents wander around as they pleased. Staff were dotted around to chat to, but they were cornered by a few so most people didn’t get to speak to anyone. It was chaos. Corridors and classrooms were blocked, and nobody knew where they were going.”

Parents like it when schools take an interest in their child, and when they address the child rather than the parent. Laying on activities for kids while parents have a Q&A session with the head and EY teacher is a winner.

Tidy up. Make the place presentable. General chaos and grubbiness will be a strike against you, and parents despise litter. Don’t make it too sterile, however – creative mess or muddy feet from outdoor activities is charming.

Along similar lines, put up pictures of trips and exciting extra-curricular events, and display pupils’ work on your walls, in exercise books and on computers – though be careful to not just display the star pupils’ work, which might suggest that the others never get a look in.

Bernadette John is director at The Good Schools Guide

 @goodschoolsuk
 goodschoolsguide.co.uk

Safeguarding help is at hand

Karen Squillino outlines the safeguarding assistance that schools can receive free of charge from the NSPCC

Research has shown that in the average primary school class, at least two children will have suffered from abuse or neglect. What's more worrying is that many children won't even recognise that what's happening to them is wrong, or know who to turn to for help.

Primary schools play an essential role in keeping our children safe. Not only are they in a strong position to identify signs of abuse and neglect, they can also provide a secure space in which to teach children about the importance of staying safe, and if necessary, speaking out.

Due to budgetary pressures, however, it can be tough for primary schools to find the resources and expertise needed to teach children about the sensitive

topic of abuse and neglect. That's one of the many reasons why the NSPCC has created a programme for schools, 'Speak Out, Stay Safe', which delivers safeguarding messages to primary-aged children through interactive assemblies and workshops.

Last year the NSPCC Schools Service visited more than 7,800 primary schools and spoke with over 1.6 million children. Delivered by specially-trained staff and volunteers, the programme helps children understand the different forms of child abuse, such as neglect, bullying and physical and sexual abuse, encouraging them to speak to a trusted adult or Childline about any worries they may have.

As a direct consequence of the 'Speak Out, Stay Safe' programme, children

have come forward to report abuse and some of those disclosures have resulted in perpetrators being convicted and imprisoned.

It's our ambition to reach each primary school every three years, so that children can hear key safeguarding messages at least twice throughout their primary years. We're endeavouring to both work with new schools and revisit schools that have previously had the programme delivered. The NSPCC delivers 'Speak Out, Stay Safe' completely free of charge.

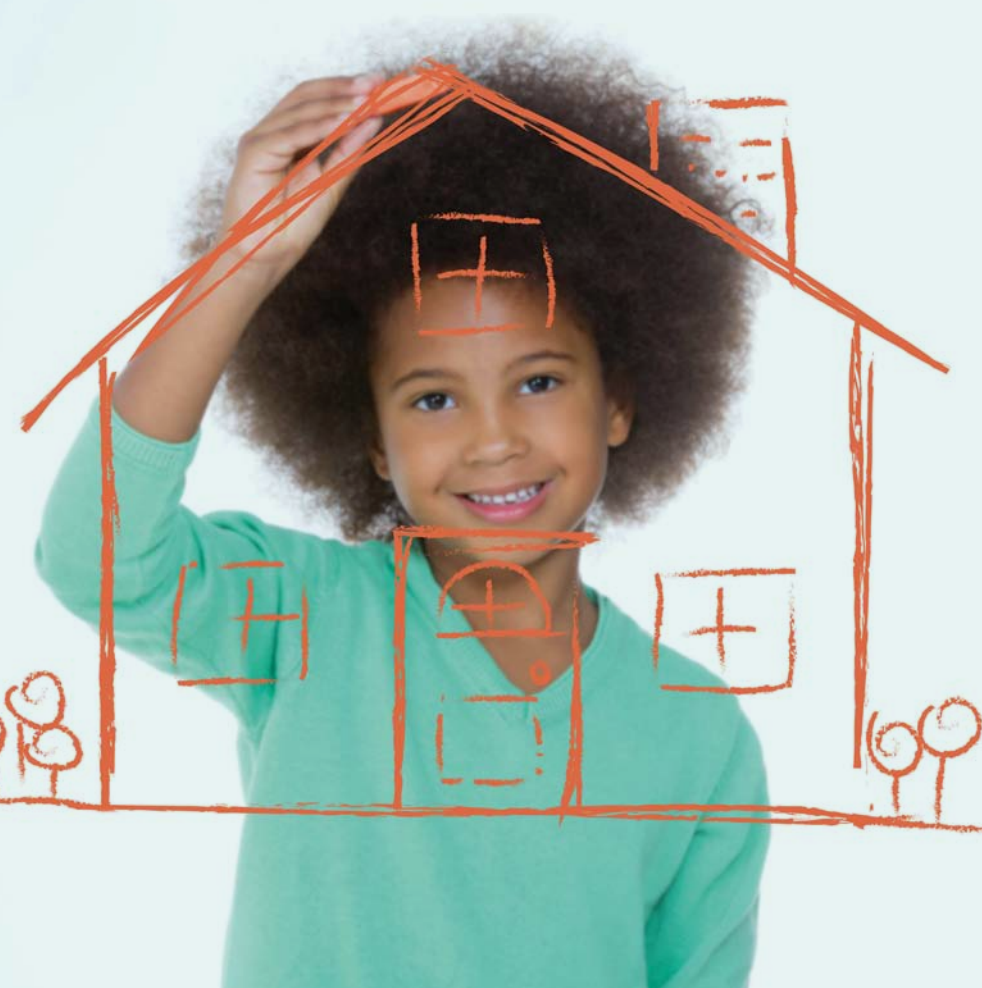
The programme itself can assist schools with meeting their statutory safeguarding requirements, and consists of an assembly presentation for children aged 5 to 11, followed by a one-hour classroom workshop for years 5 and 6 (P6 and 7 in Northern Ireland and Scotland). In Wales, it can be presented bilingually.

This work further provides us with a valuable opportunity to speak to headteachers and business leaders about the NSPCC's wider efforts to ensure that schools are the safest possible environment for children. We offer a range of safeguarding resources, including lesson plans about staying safe online and an online safeguarding self-assessment tool, along with face-to-face and online training.

For parents, there are activity packs that will help them talk to their children about the underwear rule (see tinyurl.com/nspcc-ur), as well as our Net Aware guide, which helps adults better understand the risks of the popular games, apps and social media sites their children engage with when online.

You can see the 'Speak Out, Stay Safe' programme in action by watching our new video at tinyurl.com/so-ss-vid. For more information and to sign up, visit nspcc.org.uk/speakout

Karen Squillino is head of schools service at the NSPCC



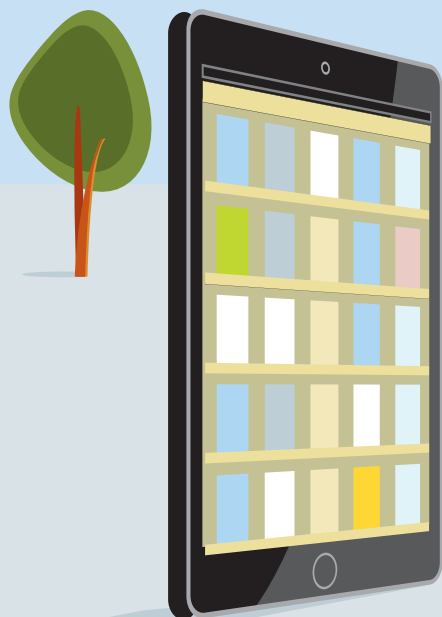
HOW TO RUN YOUR SCHOOL'S SOCIAL MEDIA

A school's social media presence can be engaging, informative and fun – but only with some careful work going on behind the scenes...



There are now over 2.8 billion people around the world with a Facebook account, sharing 3.3 million posts each minute. In that same minute, 450,000 tweets are being posted and 66,000 pictures are being uploaded to Instagram. Every large company, charity and politician is using social media to engage their communities – and people are increasingly relying on it as their main source of news and advice.

Given this background, it's vital that all schools consider the benefits and risks of social media, and take reasonable steps to ensure that they're using the right platforms in the right way to help their school meet its overall objectives.



RESEARCH COMES FIRST

The first thing to do before setting up your accounts is to carry out research among your current and future parents and guardians. What social media platforms do they use and how do they use them? Surveys, parent councils and searching for your school on major social media platforms are the best ways of finding out.

Most primary schools will likely find that parents are using Facebook, and increasingly Instagram and Twitter to share opinions, ask questions and find people with similar interests, which are all real opportunities for your school. They'll also be using those services to raise complaints and concerns, which is a potential threat that you'll need to monitor.

Once you've decided which platform(s) you need to use, there are several key questions to answer – how do you set up the accounts, who will look after those accounts, how often (and with what) should you update them, who will monitor their use and reply to comments, and how will you safeguard your students and staff throughout the process?

HOW DO YOU SET UP ACCOUNTS?

The process is different for each social media platform, but usually very simple. You'll typically be asked to supply an email address or mobile phone number as your main contact, and then create a profile page populated with pictures and your other contact details. Make sure that you're using the school's contact details at every stage, so that you can maintain control when staff leave and easily monitor comments.

Registering on Facebook involves a further step of creating a specific school

page – click the triangle at the far right of the homepage, select 'create pages' and then set up a 'company, organisation or institute'. This allows you to set controls for moderating comments. I'd recommend also setting up a 'message button', so that people can ask you questions directly.

WHO WILL LOOK AFTER YOUR ACCOUNTS?

There are three skills needed here. Your social media manager needs the technical ability to manage the process, the communication skills to properly engage with others where needed and time to regularly monitor what's happening online.

The last of these makes it difficult for a teacher to take on the role, so in most primary schools it's best to find and train someone in your admin team. Multi Academy Trusts have been known to hire social media managers to run several schools accounts – if that applies to you, it's important to keep the individuals concerned updated with accurate key information.

WHEN AND HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU POST UPDATES?

Different social media platforms lend themselves to different update patterns. Facebook should be updated between once a day or once a week, depending on the size of your school and the amount of information you have to share. Twitter needs daily updates, or else your posts will be lost among the large volume of tweets that many people see every day. Tools such as Buffer (buffer.com) let you schedule social media updates in advance, so you can post them at the best time for people to read them. For parents, the times around their daily drop-offs and pick-ups work well.



WHAT SHOULD YOU SHARE?

Aim to post a mix of useful information (such as reminders for parents about upcoming INSET days and trips) and good news about your school. Social media platforms have become increasingly photo- and video-friendly over time, and can obviously be updated from anywhere, so it might be worth investing in a school smartphone that can

be taken out and about. Consider training a couple of members of staff on using it to take pictures or videos and upload images. Looking to the future, live-streaming of events online is becoming ever more easy through additions to existing platforms, such as Facebook Live (live.fb.com) and dedicated services, such as Periscope (periscope.tv). Imagine being able to share your assemblies and school celebrations with all your parents in real time!

HOW CAN YOU MONITOR WHAT'S BEING SAID ABOUT YOU ONLINE?

Social media sites need monitoring at least daily, so that you can help with enquiries and identify any potential areas of unhappiness! There are some excellent online tools at a range of price points that will allow you to do this, including Hootsuite, SocialMention and Tweetdeck, or you can simply log into your accounts and look for 'mentions'.

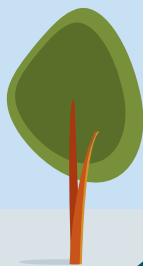
HOW SHOULD YOU RESPOND TO COMMENTS ONLINE?

Comments can generally be classified as positive, negative and neutral (the latter usually questions). Thank people for positive comments and make sure to record them for potential use in your school's marketing messages. Answer neutral questions as accurately as possible – if you're not sure what to say, ask around internally.

If any negative comments are posted, you'll need to address the issue quickly. If the post is abusive, remove it from your page if you can and report it to the social media platform straight away. If it's a genuine complaint, try to engage with the person posting face-to-face as soon as possible. As part of the discussion, ask them to remove their post.


