PSM

SCHOOL BUSINESS ADVICE

The in crowd
Why SBLs should be part of the team

Your 2020
Take control of the year to come

Build a Brilliant Curriculum

TAKE TEACHING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Moving schools
Change jobs without the hassle

Procure like a pro
Make your spending go further

Pupil Premium
Is your funding doing all the good it can?

Choppy Waters
How to budget in the absence of facts

A Hidden Shame
Managing the impact of staff bullying

From the editor

So, after years of the profession calling for additional funding, it's happened at last. This month the government announced that its spending on schools will increase by £7.1 billion by 2022-23, with NQT starting salaries set to rise to £30,000.

However, given the tumultuous state of the UK's parliamentary system at the time of writing, who can say at this stage whether that largesse will ever actually make it into schools' accounts? It's difficult enough managing a primary school's budget at the best of times, but even more so when you're operating in the dark – turn to page 64, and you'll find some advice from Hayley Dunn on how to contend with just that.

Conversely, Pupil Premium funding has been a fixture in schools' ledgers for over eight years. Enough time, you'd think, for school leaders and finance staff to get a handle on how to use it effectively – yet as Rebecca Leek explains on page 68, myths and confusion can still get in the way of schools' efforts to maximise their Pupil Premium spend.

Assuming for a moment that the government's lavishing of cash does come to pass, the broader philosophies informing the schools accountability system still seem unlikely to be shifting any time soon. Ross Morrison McGill sets out his case for why that's a problem in this issue's page 6 interview, while over on page 12, Jeremy Hannay outlines why the time has come for schools to tackle the prioritising of performance data head-on by building a very different kind of curriculum.

Finally, if any readers are planning to visit the Schools & Academies Show at the NEC Birmingham in November, know that team *PSM* will be in attendance throughout at stand J72 – it would be great to meet some of you there.

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser
callum.fauser@theteachco.com

Our experts this issue

Sue Birchall
Business manager at The Malling School, Kent

Hayley Dunn
School business leadership specialist for ASCL

Jill Berry
Leadership consultant and former headteacher

Anthony David
Executive headteacher

Mike Fairclough
Headteacher at West Rise Junior School

Hilary Goldsmith
School business leadership consultant

Rebecca Leek
Director of strategy at ASSET Education

Jeremy Hannay
Headteacher at Three Bridges Primary School

From the makers of *Teach Primary*

HIGHLIGHTS

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Dan Baker, Business Manager, The Brent Primary School

"Schools should be rewarded for collaborating, rather than competing"

Ross Morrison McGill, creator of Teacher Toolkit and Britain's most followed educator on Twitter, explains why he views Ofsted as the 'grim reaper'…

What did you set out to do with your new book, *Just Great Teaching*?

My work now involves regularly visiting schools all around the country, and increasingly other countries too. Arriving at a school for the first time, you pick up a sixth sense for what makes a good learning good environment. It's the welcome you get at reception, what you see from visiting the classrooms and what you pick up from the ethos and culture.

I've visited around 150 different schools in the last two years, and seen the majority of them attempting to do exactly the same thing; what makes them unique and different to one another is pretty much their location, the types of kids they have and their building infrastructure. Having seen those schools, I wanted to share my experiences and celebrate the amazing work that's going on. I made an effort to feature a range of different schools in the book – not just state schools, but also grammar, alternative provision and independent, across primary and secondary.

Were there any experiences or examples of practice you saw on your travels that really stayed with you?

There were two in particular. Visiting Queen Mary's Grammar School, and seeing what they're doing in a tough area of Walsall, made me rethink my perception of grammars. It's one of the oldest schools in the country, dating back to 1554, and while they might select their kids, they're still needing to support children who have significant mental health issues and doing incredible work in response to that. Set aside the structure, and it's clear that there are teachers there who simply want the best for their kids. That said, we also had some good, healthy discussions about the relative benefits of grammar schools and how they're viewed by parents, the public and government.

The second was visiting Fettes College, where I felt a real sense of imposter syndrome. I'm from a working class family, and have attended and worked in state schools my whole life. I'd been invited into these grand buildings, but what I found was that the classrooms there were essentially places we'd all recognise – highly complex environments in which the work revolves around getting kids to learn and remember, as well helping them to develop pastorally.