HOW WILL YOU SAFEGUARD EVERYONE INVOLVED?

You need to make sure that your staff and students are protected at all times. That means following school policies on identifying students, and reminding parents not to 'tag' pictures with student names or use abusive language. Staff need to be aware of policies around contacting students on social media, and ensure that all posts be reviewed by senior management on a regular basis.



Simon Hepburn is the founder of Marketing Advice for Schools

 @Mktadvice4schls

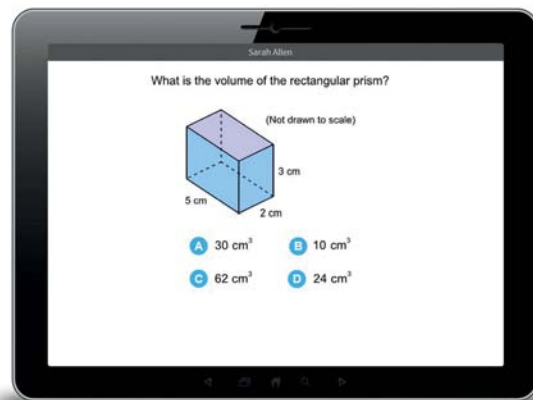
 marketingadviceforschools.com



Resources UPDATE

ROMY SHORT | DIRECTOR OF ASSESSMENT,
RENAISSANCE

Here's how to predict SATs results correctly 89% of the time...



Following the changes made to SATs in 2016, it's become hard to know what to expect when it comes to national testing. With the DfE asserting that results are no longer comparable to those of previous years, and given a dramatic shift in pass rates for the revised tests, how can teachers know what to aim for?

At Renaissance, we have provided Star Reading and Star Maths – computer-adaptive tests measuring attainment and progress – in the UK since 1999. Star is designed to be administered in around 20 minutes, as often as needed throughout the year. It comprises standardised computer adaptive tests, in that the questions alter based on children's responses, with the results available immediately.

Teachers can save on marking time and the students are accurately placed from a test that's personalised to their ability. Many of our customers have told us that they found Star useful when preparing for SATs, and that children who had performed well in Star throughout the year generally succeeded in their SATs too. In light of the changes that have now taken place in national assessment, we set out to find just how strong the relationship between Star and SATs actually is.

ESTABLISHING A CORRELATION

We contacted the DfE and submitted our proposal to compare children's Star outcomes with their SATs scores. They then administered a secure data match, with which we were able to examine the results of more than 12,000 children side-by-side.

Generally speaking, a correlation of 0.7 suggests a strong relationship between two score scales. We were therefore pleased to find that Star had achieved correlations beyond that for every SATs subject, as shown here.

SUBJECT	Correlation
Reading and Star Reading	0.77
Maths and Star Maths	0.84
SPaG and Star Reading	0.71



Having established a strong correlation, we then examined in further depth how we could guide our customers to predict their children's SATs performance.

IDENTIFYING PREDICTION ACCURACY

Our next step was to identify a cut-off score, above which a pupil would be predicted as more likely to pass than to fail. When applied to the children involved in the study, the correct outcome was predicted with the following levels of accuracy:

SUBJECT	Prediction accuracy
Reading	79%
Maths	89%
SPaG	82%

The full report into the study's findings contains details of the specific Star cut-off scores used, alongside scores relating to higher probabilities of passing (60%, 70% and so on). We provide these scores so that teachers can make the best decisions possible for their classes, and to ensure that their pupils are on track to succeed, while any need for additional guidance is flagged as early as possible.

INSTANT INFORMATION

Star Assessments offers a comprehensive system of reporting, enabling staff to examine progress and attainment at a school, class or individual level. Reports can be filtered by student characteristics, such as Pupil Premium eligibility, SEN and EAL, and relevant information can be quickly accessed and displayed at parent evenings and Ofsted inspections.

As an assessment solution, Star provides accurate, reliable insight to assure teachers that children are prepared not only for SATs, but for the rest of their school careers.

To download a copy of the full report detailing the study's findings, and to find out more about Star Assessments, visit renlearn.co.uk/KS2-report or contact 020 7184 4040

When should you make a HOUSE CALL?

Daniel Jarrett looks at what ought to happen when concerns over a pupil's welfare prompt a visit to their home...

There are myriad reasons that could warrant the need for a home visit by school representatives and practitioners, and every school will respond to such concerns differently. There will usually be professionals with responsibility for different areas, such as an attendance lead, a pastoral lead or family support worker. Depending on the situation, conversations will need to be had as to which member of staff is most suited to undertake a particular home visit. Sometimes it might be a member of staff who's had a previous working relationship with the family in question.

Some practitioners might arrange a series of home visits with families. One example might be to ensure that children are ready in the mornings and perhaps even walk them to school, thus establishing a routine that the family may later be able to take on themselves.

There needs to be a thorough awareness of the possible risks when undertaking a home visit. These might include inaccessible entrances; any hazards associated with the property; pets that could be dangerous or particular relatives and individuals known to frequent the property. Anything that could pose a risk to a practitioner completing a home visit needs to be discussed formally, noted in writing and checked ahead of time.

This information can be sourced from existing school records, other professionals who have previously

worked with the family, or the telephone call that should be made to the family in advance, notifying them of the date and time of the home visit.

INITIAL VISITS

A professional entering a property for the first time should never do so on their own – it's important that there be at least two

professionals present to assess the risk and support each other in the event of any incidents. It's also worth noting that if there are any dangers associated with the property, it's best that the conversation be conducted on the doorstep unless there's an absolute need to enter.

Thankfully we're not aware of any home visits that have gone wrong or given rise to a major issue of concern. On occasion, some practitioners have stated being uncomfortable with undertaking a home visit due to the risks involved, and instead arranged to meet families in school or passed the matter on to the police.

From my experience as a former practitioner and now Safeguarding Manager, I've always been impressed by the willingness of schools to undertake joint home visits. It's just a case of ensuring that the potential risks are reduced as much as possible, and that appropriate (and regularly updated) policies be put in place to ensure that practitioners undertaking home visits are effectively supported.

The majority of schools will have a lone working policy of some kind; if not, that's something they can look into.



**Daniel Jarrett is
Safeguarding
Manager at School
Home Support**

@shsorguk

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COMMON REASONS FOR HOME VISITS

1

Persistent lateness

If a child's lack of punctuality in the mornings indicates issues with the family's daily routine



2

Low attendance

Prolonged absences of three to five days with no contact from parents may require a police referral



3

Lack of engagement

Persistent failure by the child's family to attend parents' evenings or other school meetings



4

Visible signs of distress

If a child's outward appearance raises concerns regarding ill health, neglect or abuse

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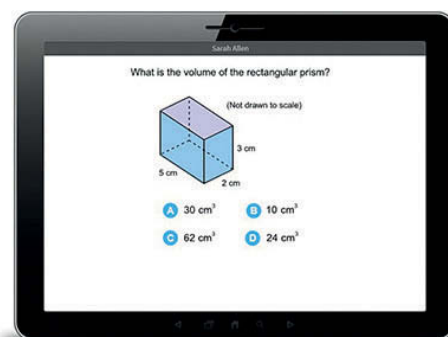
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Legal & HR



WELLNESS IS AN **SBM** **ISSUE**

When it comes to supporting staff wellbeing, SBMs can have an important part to play...

Have you ever seen those whimsically illustrated inspirational quotes come up on your social media feed? 'You can't pour from an empty cup', that sort of thing? Well, like them or loathe them, there is something in them. You need to take care of yourself first.

"I don't have time for that," you might say, "I'm far too busy." That's hardly surprising, given that school business managers are susceptible to overwork. No wonder a 2016 NASBM report described the job as 'boundaryless' – it's easy to see how taking care of yourself can drop way down your list of priorities.

Working more hours, while a quick fix, isn't a long term solution. Sustained overwork can have potentially disastrous consequences for your health and your ability to perform your job well. Give yourself a break. Speak up if you're becoming overloaded. Identify those tasks that can be delegated, outsourced, or even not done at all, and come up with a plan to tackle them.

Once you've started to tame that pile of work, you'll have the chance to glance up from it now and again to see how people *are* doing, not just *what* they're doing. This isn't just about being nice to people (although of course that's important) – it's crucial for protecting the wellbeing of the school's staff.

Staff are a significant investment for any school, typically over 70% of the budget. Consider the time, effort and resources that go into recruiting a member of staff; the cost of appointing a teacher often amounts to thousands of pounds. Staff absence entails a direct cost, be it the fee to book supply or the time spent juggling cover. Looking after them is clearly a no-brainer, then – but how should you go about doing it? Here are some suggestions:

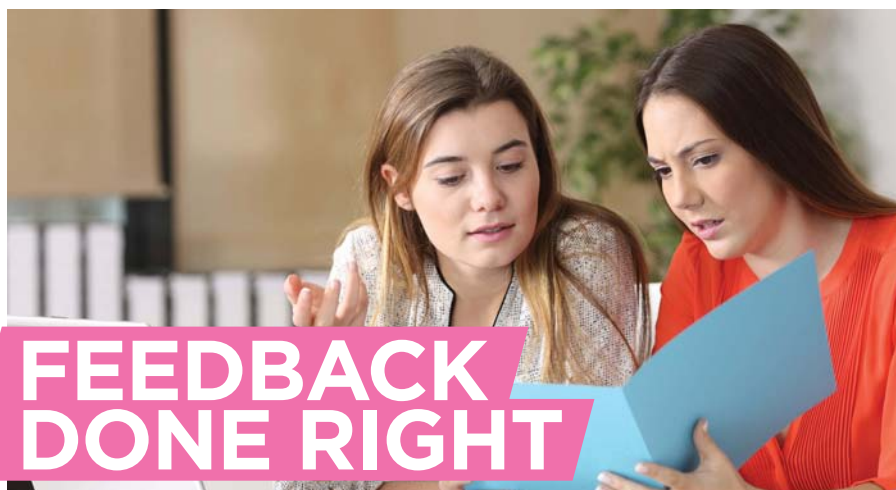
- Take time to talk to people, and not just about work. Get into the staffroom and have a cup of tea – it can be a powerful way to find out what's really going on and build positive relationships.
- Ensure staff at all stages are supported, starting with a robust and supportive induction process. Even your most experienced and senior staff will need support, so consider how you can put that in place.
- Work with your SLT to ensure workload implications are considered in their decision-making. Actively search for ways in which staff workloads can be managed better. For example, could your email communications be organised more effectively?

The question here isn't 'Can I afford the time to look after myself?', but 'How can I afford not to?' A burnt-out or snowed-under SBM is no use to anyone. Remember you're a person first and an employee second. So go on – fill your cup.

Sam Collins is the founder of Schoolwell – an online directory of wellbeing resources for schools

 @samschoolstuff

 schoolwell.co.uk



How to evaluate the performance of your teachers in a challenging, yet constructive way? Focus Education offers a few suggestions...

Providing your staff with high quality feedback is essential if you're to meet the needs of pupils and parents, achieve good Ofsted results and drive school improvement. The right kind of feedback can help make teachers more effective, improve best practice and ultimately improve learning.

According to research carried out by Helen Timperley at the University of Auckland, the way teachers develop is similar to how students learn, and can have a significant impact on how well students perform. Teachers are most likely to respond positively to feedback that's clear, specific and focused on improving student outcomes, but which also includes challenging goals.

Your feedback should further encourage teachers to be independent learners and ideally be delivered in an environment that teachers find trusting and supportive. If your feedback policies are in need of improving, it's worth considering the following four areas:

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Ask what has gone well, be positive and link back to learning goals. Ask teachers what they can improve, but be realistic in the goals you set. Be constructive and practical – always prompt teachers to consider the way forward.