Based on my travels and the stories and anecdotes I'm able to share, it's my belief that most people would like to see a happy medium between high stakes accountability at one extreme and models where there's hardly any accountability at all at the other. My experiences have also confirmed for me that schools should be rewarded for collaborating rather than competing, as they do under the model we currently have.

Throughout the book you refer to Ofsted as 'the grim reaper' – why is that?

Because of the high stakes involved. We're all human, and all subject to bias and stereotyping over hard evidence – though even when we look at that evidence, it can be inaccurate. In a high stakes accountability system, that can end your career.

I've seen many people around me lose their jobs in state schools through redundancy or as a result of Ofsted inspections, or be forced to work longer hours through lack of funding. When the pressure's on to get certain results, choosing to work in a disadvantaged school predominantly attended by low income families, with high levels of EAL and affected by other social demographic factors, the challenge is very real.

You're a well established Twitter presence at this point – what's your take on how the '#edutwitter' discourse has changed and evolved over time?

In the early days, it was amazing. I could tweet out a worksheet, photograph or question and get a response while I was asleep, or get a reply quicker from a colleague in Australia than I could from someone working next door in the same building. Starting in around 2013 you then saw the rise of #WomenEd, #ResearchEd, #BAMEd, all these different social media branches where people were able to develop their own communities.

At the same time, however, there's been lots of politicisation and use of social media to divide. We're all clear that teachers shouldn't express their politics in the classroom, but on social media other aspects of people's lives – their support for certain politicians, for example – results in teacher exchanges being framed by different ideologies, particularly those with considerable influence.

I'm currently studying for a doctorate, looking at how social media has enabled teacher voice, encouraged professionalism and prompted discussion about learning theories. I'm also looking at social media theories such 'context collusion', which is the notion of things happening behind the
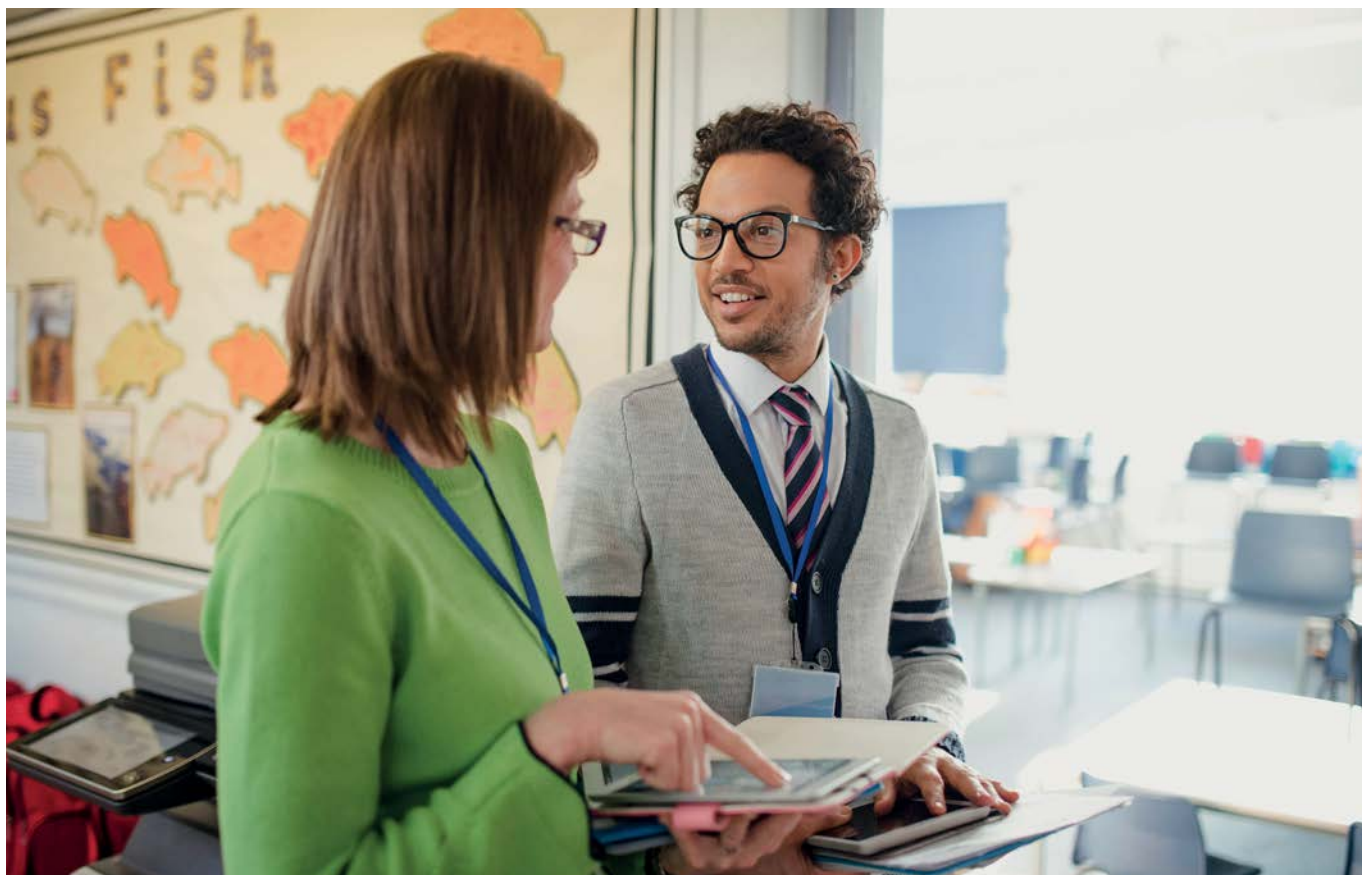
scenes and the large-scale coordination of certain messages – think Cambridge Analytica.