BEWARE OF THE PITFALLS

Be careful when using different forms of teacher assessment, be they lesson observations, student ratings or senior leadership inspections, or based on analysis of lesson plans and assignments. These methods all have their uses, but can give rise to problems too. They will only prove to be useful tools if carried out according to an agreed protocol, in full knowledge of what inferences they can

and cannot support. Also be aware that they can be subject to bias and inaccuracies.

USE A VARIETY OF METHODS

If you want to effectively assess a teacher, you should obtain evidence via a range of different methods and evaluate them against each other. The volume of data this will produce might seem daunting, but it will help negate the aforementioned pitfalls that can arise when certain feedback methods are used in isolation.

DEVISE A SCHOOL SUPPORT SYSTEM

When analysing different assessment methods, it's important to take into account 'political' factors such as trust, authority, power, who controls the information obtained and what impact these are likely to have on your assessments. A robust internal school support system will help teachers respond positively to the challenge of improvement.

In essence, feedback and evaluation is an important leadership task. It contributes to school improvement by providing an accurate assessment of how well both the school and individual teachers are performing. It leads to the identification of improvement priorities and to evidence-based school improvement planning, which results in clear benefits for pupils.

Focus Education is a family-run company, providing educational advice, support and consultancy to primary schools and academies

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 focus-education.co.uk

It's time for teacher training to include apprenticeships

Three-year teacher apprenticeships should be welcomed, says Emma Hollis – but the devil's in the detail...

Justine Greening's recent announcement of plans for a new teaching-apprenticeship route to QTS marks a major shift in ministerial thinking. The Education Secretary wants these apprenticeships to be seen as equivalent to university degrees, and envisages them working as a route into teaching, even for those who have never set foot in a higher education institution.

That teaching apprenticeships will have parity of esteem alongside graduate routes has divided the profession since the announcement was made. My view is that an undergraduate apprenticeship, where trainees first obtain a degree (accredited by an established SCITT or HEI working in partnership with schools) and go on to achieve QTS is the best option. There are examples of this working already, with many small-scale informal schemes in place which lead to part-time undergraduate degree qualifications and progression to School Direct. Generally, however, we need to make the teacher training system less complex – not create additional routes that fail to solve our problems around recruitment and retention.

There are some issues to work through. It's well known that school leaders are concerned about the cost of the apprenticeship levy. Since April, schools with large wage bills have paid a levy that they can then claim back to cover the cost of training new apprentices. Those with more than 250 employees have to hire a certain number of apprentices every year under new public sector apprenticeship targets. For smaller organisations, the message that 2.3% of employees must be apprentices doesn't work so well and their appetite for using the levy for teachers (whose salaries cost more than other types of apprentice) isn't as strong.

There's much work to be done in ironing out the detail of what the teaching-apprenticeship route to QTS will look like. The DfE has been clear that teachers require teaching knowledge that's grounded in pedagogy and takes in the curriculum. Yet we also know that we need to grow the talent pool – older people, career changers, mature support staff who are keen to develop. A three-year undergraduate teacher training route that involves apprenticeships and partnerships

between schools, SCITTs and HEIs is one model that could work.

Under this model, year one would cover school-based practice, focusing on pedagogy and relationship-building, running alongside an academically rigorous programme of study investigating the knowledge required to teach the apprentice's chosen subject(s). In year two, time would be set aside for academic study with a focus on reflection. In year three, their teaching responsibilities will increase and their academic focus will shift to a research area that either interests them or meets a need within their school.

This layered approach would mean that they'll have a clearer sense of what interests them and the type of teacher they are, or would like to become. It would also mean that NQTs will be better equipped for life as a teacher and give schools what they need from staff, improving retention.

However, there's a bigger job to be done in changing perceptions that apprenticeships somehow 'dumb down' the profession. We need to actively promote examples of where apprenticeships have worked in other professions to support recruitment and retention. For their part, schools need to better understand the financial

benefit of apprenticeships and the cost-savings of 'growing your own'.

Emma Hollis is executive director of the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers

 @nasbtt

 nasbtt.org.uk





The inside story

JAMES DE BASS | EDUCATE.CO.UK

Educate's CEO looks back on how a business that started out supplying a wide array of school support services became the provider of one of the leading teacher performance management and school improvement solutions



How was Educate first founded?

Educate was founded as a result of listening to friends working in education describing frustrations with their work-life balance and the inefficiencies within their schools. We set about looking for solutions from business that could be applied to education to help alleviate those frustrations.

What was the company's initial vision, and to what extent has it changed?

It was to help headteachers manage their schools more efficiently and effectively, by providing them with expert support, training and systems to improve on their current practice.

We wanted to improve three aspects in particular:

- Outcomes – how can we help directly or indirectly improve KPIs?
- Time – how can we help improve internal processes within schools to free up time?
- Money – how can we lower schools' costs?

We knew that we could improve the quality of teaching through effective staff performance management systems, and we also knew that we could save schools money through better procurement procedures. Following the introduction of performance related pay, we went on to train many thousands of headteachers on how to implement the changes and provided them with policies and templates. In the area of procurement, we've successfully saved schools and school groups considerable amounts of money through joint procurement initiatives.

In between we've made forays into all sorts of other interesting areas, which have included commissioning four new charitable schools in Zambia; getting into Initial Teacher Training; project managing the set up of two University Technical Colleges and carrying out recruitment work for clients.

However, we've since returned to our roots and now focus solely on helping schools get the best from their people through our online management systems.

What was Educate's first major breakthrough or watershed moment?

Switching from paper-based templates for performance management and creating an online system was a strategic turning point for us, followed soon after by our decision to focus on this specific area of expertise, rather than trying to be a full service offering.

What's been the toughest challenge that Educate's faced to date?

Our toughest challenge was taking the decision to withdraw from the procurement business. Demand for the service wasn't high enough, and the cost of delivering it on a small scale wasn't sustainable.

What can you tell us about the company's upcoming plans?

There are two areas I'm very excited about – one is our foray into China where we're working alongside the Ministry of Education to introduce Standards Tracker to government schools in China. I will be going over in November, together with one of our headteacher clients, to present at their national conference in Beijing.

The second is a new planning and reporting tool. It's a simple dashboard for reporting on school progress for governors, which at the same time has all the information needed for support and challenge in one place and online. We're currently rolling it out to a group of over 400 schools and will be launching it to other schools towards the end of this year.



educate Educate School Services | 0203 411 1080 | info@educate.co.uk

2010

Founded; educators and business people share expertise to create a services company

2012

Acquired Head Support Ltd. and joined forces with Nigel Middleton

2013

Launched Standards Tracker – an online version of the paper-based AESOPP audit

2016

Signed Memorandum of Understanding with the Chinese National Institute of Education Sciences

MAKE THE MOST OF LUNCHTIMES

Instead of seeing noon as just about food and playtime, why not use it as a learning opportunity?



WHAT I DO



PAUL
AAGAARD IS
A DIRECTOR
AT RECIPE
FOR CHANGE

Around 2005, I was commissioned by the NHS in East Sussex to run a Food in Schools programme and promote school meals. I realised very quickly that talking to children about healthy food was a complete waste of time if they went into a dining room that was noisy and rushed, where their mates didn't wait for them to finish and where the supervisors were grumpy. I then spent the next 10 years devising and refining a consultation

programme around getting lunchtimes right.

A tiny part of lunchtime supervisors' job should be to monitor hygiene. The major part of their job ought to be to teach what I call the 'social curriculum' - to sit with children, role model good manners and use of cutlery. Yes, there's some cleaning, policing and nursing involved - but their main emphasis should be on teaching, counselling and caring.

34.2%

OF YEAR 6 CHILDREN IN ENGLAND ARE EITHER OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE.

Source: The National Child Measurement Programme, England - 2016/17 school year; published by NHS Digital

£3.4k

A SCHOOL MIDDAY WORKER'S AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARY

Source: 2016 survey carried out in England by UNISON



Have midday supervisors share their views of your lunchtime provision with senior staff; children should know that any behaviour management on their part will be supported by school staff as part of a clear and consistent lunchtime behaviour policy

A recent review of food culture in English schools undertaken by the Jamie Oliver Food Foundation Schools and several partners recommended that schools be made healthy food zones, extra support be given to the school workforce and that food education qualifications be improved. See tinyurl.com/jo-food-review for more details

RECIPE FOR CHANGE

Recipe for Change was formed by a group of social entrepreneurs

possessing experience in public health with the aim of improving school lunchtimes. It sees socialising at mealtimes as an important way for young people to make friends, build their communication skills and develop good table manners. Find out more at recipeforchange.co.uk

"It was a feeding trough"

We spend hours in the classroom putting in place rules and expectations so that children know exactly what to do. It used to be that at 12pm, we would open the doors, say 'Go!' and not take them in again until 1pm - and they came back feral. Something had to change.

Paul came to our school and pointed out something I hadn't noticed before - it was a feeding trough, a case of 'get them in, feed them, get them out.' What we've got now is something much closer to a restaurant. We've slowed everything down so that lunch now runs from 11.30am to 1.30pm, with the numbers entering the hall staggered according to their class.

The children come in, a waiter tells them where to sit and everything's served

at the table. The children know that once they've sat down they've got to eat, and can't leave until their whole table of six has finished. The hall is split in two halves, A and B, which alternate between being used and cleaned by one of two supervisors. When pupils are sat on their side the supervisor won't clean, but instead talks to the children.

We have a system where if a child misbehaves they get a white slip. The total number of slips given out in autumn 2016 was 53. In spring this year, just after we'd started the new lunch system, the count was 39. In summer just gone it was down to 10. The data's there, and it shows our afternoon behaviour incidents have dropped right down.

Elaine D'Souza - headteacher, Hermitage Primary School



NEW SBP? MAKE YOUR START A GREAT ONE

NASBM's Louise Hatswell offers some pointers to those setting out on their school business management journey...

People often don't realise how diverse being a school business professional (SBP) can be – something that's particularly true in primary schools, where teams tend to be smaller and less well established. In my experience, it's good to see your job description as a baseline, rather than an exhaustive list!

While managing budgets is a big part of the job, you'll also have to regularly interact with teaching staff, parents, governors, suppliers, contractors and, of course, pupils. For those just starting out, here are my top 10 tips for keeping the school (and yourself) afloat...

1. PREPARE TO BE SURPRISED

In primary schools everyone has to do their bit, so don't be shy about getting your hands dirty. Whether it's supervising workmen on Friday evening after there's been a flood, or removing chewing gum from a child's hair, there's much more to the role than meets the eye! If you're just expecting spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations, think again...

3. HONE YOUR SOFT SKILLS

In my opinion, the most important skills and traits for an SBP are 'soft' ones such as communication, discretion, adaptability and a good sense of humour. Everything else can be learnt. Hone those qualities and they'll stand you in good stead, while helping you forge positive relationships with teaching members of the leadership team.

2. BE A RUTHLESS NEGOTIATOR

Being an SBP is a wonderful job – it's rewarding to know that you're helping to improve the educational experience for the young people in your care. From a practical standpoint, this should make you a ruthless negotiator. Always ask for a discount, a better price, or a 'buy one get one free' deal. Don't forget that you can review contracts even when they're not up for renewal.

4. KEEP YOUR SKILLS UP TO DATE

When entering the education sector for the first time, there will be a few additional skills that you'll need. Be sure to have at least a basic understanding of how school funding is allocated and the importance of pupil numbers, as well as a sound knowledge of financial management systems and additional grant funding (such as universal infant free school meals, the primary PE and sport premium and the statutory reporting requirements

that go with them). If you're in an academy, it's essential to also familiarise yourself with the Academies Financial Handbook (tinyurl.com/academies-handbook) and what the Academies Accounts Return process involves (see tinyurl.com/academies-accounts-return).

5. GET TO KNOW YOUR SCHOOL'S SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Ideally, SBPs should be a member of their school's senior leadership team. SBPs ought to generally be in charge of staff absence and well-being, ICT, parental engagement, facilities management and overseeing health and safety, while also supporting staff performance management. Some areas lend themselves well to joint working between SBPs and teaching staff, such as managing

data and the day-to-day organisation of the school calendar, producing newsletters or developing the prospectus.

Working with teaching staff isn't just an excellent way of maximising support, it can also encourage change where needed. If nothing else, it will help them to better understand the diverse nature of the SBP role and that we don't just 'do the budget'!

6. BE SAVVY ABOUT CUTS

Before resorting to drastic staff cuts, be aware that substantial savings can be made elsewhere. In my three schools, for example, we're currently going out to tender for our catering. We're aiming for a contract that's at least zero cost, and which will potentially generate income. This should save us more than £40K per annum across the schools, plus any income generated. Think broadly, look at your substantial spending and don't waste time on minimal savings, such as a penny per ream of paper.

7. REGULARLY EVALUATE STAFF ROLES

If there's nothing for it but to make bigger savings, staffing will tend to be the largest cost you have. It's therefore important to review each role whenever someone leaves. Do you need to replace them, and if so, could it be a part-time position? Can you cover it internally or by employing an apprentice? In my schools we have excellent apprentices working across the areas of business administration, teaching support and Early Years.

8. BUILD A LOCAL NETWORK

Being an SBP can be quite isolating, particularly in small primary schools where you may be working alone. Is there a local SBL group? If so, join it. If not, why not create one? I founded the South Yorkshire School Business Leaders Group (sysbl.org.uk / [@SYorksSBLGroup](https://twitter.com/SYorksSBLGroup)) which has proven to be a great way of bringing together like-minded professionals to share experiences and best practice.

9. JOIN NASBM (SOON TO BE ISBL)

The National Association of School Business Management (NASBM) offers access to member forums, conferences and networking events. The profession is evolving at pace, which is why NASBM is soon transitioning to the Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL). Along with various other benefits (including those above), ISBL membership will assist practitioners in assessing their current competency against the professional

standards and provide a clear career development path with national professional recognition. This is hugely important for the profession now that many higher-level roles (such as CFOs, COOs and even CEOs) are becoming SBPs without prior experience of the sector.

10. ASK FOR HELP!

My job can sometimes be stressful, but I'm lucky to work in a profession where my peers fall over themselves to help me. Never be afraid to seek advice – the questions you ask will usually be the same ones other practitioners have asked before you. A good sense of humour also helps – I've found laughter to be great stress preventer (and reliever)!

In primary, no two days are the same. You can be balancing the budget one minute, and tending to a

cut knee the next. Sometimes while dressed up for World Book Day! The role can be challenging, but one thing's for sure – it's definitely never dull.



Louise Hatswell is business manager and director of finance for one

secondary and two primary schools in Rotherham. She's also founder and chair of the South Yorkshire School Business Leaders Group and a trustee for the NASBM, (which is transitioning to the Institute of School Business Leadership in November this year).

 [@NASBM_news](https://twitter.com/NASBM_news)

 nasbm.co.uk

KIDS OR CAREER?

DON'T MAKE STAFF CHOOSE

How much faith do your teachers have in the support they'll receive if they decide to have children? Emma Sheppard and Lucy Starbuck Braidley take a closer look...



Emma Sheppard is a lead practitioner in English and founder of the The Maternity Teacher Paternity Teacher Project (MTPT), which seeks to inspire, empower and connect teachers choosing to complete CPD whilst on parental leave

In a recent *Primary School Management* article, Sarah Hardy cited a collection of essays published in 2016 by Policy Exchange. The document states that 27% of the teachers leaving state education each year are women aged 30-39 (see tinyurl.com/px-importance-teachers), and goes on to assume a link between this figure and maternity leave. This, coupled with findings by the Institute for Fiscal Studies regarding the gender pay gap (tinyurl.com/ifs-gender-gap) – which suggest that women's salaries dip significantly after the birth of their second child – paints a bleak picture for staff retention in an industry dominated by women.

But there is good news. Perhaps because an overwhelming majority of primary teaching staff are women (almost 85%, according to the DfE), primary schools appear to be doing more than secondary schools to create family-friendly working environments for staff when they return to work after maternity leave. Yet the ways in which school leaders can support and empower members of staff *during* parental leave is relatively unexplored territory. If managed badly, it can result in a detrimental and frustrating career gap for valuable teachers.

ROLE MODELS

This is delicate terrain, but the first step is to ensure there are role models at all levels for parent staff within your organisation. How many of your SLT are parents? Better yet, how many are mothers? What proportion of your senior or middle leaders work job shares, or part time hours? How many of your trainees have completed their qualifications around the demands of a family? How many of your parents on leave are invited

into school to introduce their babies?

Conversely, are fathers confident with your shared parental leave policy, and do they feel that this could be a beneficial step for them and their families? Is the policy known to the rest of your staff?

Even in schools with such staffing arrangements in place, teachers without children can remain unaware of them. In her acclaimed book *Lean In*, Facebook's chief operating officer, Sheryl Sandberg, says this can result in some women 'Leaving before they leave' – that is, deciding that their present career is incompatible with their parenting aspirations, even before they're pregnant.

Demonstrating to staff that deciding to become a parent won't impact on their career aspirations, backed up by workplace role models, can send a powerful message.

COACHING AND COMMUNICATION

The second step is to communicate with expectant parents about their changing priorities, but without projecting any of your own assumptions or expectations onto the individual.

Since primary teachers spend all their time with one class, handing the children over to their maternity or paternity cover can be emotionally fraught – feelings that can be further exacerbated by the significant identity shift represented by becoming a parent. Combined with the day-to-day demands of teaching, managing the handover, antenatal appointments and



Lucy Starbuck Braidley is a primary school teacher and subject leader for English and art

 @maternityCPD
 mtpt.org.uk



managing finances, it's understandable that some teachers might welcome the time and space to talk with someone who listens supportively and without judgement.

A coaching model provides teachers with a safe space in which to explore their thoughts, and can be incredibly empowering. They may choose to focus on what they plan to do during their period of leave, their personal or professional worries, or ask about colleagues who have been through the same process. Whatever the conversation involves, sensitivity and confidentiality is vital. It's important not to hold teachers to anything they might have decided on in these sessions, since the arrival of a new baby can change everything.

With that in mind, clarify with the member of staff how they would prefer to stay in contact during their parental leave. Some might want to be shut off from school entirely; others might be champing at the bit to return for Keeping In Touch days and CPD opportunities.

On KIT days, whether it be via email or in person, encourage new parents to talk about what they've done while on leave, and don't be surprised if they have lots of ideas or CPD experiences to share. For some new parents, parental leave is the perfect opportunity to catch up on reading, do some networking and pursue professional and personal goals that otherwise might get sidelined in the daily

hustle and bustle of teaching. Think creatively about how your staff might continue to be involved with school life during this time, if they wish – but always allow your new parent to take the lead in deciding on the level of commitment that suits them and their new baby.

HR AND MANAGEMENT

Your school's HR manager needs to be confident with the legalities surrounding parental leave and keep their training updated.

There are various practical and logistical arrangements that must be adhered to by law, including risk assessments, time off for antenatal appointments and appropriate spaces to express, as well as suggested 'best practices',

which include mutually agreed KIT days.

In addition to that, a series of new laws introduced over the last few years now ensure greater equality for fathers, adoptive parents and same sex couples. Despite these new initiatives, however, research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development indicates that only 5% of fathers have taken up their right to shared parental leave (see tinyurl.com/cipd-outlook-dec16). It's not uncommon for expectant fathers to be completely in the dark concerning this entitlement. An informed and proactive HR manager can therefore be an empowering force for parents seeking more equal ways of balancing their family and career commitments.

Yet for all the laws we now have that are intended to protect new parents, it will often be a school's culture that most affects a teacher's experience of becoming a new parent in relation to their career. The statistics across all employment sectors are depressing – three quarters of pregnant women still experience some form of maternity discrimination within the workplace, and 54,000 women lose their jobs each year due to pregnancy – almost double the figure of 2005 (see tinyurl.com/BIS-EHRC-MAT).

Training in parental leave shouldn't be restricted to HR managers, but extended to line managers and middle leaders. After all, these are the people who'll often have the most frequent contact with teaching staff and the biggest impact on their day to day well-being at school. Anecdotally, it's also those same middle leaders and senior colleagues that can create the kind of workplace culture the aforementioned legal measures are designed to tackle – and they can be a big part of the reason why many new parents either return to the classroom or decide to leave altogether.

MATERNITY/PATERNITY TIPS FOR LEADERS

- Celebrate role models
- Communicate with expectant parents
- Offer coaching to expectant parents
- Provide training for HR staff and line managers
- Value the experience of parental leave
- Treat all parents equally



HOW TO TACKLE STAFF RETENTION

Given all the voices in the profession telling us that recruitment and retention is an issue, what should we do about it?

The statistics point to an increase in both pupil numbers and staff turnover in the coming years. It doesn't take a statistician to work out that this isn't a winning combination. There have also been alarming numbers from the DfE, which indicate that just under half of the teachers recruited in 2011 were leaving the sector within five years of being recruited.

But is the issue all about recruitment, or is it about retention too? If we can nail retention, then it follows that this will help address our recruitment issues too, but of course there's more to it than that. We don't always want to retain certain colleagues – and we can't always keep the ones we want.

In terms of what's likely to make a difference to retention in your school, here follow a few suggestions...

REVISE YOUR APPRAISAL PROCESS

An effective appraisal or performance management process should motivate, look at personal development and wellbeing and do much more than simply appraise people by reviewing their objectives. If you develop your colleagues, it's far more likely that you'll retain them.

Adopt a holistic approach by managing the objectives, behaviours, career progression, professional development and personal wellbeing of all your employees. That includes recognition – we're quick to give 'Well Done' stickers to the children, but how do we recognise and praise our colleagues for a job well done?

"We don't always want to retain certain colleagues – and we can't always keep the ones we want"

It goes without saying that development and recognition make people feel valued.

Do you have a handle on how many hours your colleagues are working, either at school or at home during the evenings and weekends? We need good people working in schools who are bright and fresh, not burnt out.

ADOPT A STRATEGIC APPROACH

By capturing information about career progression and development, you can forecast where and when you might lose people so that you can plan recruitment strategies in advance, rather than being reactionary and too quick to recruit. You can then wait for the right person – the one that fits and will therefore stay.

It's worth putting in place a robust wellbeing strategy. This could be as simple as

just adding a 'How are you?' box to your appraisal discussions, or even simply asking that question at team meetings and in the course of general conversation. Doing so will ensure that you have your finger on the pulse of your colleagues, so that when they aren't on top form



you can act quickly and potentially avoid the need for absences and supply cover.

According to some areas of research, recruitment issues have led to a rise in the renewing of temporary contracts, which isn't without risk. Not only does this perpetuate uncertainty for children and parents, renewing temporary contracts without giving thought to continuous service may lead to situations where people are eventually entitled to redundancy payments or the right to be classed as a permanent employee. Always seek advice before renewing or ending temporary contracts.

It's never easy, but you should always ask why someone is leaving – maintaining a record of exit interviews can help to detect any recurring themes. Getting to the truth should have a positive impact on your staff retention. After all, you can only do something about it if you know what the issue is.

LOOK AT YOUR INCENTIVES

Could you enhance your offer to colleagues? Do you promote flexible working, for example? Job shares are often seen as inconsistent and complicated, but they could well be the answer to some of your retention issues.

With regards to pay, the 2017 School teachers' pay and conditions document (or 'STPCD' – see tinyurl.com/dfe-stpcd) sets out pay lifts between 1% and 2% and includes uplifts to teaching and learning responsibility and SEN payments too. If you don't employ under the STPCD, these uplifts won't apply to you, leaving you free to set your own pay rates.

What do you need to do? Update your pay policy. Where a teacher is at the minimum end of their pay range, you'll need to increase their salary in line with the percentage increase. The uplifts also need to be considered (but not necessarily made) when making recommendations for pay progression as part of your performance management or appraisal process, in line with your pay policy.