In the book, you state that disseminating great ideas without fear of high stakes accountability 'must be the future model for improving schools'. What would that type of system look like in practice?
Look at the Isle of Man, which has used peer-to-peer school inspection for decades without being acknowledged for it. Ofsted accepts that schools work in different contexts, but doesn't differentiate in terms of how they're evaluated because they want the same standards for everyone. I admire that in a way, but if you get Outstanding or put in Special Measures, it affects your teacher population. Local house prices may go up or down, and having lived and worked in London for 25 years, I've seen how it can even potentially influence knife crime.

Every school I've visited has always wanted to do better. We need to get to a place where schools can visit each other, share best practice and be given the time and space to evaluate each others' processes – *"These things are great, let's share those, but there are one or two things we think you could do better. Let's come back in a couple of years' time, test it again and keep the dialogue going."* That's preferable to having five strangers pop by your school and use an evaluation system to grade you.

According to Ofsted's own research, only 19% of parents read their school's full Ofsted report. We're regularly told the existing system is 'what parents want,' but in the 26 years since they were inaugurated, we've yet to see any detailed data explaining *why* parents want graded schools. At the same time, Ofsted's latest Teacher Voice survey has indicated that teachers' views of Ofsted's effectiveness have dropped to their lowest ever level.

The jury's out, but I think this is a last hurrah for using a graded framework for schools. Abolishing it and adopting the Isle of Man model would enable people with similar job experience to provide critiques that are supportive and challenging, rather than high stakes.

I myself have twice opted to leave difficult situations, because life goes on and I need to feed my family. We want the best people in our schools – highly qualified people who can make a difference to both the most able and most disadvantaged children – so that our school system and society as a whole can be made better. That's what now drives me in my day-to-work – empowering teachers to become more knowledgable through what I've learned on my travels, the insights on my website, blogs and books. I've tried to widen my own lens and challenge my own biases, and as long as people are interested, I'll do it until circumstances change.

🐦 **@TeacherToolkit**
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1997	2007	2008	2011	2014	2017
Completes teacher training; teaching in Lewisham and Haringey	**Starts the Teacher Toolkit website; teaching in Haringey**	**Assistant principal at The Crest Girls' Academy; takes voluntary redundancy in 2011**	**Assistant vice principal at Greig City Academy, Haringey**	**Deputy head at Quintin Kynaston Academy, Westminster; listed in Times 500**	**Moves into full-time teacher training; website development; pursues doctorate**