You can also make differentiated pay awards, where justified by an employee's performance or any circumstances relevant to your school, which will allow you to make the best use of your budget.

RESPECT EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS

Another thing you can do is end tribunal fees. What does this mean? Employees are able to make claims without having to pay an initial fee, thus making claims easier. Does this make a difference to how schools operate? It shouldn't. If we treat people properly and follow a fair process, we shouldn't have to fear possible claims. We should always be mindful of having a fair reason for an employment decision, with due consideration for employment rights.

As of September this year, free term time childcare has increased from 15 hours to 30 hours for 3- and 4-year-olds. Have you accommodated this within your educational setting? Do you have the right number of employees to make it work? Have you linked with private, voluntary and independent nurseries to cover the provision? If you offer this cover in your pre-school setting, you'll need to have the right staff in the right place at the right time – with the right pay and the right contract.

If you're outsourcing your provision, then you'll need to consider Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) – TUPE – regulations and the employment rights associated with transferring your provision to an external organisation. This works the other way round, too; if you're looking to include the provision in your school from an outsourced agency, you'll need to look at whether TUPE applies and go through the correct legal process.



Nickie Elenor is a solicitor and managing director of Your HR Lawyer

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 yourhrlawyer.co.uk

Save money by **SAVING ENERGY**

Two industry experts offer some suggestions for how schools can cut their energy bills and profit in the process...



“GETTING STAFF ON BOARD IS KEY TO SAVING ENERGY”

DAVE HORTON,
AWARD-WINNING
ENERGY SPECIALIST
AT NPOWER
BUSINESS
SOLUTIONS

Finding ways to change employee behaviour has been identified by the government as vital if UK schools and businesses are to realise more widespread efficiencies. Indeed, research by the Centre for Economics and Business Research has found that behavioural change has the potential to deliver savings of around £860m for organisations throughout the UK.

We find most schools can save up to 20% on energy costs by adopting efficiency measures, with employee engagement playing a key part. But the challenge is often how to do this – and where to begin.

Developing a strategy to get staff on board is essential if you want to maximise energy savings. Here are some pointers we’ve found helpful with other schools and businesses we work with.

1 ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

Put energy efficiency on the agenda by organising an informal meeting and invite staff to share any observations and ideas.

2 APPOINT AN ENERGY CHAMPION

Ask for a volunteer to act as an Energy Champion, whose role will be to engage regularly with staff and feed back ideas. If you need help with this, we offer a one-day specialist Energy Champion training course through our Energy Management Qualifications (www.nbsemq.com). There’s also a 30-minute

Foundation e-learning course for other staff to increase their awareness and understanding of how to save energy.

3 COMMUNICATE YOUR POLICY
Work with your Energy Champion to come up with some behaviours you’d like staff to adopt and then communicate these through various means – via posters around school or regular email reminders, for example. Some potential messages might include:

- Turn off equipment after use
- Switch off lights and heating at the end of the day
- Turn down the thermostat, rather than opening windows, if it gets too hot

4 EMPLOY SOME TECHNOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE
Where possible, support your goals with technology. For instance, it’s worth putting up reminders to switch off lights after use in classrooms, staff rooms and halls, but at the same time, look into adding passive infrared motion detectors to your lighting system so that if staff forget, the lights will switch off automatically.

5 INCENTIVISE YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY
Consider setting up a reward scheme so that staff can suggest further energy saving ideas of their own. You could also get the pupils involved and create a school-wide campaign that everyone can be part of.

 [@npowerBusiness](https://twitter.com/npowerBusiness)

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We have many more ideas to help schools, so do get in touch to find out more. Further information about our specialist training can be found at nbsemq.com. If you oversee very large or multiple schools, you may be interested in finding out more about our specialist Carbon Psychology service at EnergyHQ.com. You can also contact me and the team directly via nbsemq@npower.com





MARK STEVENSON,
MANAGING
DIRECTOR OF
THE SCHOOLS'
ENERGY
CONSULTANCY,
BRIGHT SPARK
ENERGY

"SCHOOLS ARE FEELING THE FINANCIAL PINCH"

Back in February 2017, *The Guardian* reported that schools in England were "To see the first real-term funding cuts for 20 years." By April, the BBC had reported that, "Pressure on school budgets in England is leading to a narrower secondary curriculum, with teaching posts in some subjects being cut."

Whichever way you look at it, one thing's for sure – schools are feeling the financial pinch. But what most schools aren't aware of is that the cost of keeping the lights and heating on is increasing by up to 10% per annum every year. Expenditure on energy consumption in schools is one of the top five highest costs, with some of the larger schools spending over £100,000 per annum on gas and electricity.

We've been working closely with many schools and MATs to help them review and reduce their spending on energy consumption, while also becoming more sustainable. We focus on all aspects of energy use across a school's estate, before working out how to save using the concept of marginal gains. And the first thing schools should look at doing is

to carry out an energy consumption health-check.

Many schools we visit haven't reviewed their supplier for years; most stay within their LA schemes, stuck in a static 'one size fits all' contract. The main reason for this is that schools simply don't have the time to carry out complex audits and research other options. However, we know where significant savings can be made. To take one small primary academy as an example, simply switching gas and electricity supplier saved the school just over £2,500 per annum.

Switching to LED lighting ought to form part of your energy review, but schools should be aware that unscrupulous companies are making significant sums of money by selling poor quality LED lighting with no design service and warranties limited to five years. High quality LED lighting will last a lot longer than normal bulbs, offering an average of 50,000 hours of burn life, which equates to 25 years within a typical school setting. Schools can also benefit from reductions in their energy bills of up to 75%, lower maintenance costs and avoiding the capital cost of replacing their lighting.

Finally, another area worth considering is solar energy. Beyond saving on energy expenditure, this can also be a way for schools to 'make' money – and there doesn't even need to be an initial cost, since there are numerous sustainable energy grants available from government and LAs that will cover the cost of installing solar panels.

In one primary school on the south coast of England, for example, we secured a grant to have the technology installed at no cost to the school. In year one, it saved £1,949.67 on the school's energy bill, with 90% of the solar power generated used by the school. It was then able to sell the remaining 10% back to its energy supplier.

For many schools, and particularly primaries, we can offer an energy consumption health-check free of charge – get it in touch with us to find out more.

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WHY YOUR BUDGET IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS



Budgetary decisions shouldn't just be made behind closed doors – if anything, you owe it to your staff to keep them informed

It's not just school leaders who should be worried about school budgets. Large parts of the profession are now familiar with the need to deliver 'efficiencies' and make 'cost savings', with the result that schools are now working collaboratively by sharing resources, getting more from their contracts and utilising the skills of colleagues across different settings. These aren't necessarily new ideas, but it's vital that everyone understands how important they are.

Funding for schools has been stuck below inflation for years. It's an issue that's hit headlines throughout the past year, inspired political marches and given rise to campaigning websites such as schoolcuts.org.uk, highlighting the effect that the real term cuts have had on education budgets. The government's recent announcement of a revised national funding formula might mark a new change in direction – but it's still been a pretty bleak picture for education finance over the past few years, and the effects are very much being felt right now.

Creating a culture of sensible buying and resource use is difficult in any organisation, but this is crucial if our schools are to survive. Some staff may see the establishment of new procurement systems, reduced spending and efficiency improvements as additional workload burdens and barriers to learning, but these 'barriers' are ultimately what's needed if we're to keep the books under control. If we don't, it could have a far-reaching impact on generations of learners.

That's why it's important to give your staff a better understanding of your school's financial context. Explaining the reasons behind some of your key financial decisions can help to bring them on board, and in some cases even persuade them to suggest some further budgeting ideas and strategies, thus lightening the load. Ask them to consider the following points:

1. ARE THEIR EXPECTATIONS REALISTIC?

You should have a sense of where the school's projects and resources sit in relation to your 3-year school development plan, and be able to spot when your staff's priorities don't line up with what the SDP proposes. Before they ask for a new piece of equipment and take offence at someone telling them no, try approaching them first and asking them to consider if there are any alternatives.

2. BE RESOURCEFUL

Does that teaching colleague really need to purchase 60 workbooks for that particular topic, or can the pupils' work be submitted online? Have they checked the school's stock audit to see if there's an existing data logger they can use, rather than ask for a new one? Do they properly switch off that school projector that otherwise usually remains on? These are small things, but they add up to long-term gains – after all, a projector will have a much longer working life if it's cared for...

3. CAN YOU BUDGET RESPONSIBLY?

Do your subject and phase leaders, SENCOs and other staff have any control over own budgets? If so, they'll have an increased awareness of how budgets are allocated, know what it's like to have to say 'no' and be sensitive to the impact that budgets can have on learning outcomes.

4. COMMUNICATE

Encourage regular conversations between teaching staff/business managers and/or SLT about the school's financial position and where improvements could be made.

A culture of sensible budgeting and resource use in schools is needed now more than ever, and that's everyone's job – or else one day the finances might not be in place to support yours...

Grahame Colclough is Business & Operations Leader at Burnwood Community School



“ALL CHILDREN DESERVE AN EQUAL CHANCE”

With budgets continuing to shrink, some children in particular are feeling the pinch...

So the DfE would like us to believe that the problem of education finance can be saved by back office economies. That is, looking for the best deal on paperclips, photocopying and utilities providers. But as everyone knows, the largest proportion of money spent in schools is on staff – their wages, pension and National Insurance contributions. And, as headteachers will know, difficult decisions on staffing are having to be made.

Class sizes are rising. Teachers aren't climbing the pay scale as easily, and those who have can find it difficult to move schools unless they go for promotion. Redundancies are being made, starting with the cheapest – often TAs.

To be fair, fairer funding for all schools and LAs has been a long time coming. All children deserve an equal chance at their education, in decent school buildings with properly qualified staff, but setting fairer funding against a backdrop of cuts to public spending means that all schools and LAs are feeling the squeeze.

As budgets tighten, schools are being forced to look hard at their spending. And in an inclusive system, it isn't hard to see where large wads of it is going. Disabled children, by dint of their needing more adult support in the classroom, can be a financial drain that some schools are keen to avoid. I know this because when I took my son, who is disabled, to look at primary schools, I was told by one

headteacher that I had to consider what he would be taking away, in budgetary terms, from the other children. We didn't send him there, if you're interested. And that was before the credit crunch.

In its response to the DfE's consultation on a national funding formula, the Local Government Association stated that councils must be able to exercise control over allocation of resources to ensure that pupils with SEND receive sufficient funding, and that centralising this decision making would put outcomes at risk.

When it comes to the bottom line, we have the law. I sometimes think that someone, somewhere, must have a vested interest in keeping parents and schools on opposite sides of a battle line, because if it wasn't for my role as parent of a disabled child, I wouldn't know half as much as I do about SEN law, who to ask and where to go for advice.

Picking the brains of parents like me, who have become experts in their children, costs little in terms of time, but could save a fortune. Working together makes all the difference in the world – and kindness and compassion costs nothing.

Nancy Gedge is a consultant teacher at the Driver Youth Trust



@nancygedge



driveryouthtrust.com

Which suppliers can you trust?

There are many providers of education goods and services out there – so it's just as well BESA can help flag up those you can rely on...

The start of the school year is always slightly chaotic, but this year particularly so. Between thousands of unfilled teacher vacancies, an as-yet unresolved school funding crisis and an ever-expanding teacher workload, it's fair to say that this September was a more challenging one than most.

If you needed any more indication, the NAHT has deemed it necessary to relaunch one of its previous campaigns under a slightly amended message – 'School Funding STILL in Crisis' – which is highlighting that schools need at least an extra £2 billion each year to stave off the need for further cuts to staff and subjects.

A survey undertaken this summer by the National Education Research Panel on BESA's behalf found that expenditure on school resources is now at its lowest point since 2010. Carried out among a representative sample of headteachers across UK primary and secondary schools, the survey further showed that school leaders were forecasting a 5.5% reduction in their expenditure by the end of 2017. That's an even more widespread sense of decline than in 2016, when headteachers reported that their spending on resources was down by 4.7%.

With that in mind, how can headteachers be sure that they're making the correct decision when buying new resources for their school?

Know where you stand

Headteachers often need to invest in new resources to drive school improvement, support their teachers and enhance their pupils' learning. These resources might take the form of new stationery, the specifying of an entirely new EdTech system, or simply restocking the school library with a selection of new books.

That's where BESA's Code of Practice can help. All BESA members must abide by the series of standards set out within the Code of Practice, which are designed to give assurance to schools

that if they procure any goods or services from BESA members, they will be buying quality products and a standard of service that they can trust.

This year has seen the Code of Practice (available to view at besa.org.uk/code-of-practice) updated to include an area that's become a major issue within schools – safeguarding and data security. BESA members must not only be able to demonstrate that their staff are willing to comply with the relevant regulations of any educational institution, but also that their service offering is compliant with current and future data regulations, as well as any individual data sharing agreements in place at a school or trust.

The BESA Code of Practice reflects a desire on the part of BESA members to ensure they always offer the highest quality of products and services to schools around the world and provide a world-class customer experience. Schools can therefore be confident that when they see the BESA logo during that next procurement round, it's a clear indication that the provider in question is a purveyor of high-quality products and services that they can trust.

Cleo Fatoorehchi is communications coordinator at BESA

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A HEADTEACHER'S GUIDE TO HAGGLING

Hayley Dunn explains how heads can enter that next tricky sales negotiation with eyes wide open...

Have you ever watched *Dragon's Den* and observed the negotiation discussions? Have you noticed that the Dragons very rarely move from their initial offer? It's because they're clear as to what they want, and what their bottom line is. Now, being who they are – high-flying multi-millionaires – they already have a strong negotiating position. But why is it that so many of the entrepreneurs come away without a deal?

For some, it'll be because the product or service they've come up with is too niche or downright bizarre – but for others, it'll be because they lack a strong negotiation strategy and have come unprepared. Those entrepreneurs who are successful in securing a deal have

a few characteristics in common: they're well prepared, know their numbers and their market, and will clearly state what they're looking for from the Dragon(s). Often it won't be money they need, but a means of entering new markets or devising an online sales strategy.

It's fascinating to watch and learn from this. Not unlike a competition or game, bargaining is all about preparation and the moves that you make, and can be very satisfying when you're successful. Of course, that depends on the sort of person you are – haggling can be some peoples worst nightmare! In the main, however, negotiation is a skill that requires a strategy in order to be effective. Here, then, is my 12-point plan to help you get the best deals for your organisation:



1 Negotiate in person

Negotiating face-to-face is a great strategy, because it gives you the opportunity to observe the other person. Always listen more than you speak. Don't be afraid of stating early on what you're looking for, and be secure in knowing what deal you want. If you come across as unsure, the person may use this to try and improve the deal for them – for example, by selling add-on products or services you don't really need.



2 Be prepared

Do your homework regarding the company – the product or service they're offering, and potentially the individual you're likely to be dealing with. For instance, most sales people maintain a LinkedIn profile that will show you how long they've been with the company, any posts they might have shared and the skills that others have recommended them for. You can also do some financial due diligence on the relevant company – one approach might be to access any reports on them that are available from Companies House.

3

Know what you want and your key issues

Once you've listed what you want, rank your priorities from highest to lowest. If you're negotiating for a new services contract it might help to prepare a tender proposal. You can use a weighting system to help you, especially if you're seeing a number of different companies. Know your bottom line. Is it the price that's most important? Have an idea of what your target price is and what terms you want.

If your negotiation is about securing a better level of service from an existing supplier, then sequencing key issues is useful. Note down the following information to use in your meeting:

- Dates and details where expectations or deadlines weren't met
- Actions that were taken by your staff i.e. records of phone calls or emails
- Details of what the contract states you are entitled to
- Clear expectations of the improvements you expect and within what timescale



4 Decide what you're willing to reveal

Keep a bullet point list to hand of information you're willing to share. You don't have to keep all your cards close to your chest – disclosing some key information will help the negotiation progress. Be transparent about what you can be flexible on.

5



Silence is Golden

Using silence is one of my favourite strategies. Don't feel that you have to fill space in conversation. Make a strong and clear statement about the deal you want. Then say to the person "I'll give you some time to think about that and then tell me if it's achievable..." Take a pad or papers with you so that you've got something else to focus on. You've now moved the focus of the negotiation on to them. As noted above, listen more than you speak and think carefully about what you're saying.



6 Use speech effectively

You'll know from using behaviour management techniques with pupils just how effective the right kind of speech can be. Keep a positive, level tone. If they've done their homework they're likely to give compliments throughout the discussion or presentation which will be directed at yourself or the school. Don't let this sway you – just give a polite thank you, before moving the conversation on.

7 Use the 'good cop, bad cop' routine

If you know that there's going to be lots of haggling involved, take another member of staff with you and employ the 'good cop, bad cop' routine. Your school business manager would be perfect for this task.



8 Pay attention to body language

If you're dealing with a salesperson, they're likely to have had training in how to conduct themselves effectively, from what they wear, to how they sit and greet people – but it's hard for anyone to keep this up all the time...



9 Get references

Don't rely on the references that salespeople give you. Always try to find someone independently who's had previous experience of the product or service.

10



Gather information

Extract as much information as you can about what you're negotiating on. While haggling, if you feel confident enough try asking the salesperson about sales targets. Are they relying on this particular deal to make their monthly or annual target? A salesperson approaching the end of an annual sales period may be far more keen to negotiate a deal if it secures them a sale.



11 Always, always be prepared to walk away

There's no stronger position than the other person thinking or knowing that they're your only option. There's always another way. Always an alternative option. You might just have to compromise somewhere along the line.

12



Never sign there and then

Always run any terms and conditions documents past your legal advisor. I promise you that this will be time well spent...



Hayley Dunn is a multi academy trust finance director

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IS YOUR SCHOOL READY TO GO CASHLESS?

Nicky Gillhespie explains why she's big fan of cashless payments – and why your school should introduce them too...

Around four years ago we made the decision at Cheam Fields Primary to become completely cashless. At the time, we were still using our local authority's catering service. They had previously introduced (and managed to get a good deal with) a parental payments service that the majority of schools in Sutton used, and still do. Back then, in the days before free school meals for infants, most of the money we had coming in was for school dinners. We soon realised, however, that if we were going to be getting this system for a good price, and if our biggest source of payments was now cashless, why not do the same for everything else?

We began by setting aside a September to January term where parents could make payments using either method, though we did announce that we were no longer accepting cheques. Those would always cause us problems, whether it was because they bounced or the wait for them to clear.

The way we presented it to parents was, *'We're no longer accepting cheques, but you can continue to pay in cash. Should you wish to pay online, we can set you up with an account.'* By the end of that term, there were so many parents signed up and so few still paying for things with cash that we went cashless soon afterwards.

BEDDING IN

We'd expected some pushback, but were surprised at how few problems there were. We issued parents with temporary logins that they could change, and made sure they knew we could reset their login from our end if need be. We offered parents with English as a second language, and those who weren't computer literate, the option of booking an appointment with somebody from the school office to help them through the registration process. At most, we had 15 people needing that, but it's still something we offer every year with each new intake.

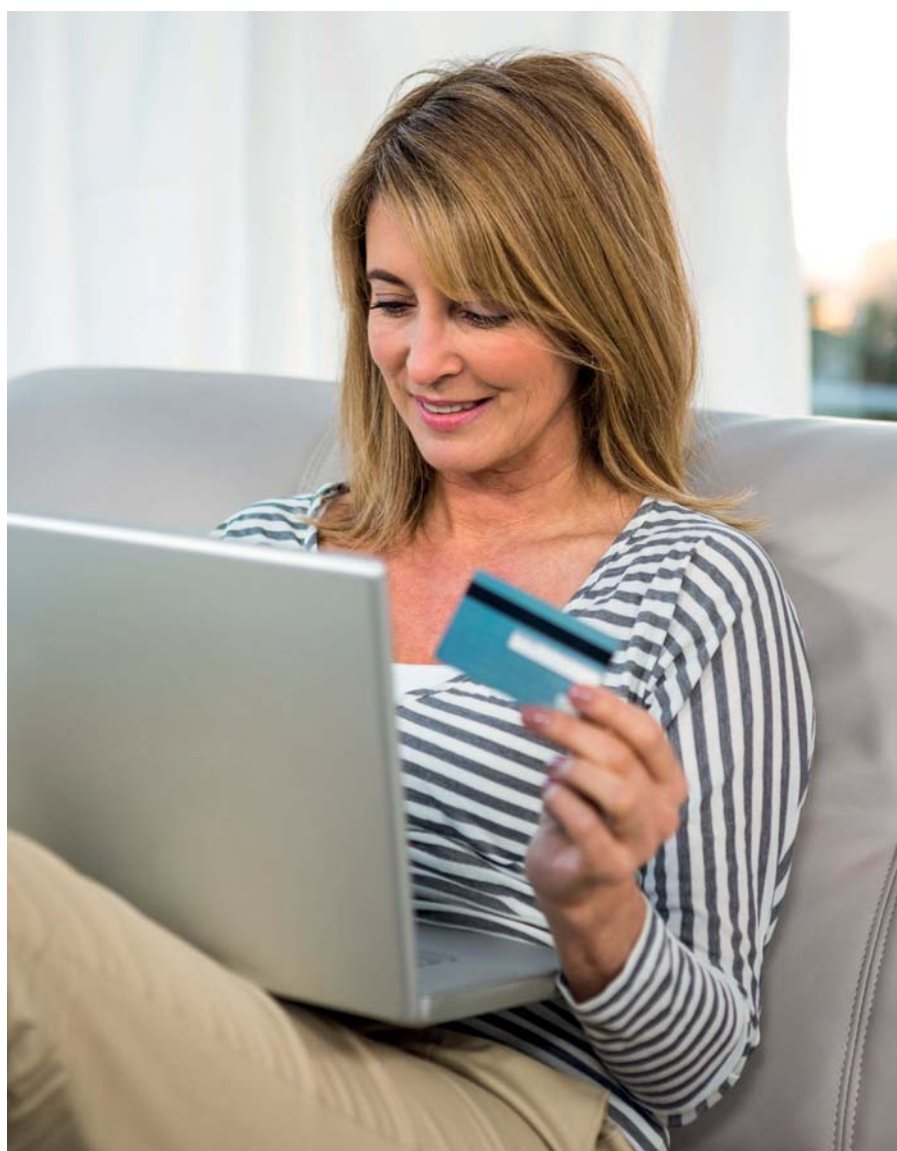
We currently have around five families in school that don't use the online facility.

For them, we print off barcoded letters that they can take to a payment point in a shop or Post Office. We've tended to find that even our less well-off families can still get some access to online banking, often via their phones.

With cashless systems, you get far more control in terms of auditing. You have instant access to complete records of who's paid you, when and how much.

Whenever cash is involved, something always seems to get lost. Of course, we also no longer have any cash on site that we need to count and physically take to the bank or pay a security company to transport, which is what used to happen.

When parents log in they can call up the details of their child(ren) and see all the things they've been allocated to pay for. Some might not usually have school





DO IT YOURSELF

If your school's looking at going cashless, you might want to observe the following points...

• KEEP PARENTS INVOLVED

Get parents onside early on and offer support to those who need it. Once people are set up, the system should be simple to use.

• DON'T DO IT OVERNIGHT

Once you've made the decision, introduce a 'dual run' period in which both cash and online payments (though possibly not cheques) are accepted, so that parents can get used to the transition.

• DON'T GIVE TOO MUCH LEEWAY

Once the transition term's over, start getting strict about not accepting cash. Otherwise you run the risk of some parents believing it's easier for them to just bring cash in and dump it on your reception desk. So long as you're running two systems, you're won't be getting the time-saving benefits.

• REMEMBER WHAT IT'S FOR

Keep in mind that the main point of what you're doing is to help your school cut down on admin time, while introducing reliable financial reporting and a proper audit trail.

meals and won't be automatically charged for them, but they have the option to pay for them on a couple days in any given week if they wish. There's also the option for them to pay for more expensive items, like schools trips, in instalments over 18 months to two years, rather than all in one go and have the system track what they owe. It's sophisticated, but very simple to use.

RUNNING COSTS

Of course, there are costs involved in setting up and running a cashless system – and it can be hard to say exactly what those are, since the ongoing costs currently depend on the type of cards people are paying with. American Express cards are more expensive than Barclays Visa debit cards, for example, but we've found that things more or less even out.

The only real issue we've encountered so far is that we had to leave our initial system provider for two reasons. The first was that the system itself often crashed, possibly through overuse. The second was that the provider used to collect the money regularly, but only credit the school twice a month. We've since moved to a provider we were already using for our pupil databases and finance systems,

and to a system that provides us with funds twice a week, which gives us fewer cash flow issues to deal with.

As with any service, it's up to schools to investigate what different providers offer – but there's really not that much difference between them. As long as your cashless provider is reputable and observes all the necessary data protection rules, that's the main thing. You don't want to give your school a bad reputation by signing up to some small company that accidentally lets all your collected credit card details get out there.

Unfortunately, we do still have to chase people who haven't paid for things every few weeks – the human factor doesn't change. Towards the end of each term we have a big drive on chasing all debts. If we could do away with this and the time it involves, that would be fantastic – but unfortunately, just because parents can pay online that doesn't mean we never have any debts.

Ultimately, though, from an administrative point of view we've saved loads of time by not accepting cash – personally, I don't understand why some schools still are.

Nicky Gillhespy is chief operations officer at the LEO Academy Trust

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Michael Tidd wants your feedback – but not if it's based solely on data...

Discussion



You can't measure wisdom with tests and scores, argues Debra Kidd

Advice



Julie Price Grimshaw recalls what she learnt from mentoring trainees

Resources



Head to Teachwire to download six of the best KS1 SATs resources for the maths reasoning paper.

What's trending

1

Ideas to engage reluctant writers

2

Teaching the selfie generation

3

Are you ready to be head?

4

Stop eating your shoes!

5

Can we still afford glue sticks?

DO HEADTEACHERS MAKE GOOD CEOS?

What's it like to swap a career spent at the chalkface for one of executive oversight? One head turned CEO shares his observations...

In 2002 I was appointed as head of a school which, at the time, had a multitude of issues that needed addressing. It took three years to move us up to 'good', and another three to reach 'outstanding'. I subsequently worked with other schools as part of the London Challenge, becoming a national leader of education in the process, and was then involved in a partnership that formed the basis of what's now STEP Academy Trust.

My professional journey involved going from headteacher to executive headteacher over two schools, and then leading a MAT that's steadily grown to include 14 academies across two geographical areas.

For 'accidental CEOs' such as myself, who have grown into the role, there are major challenges which won't apply to someone appointed from a business background. It's perhaps less of an issue for secondary heads, who'll often be running fairly large organisations already – but for a primary head used to 450 kids and 50 staff, suddenly finding yourself leading a £20 million organisation with 500 to 600 staff involves a major mental shift.

The level of accountability is much greater, as is the impact of failing to deliver. That said, there are certain attributes you develop as a primary head that will really help. Most successful primary headteachers will be thoroughly



grounded in the mission and values of their school, good at communicating them and able to ensure that everyone within the school connects with each other. When developing a MAT, it's crucial that the Trust's mission and values are clear – because quite often in MATs, they won't be.

We were among the first MATs, converting in 2011, and for those first three years there was little guidance, support or sharing of practice with others. It was eventually recognised by the DfE that some training and support was needed for former heads in my position, and the course I attended proved pivotal for my development. I consider myself an introvert. I don't like presenting to large groups of people and much prefer one-to-one conversations. I was used to assemblies and parents' meetings, but addressing conferences attended by 200 other MAT CEOs is a whole other ball game. The anxiety is something I've struggled with, but I've learnt how to manage it.

Talking to other CEOs, it's quite a diverse grouping, but there are recurring traits – imposter syndrome is quite common. It's hard to grow and develop a MAT to the size we are or bigger if you've not previously been a head, but I believe that's changing. There are now established and successful MATs which may soon be led by a new generation of leaders from outside the profession.

Personally, I recognised that for STEP to be successful, I had to improve – though STEP's success has ultimately been more about the team we've assembled, how they operate and the devotion they have. It's a journey I feel privileged to have been on.

Mark Ducker OBE is CEO and executive trustee of the STEP Academy Trust

 @thesteptrust

 stepacademytrust.org



BECOME A KNOWLEDGE LEADER

Mentoring a recently appointed fellow head can improve your own performance in several powerful ways, writes Viv Grant...

When you're a headteacher, mentoring a colleague who has just taken on the role can be one of the greatest gifts you give to both yourself and your mentee, but it isn't something to be taken lightly. It comes with a certain amount of responsibility and pressure on one's time. If these can't be resolved at the outset, it's better to say no and decline the invitation, rather than enter into a relationship in which expectations on one side or the other can't be met. But if you're happy to take on the responsibility on, there are three particular benefits that I believe are foundational for a headteacher's own professional growth and development:

1 INCREASED WISDOM

Wisdom comes as we get older and develop the capacity to reflect and learn from our life experiences. As a headteacher, with what's likely to be years under your belt, there's a depth to your level of experience that your mentee will benefit from hearing, but which you can also benefit from exploring. Recounting the lessons you've learnt can serve to remind yourself of the journey you've been on; the highs and the lows, and the person you've become along the way.

2 DEEPER LEVELS OF EMPATHY

You'll have the chance to sharpen your ability to listen beyond words. You'll become more conscious of your mentee's silences, intonation and feelings, and through those, be able to draw on greater levels of empathy. You'll

build a better understanding of how it feels to be them – to be outside of one's comfort zone while having to learn and acquire a whole new set of skills. In return, the mentee will start to see your relationship as one where it's safe to make mistakes and take risks.

3 GREATER SELF-UNDERSTANDING

The self-awareness experienced while mentoring others can lead mentors to ask certain questions of themselves: Why am I giving this piece of advice? What is this relationship teaching me about myself? These sorts of questions, if asked during the periods of reflection following a mentoring session, can broaden the mentor's personal horizons and understanding of how the headship role has shaped their own personality and behaviour.

In a climate of reduced budgets and limited resources, mentoring doesn't require much in the way of financial outlay, but can reap dividends for all concerned. Together, mentor and mentee can learn a great deal about their impact on the children they teach and those they lead, while helping to create a learning environment in which all can flourish.

Viv Grant is the director of Integrity Coaching

 @Vivgrant

 integritycoaching.co.uk

Make friends, influence people

Every school leader has to be good at meeting and getting on with people – but how good are your networking skills at conferences and other such events?...

Building positive relationships and establishing effective communication with others are, I would say, key to successful leadership. If you struggle to relate to and communicate with those around you, I would respectfully suggest that leadership might not be the best professional course for you.

Headteachers need to foster productive relationships with those within their school community – pupils, staff, parents, governors – but making connections with others beyond the school is also crucial for leaders if their schools are to flourish within the wider educational landscape. So what can you do to improve your networking skills?

Remember you're an ambassador

When engaging in a professional capacity with people outside the school, recognise that you represent your school – and that those you meet may well form judgements accordingly. This can be both a challenge and a privilege. I remember parents telling me, “We chose this school because we bought into you and what you seemed to stand for.” Be constantly mindful of this.

Introversion needn't stop you

Even if you're introverted and shy (and many strong leaders are), you can still make positive connections with others by showing your passion for education, your commitment to your school and your role and your care for those within it – the pupils and staff. Be authentic, open and warm. Successful networking isn't about glitz and charisma. I'd suggest that it's actually about positive

human connection.

Look for unfamiliar faces

At events outside of school, resist the temptation to speak only to those whom you already know. Actively seek out new contacts, and be especially alert to those who seem to know few people and who perhaps appear isolated. Networking is always about giving as well as gaining, and contributing and supporting others in addition to learning and benefiting yourself.

Ask questions

Recognise that when you meet others at conferences and other events you need to achieve a balance between talking about yourself and your school, and asking questions which enable you to learn about others. Some of the educational professionals whose social skills I most admire are those who always show a genuine interest in those they meet.

Engage online

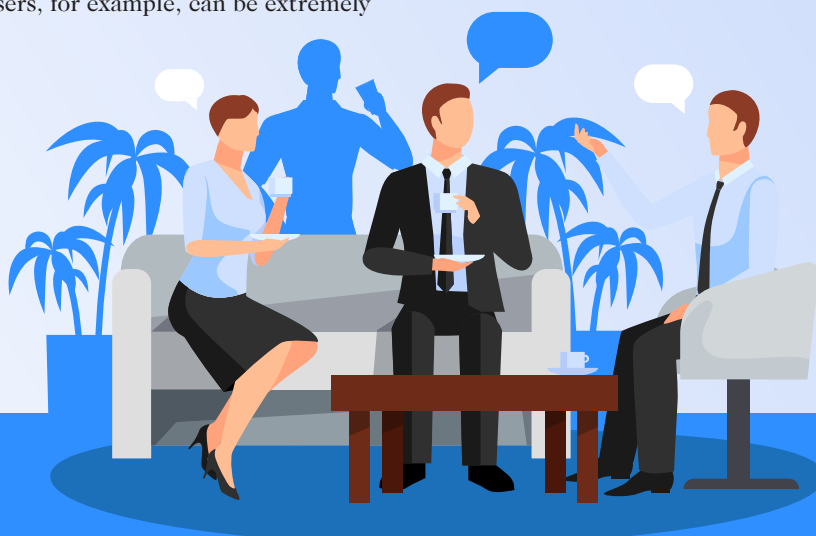
Professional learning networks built through online interactions can be powerful. The educational links that have developed over time between Twitter users, for example, can be extremely

useful and supportive, both practically and emotionally. Consider with whom it might be interesting to connect and build rapport – again, for mutual benefit.

If you're new to using Twitter for the purposes of professional development, seek out someone who uses it for just that and see what you can learn from them. Ross Morrison McGill (@TeacherToolkit) has a useful list of 101 educators worth following that can help you get started – see tinyurl.com/tt-101-ed. It can be especially interesting and rewarding to meet people at conferences with whom you've already made a virtual connection.

However (un)comfortable you might feel in situations where you recognise few people and need to build relationships, remember that it's an important skill for school leaders to have – and that the rewards can be considerable.

Jill Berry is a leadership consultant and former headteacher; her book *Making the Leap – Moving from Deputy to Head* is available now, published by Crown House



DO YOUR GOVERNORS HAVE THE SKILLS THEY NEED?

Your governing board has a tough job to do – so it's worth making sure that its members are up to the task...

Do your school governors have sufficient business knowledge to make meaningful decisions given the changing education landscape, and how can such knowledge be developed?

January this year saw the publication of the Competency Framework for Governance, which laid out the 16 competencies that all schools and academies should have within their Boards for them to deliver effective governance. Each competency within the document (see tinyurl.com/dfe-gov-framework-17) is essential if boards are to demonstrate clear strategic leadership, robust accountability and oversight, and assure the best educational outcomes for young people.

Of the 16 competencies it outlines, 11 are concerned with strategic leadership and accountability, and often possessed by managers and executives with a business background – people who can bring these skill sets to your governing boards.

SELF-EVALUATION

When evaluating the mix of skills present within a governing board, the usual starting point is to carry out a skills audit. Details of the NGA's online governing board self-evaluation tool, recently updated to reflect the new competency framework, can be found at tinyurl.com/nga-online-se. All governors should complete this honestly, and the results should be consolidated to give an overall picture of the skills mix – and, equally

importantly, identify skills gaps on the Board. It may be appropriate for the Chair to meet with each governor and discuss his or her understanding of the questions asked within the skills audit to ensure that there's a consistency of answers across the governing board.

Another potential source of information about skills gaps is an external review of governance. You can do this by using one of two resources available from the NGA website – 'Twenty-one Questions for Multi-academy Trusts' (tinyurl.com/nga-21-mats) or 'Twenty Key Questions for the Governing Board to ask itself' (tinyurl.com/nga-20-gov).

Where MATs are concerned, the NGA guide 'Welcome to a Multi Academy Trust' details the person spec for the role MAT trustee, including the knowledge and experience they'll need in areas such as change management, risk management and financial expertise. It's well worth reviewing this as part of the skills audit.

Once you've finished identifying where those knowledge gaps are, the challenge then becomes filling them. Broadly speaking, you'll have three options...



Ian Mackintosh
is an associate
consultant at
RMA Governance

OPTION 1 RECRUITMENT

Whenever a governor vacancy comes up, your first and only question should be, "Where are our skills gaps, and what options do we have for filling them?" Bringing in individuals who possess specific skills and experience that the board has identified it needs is the quickest and most effective way addressing those gaps.

In the case of co-opted governors, the board can draw up a shortlist of contacts from their network who are likely to fill any skills gap on the board. These potential candidates can then be approached with a clear message of why the board requires their particular skill set.

Some larger companies seek to actively participate in their local communities – why not try approaching them to see if any of their staff with the required skills are willing to join? Another source of possible governors is School Governors' One-Stop Shop, which is an independent charity dedicated to recruiting governors.

In all the above cases, it's essential that boards make their decisions based on the skills that an individual brings, rather than in response to them being a 'willing volunteer'.

Things are more complicated where parent governors are concerned, since the choice of who gets to represent parents on the board is down to the parents themselves, though it's still possible to state what skills the board is looking for when notifying parents about available vacancies.

One area that Boards shouldn't overlook – particularly when bringing in individuals from business – is to give new governors a proper induction. This should engage new governors from day one, while allowing them to immediately start contributing their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the school.

Businesswoman



OPTION 2 TRAINING

Identification of skills gaps on the board in the absence of vacancies will drive the training plan for the board's members. Possible sources for training can include LA-run governor training courses, though many won't cover business skills such as strategic business planning. Training in this area is also provided by schools governance organisations such as the NGA and Freedom and Autonomy for Schools, as well as online resource providers such as Modern Governor (moderngovernor.com).

You'll come across further training options at nationally run conference events and seminars, and sometimes through reading. Peter Rubery, CEO of Fallibroome MAT in Macclesfield, for example, recommended the book *Our Iceberg is Melting* by John Kotter to his governors early on in the MAT's development.

If you have a specific training requirement that can't be met by any of the above, sources, another option might be to set up a bespoke course for your governors – though the challenge here will be finding someone with a sufficient understanding of both business and the education sector, who is also an effective trainer.

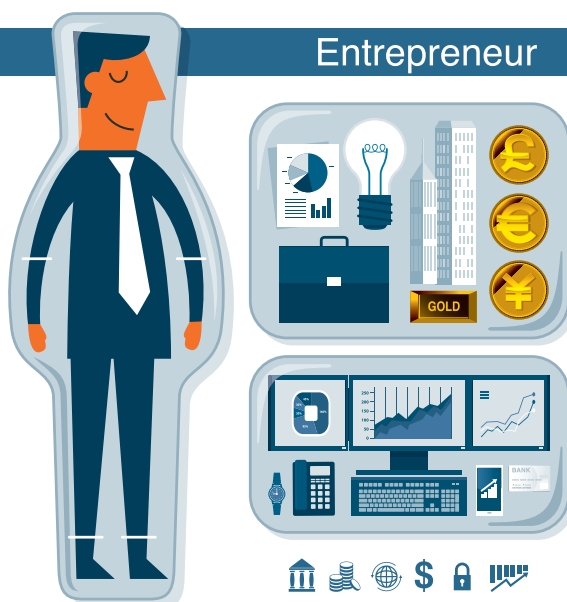
OPTION 3 EXTERNAL SUPPORT

If a governing board finds that none of the above has worked, it can consider bringing in outside support to fill a short-term skills gap. Examples of how this might work in practice could include:

- **FACILITATION:** An independent third party is brought in to support a specific task, such as setting strategy or team working within the governing board.
- **EXPERTISE:** A good option for more sensitive areas, such as managing a difficult HR situation.
- **TRAINING:** Providing input for the Board.

To deliver effective governance within schools, it's crucial that governing boards contain a balance of skills, irrespective of whether the school is maintained, an academy, voluntary aided or voluntary controlled – and the starting point for that will be to carry out an honest evaluation of what skills the board actually has. Only once this is completed will you be able to recruit and/or deliver training on behalf of the board – and most importantly, the pupils.

Entrepreneur





Days to remember

Discover how a trip to KidZania London could bring learning to life for your pupils

KidZania London, based in Westfield London Shepherd's Bush, is a 75,000-sq. ft indoor city built just for kids, where 60 real life activities are available for children to engage with. Whether these activities take place in the bank, on stage or in the fire station, each real-life experience is crafted to teach essential life skills including financial literacy, teamwork and independence.

A visit is suitable for children aged between four and 14 and blends learning and reality with entertainment. Every activity has been developed and supported by qualified teachers and can be cross-referenced to the National Curriculum. Integrity, responsibility, respect and solidarity are just some of the values teachers can expect their students to learn via roles in KidZania's fire & rescue, veterinary service and police. For example, roles of firefighter, vet,



What they'll learn

Real-life experiences teach essential life skills, from financial literacy to collaboration and communication.

Activity Highlights

1



EMERGENCY SERVICES
Become a firefighter and learn all about fire safety.

2

HOSPITAL ACTION
Perform a liver transplant as a renowned surgeon!



3



MEDIA ADVENTURES
Go live as a radio presenter and report news, chart and travel.

police officer and paramedic are available to try on for size. The KidZania paramedics will learn collaboration by discovering that they need to rely on each other to assist in emergencies. They will also develop communication skills by informing patients of the treatment they will receive. Critical thinking and self-knowledge are also aptitudes to be gained.



Firefighters, meanwhile, will learn basic safety and prevention procedures. Like paramedics, the firefighters must work together collaboratively to complete their training, know how to respond in an emergency and respond successfully to a call out. There's also the chance for pupils to take on the role of a police officer and go out on patrol to maintain the safety and order for all KidZanians. In these positions of authority children will protect residents, respond to anonymous tips, follow mysterious clues, interview witnesses and crack a case.

This November 14-16, there is a unique opportunity to take part in UK Parliament Week at KidZania. Featuring a pop-up 'Parliament Square', kids can dress up in speaker's robes, become a decision maker for the day and step into the shoes of their local MP. Children will be able to vote with their voice and their feet by making decisions on questions that matter to them. There will be a series of short talks and Q&A sessions with MPs, members of the House of Lords and staff from Parliament, among other fun activities to aid children's understanding of Parliament and democracy.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON SCHOOL VISITS

Tel: 0330 131 3335
www.KidZania.co.uk

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2 SEE AND DO

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videoscribe.co



5 ADMIN MADE EASY

For everything your MIS can't do, there's SchoolsBuddy. This information management solution can address multiple needs within a single, easy-to-use system, and be particularly helpful when it comes to parental communications. As well helping to co-ordinate and administer SMS notification messaging, breakfast club bookings and payments for school visits, it can also help keep things organised with regards to school club sign-ups, parents evening appointments and secure child collection.

As Ben Miller, IT Manager at Chesswood Junior School, puts it, "SchoolsBuddy saves us time, money and enables us do so much more – we are thrilled!"

schools buddy.com

FAIR EXCHANGE

Giving your pupils responsibility for a Healthy Tuck Shop or Stationery Shop can boost their confidence, provide them with real world maths practice, encourage them to consider their skills and experiences and develop a greater understanding of their career choices.

Pupils Profit provides training materials

that pupils can use to get their business up and running and make it profitable – the Healthy Tuck Shop snack range is fully compliant with Children's Food Trust guidelines, while the Stationery Shop's stock includes eco-friendly scented pencils and ergonomically-designed pens to assist handwriting.

pupilsprofit.com



FLEXIBLE CUBICLES

From washroom provider Bushboard comes the versatile Profiles range. Suitable for both primary and secondary schools, these units can be adapted for use as toilet, changing or shower cubicles and be specified in a choice of 36 laminate colours and three digital prints. Also available is a Profile Kids variant for younger children, which features shaped doors for easier access and supervision, plus an optional vanity unit with easy to reach taps.

bushboard-washrooms.co.uk

HIT THE ROAD

Many primary schools are now running their own minibuses, giving pupils better access to swimming lessons, public events and longer day excursions. As well as providing purchasing advice and recommendations, EVA minibus can help with driver training too. In place of the high recurring costs and lack of flexibility that can come with hiring coaches, minibuses can lend schools greater transport freedom, and even some PR support when finished in custom livery, and can be a great use of sport premium funding.

evaminibus.co.uk



LGBT SUPPORT CAN START AT PRIMARY

Peter DeWitt consider what schools can do to engage LGBT students – and at what point they should begin...

Some students in our school systems fit into the school culture without any issue. They'll get through the school experience unscathed because they're popular, gifted at sports or do well academically. They'll enter school on a daily basis feeling engaged and safe, and when they're older, will probably remember their school years as some of the best times of their lives.

Our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender student population will often have a different experience. They don't always fit in, never see positive images that represent their lives and are often bullied simply for being themselves. These students' formative memories will be of being called derogatory names, feeling unsafe in school and not feeling emotionally connected.

This year's School Report by the LGBT advocacy group Stonewall (see tinyurl.com/sw-school-17) found that 45% of lesbian, gay, bi and trans pupils – including 64% of trans pupils – are bullied for being LGBT at school. 52% of LGBT pupils hear homophobic language 'frequently' or 'often' at school.

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

As early as primary school we can recognise who some of these students will be, but we don't always do enough about it. As educators, we can sometimes underestimate the role we play in the growth and development of our students. Worse, we might choose not to recognise it, so that we can feel better about the fact that these students aren't fitting in: "Yeah, kids can be tough on one another"; "I just wish he'd act differently so he doesn't make himself a target."

What if we did things differently?

What if we found ways to engage these students through the curriculum and our school safeguarding policies, or made them feel more welcome in school by providing a safe space? What if we displayed images on the walls they could identify with, so that they know we care about them?

A further detail in Stonewall's School Report notes that "40% LGBT pupils are never taught anything about LGBT issues at school." Students of any age need an emotional connection to school if they're to be authentically engaged in the learning process. If LGBT students are never taught about LGBT topics, it can give rise to a 'hidden curriculum' consisting of topics otherwise ignored in school. Under this hidden curriculum, LGBT students may well learn that the

adults in the school they attend each day don't care about them as much as their heterosexual peers.

ALL MEANS ALL

This isn't about pushing a 'gay agenda' in schools. Schools are tasked with engaging students, which they do by providing an emotional connection. That emotional connection will be built up through images, an inclusive curriculum and school policies that don't selectively protect students based on sexual orientation, but apply to everyone, enforced by headteachers that consistently follow through on those policies.

Many schools use the phrase 'All means all' to demonstrate their belief that all students can learn. Unfortunately, too many LGBT students have come to believe that this 'all' doesn't include them.



Peter DeWitt, Ed.D is an author and consultant based in the United States. He will be appearing at the

Osiris Safeguarding LGBT+ Conference in London on 13th March 2018; for more details and booking information, visit osiriseducational.co.uk and quote code 'OsirisLGBT18' for 10% off admission

@PeterMDewitt

petermdewitt.com

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