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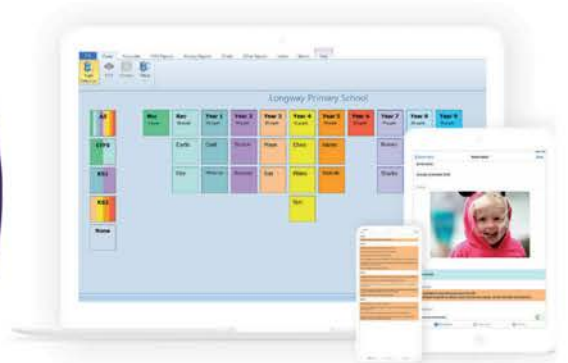
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Juniper Education

EMBRACE THE TESTING EFFECT

If we want to improve our pupils' ability to recall information, we need to interrupt the process of forgetting says Jon Hutchinson

Empirical study into the manner in which memory operates began way back in the 1880s, when Hermann Ebbinghaus measured the rate that information is lost after initially learning it. The conclusions were clear, and have been repeated in multiple contexts under a huge variety of conditions since – everybody forgets things unless they revisit that information regularly.

In the classroom, this means that we should be entirely unsurprised by our pupils struggling to recall yesterday's lesson. Indeed, it's an inevitable and perfectly natural part of the learning process. Our job is to interrupt this forgetting, by prompting the children to retrieve information from memory. It's for this reason that, as part of our curriculum design at Reach Academy Feltham, we've embedded regular quizzes into our curriculum design.

Aside from Ebbinghaus, our decisions have been influenced by more recent research into retrieval practice, spearheaded by professorial power couple Robert and Elizabeth Bjork. They suggest that any information tucked away in our memory can be measured in two ways. First, there's the speed at which you can recall some fact or skill, the 'retrieval strength'.

Second, we can consider how well connected and robust the knowledge is, known as 'storage strength'.

New information which isn't linked to anything else stored in your long-term memory will have a low retrieval strength, as well as a low storage strength. This is why they write the

hotel room number on your card when checking in. You'll probably forget it. By the end of the week, the retrieval strength of your hotel room number will have increased by regularly having to recall it. However, the storage strength will likely remain low and you probably won't be able to recall it in a year or two.

Some information, such as the name of a child in your class, could have a high storage strength (they're connected to tonnes of other memories) but a low retrieval strength ('*What was their name again?...*') Other information can have both high retrieval and high storage strength – for example, the name of your current best friend. This, of course, is what we're aiming for in what we teach. And based on what we know about how memory works, we think that the testing effect is an indispensable tool for achieving it.

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE
We always begin lessons with retrieval practice – a short quiz with five multiple-choice questions of previously learnt material. These quizzes are 'no stakes' in that we don't collect scores, and don't tell children off or express disappointment if they get a question wrong. That's not the purpose – what we're trying to do is deliberately interrupt the forgetting curve.

Think of this regular quizzing as a learning event in itself, as opposed to an assessment. It doesn't really matter whether the children get the question right or wrong, as they benefit either way. I often begin planning a lesson by asking myself, "What are the five things that I want all children to remember by the end of this lesson?" These then become the targets for quiz questions in the following lesson.

Quizzing may not be the flashiest or most fashionable classroom activity, but there's an abundance of science outlining the learning rewards. Why not add in a few quizzes into your next unit of work, and see for yourself the improvement in recall from the children?

Jon Hutchinson is the head of curriculum development at Reach Academy

🐦 **@jon_hutchinson**

HOW TO TACKLE A CULTURE CLASH

Your efforts at changing the school's culture began so well, but now they've started to falter. What should your next move be?

It's the start of a new year. You've had a great summer break, and now it's time to present your vision for the school's future to your colleagues and pupils. At the staff meeting you confidently outline where the future lies and the culture, behaviours and actions that will get the school there. It goes like a dream, and it seems everyone's on board...

Six weeks later, something doesn't feel right. A growing proportion of your colleagues seem to have forgotten the behaviours and actions you made the case for so convincingly just a short time ago. How should an effective leader put this right?

1. EXPRESS THE PURPOSE
A 1913 newspaper advert once read: '*Men wanted for hazardous journey. Low wages, bitter cold ... safe return doubtful.*' Yet 5,000 people responded to Ernest Shackleton's recruitment advert for his third Antarctic expedition. Why? Because people thrive on having purpose. When you delivered your compelling vision, did you explain the purpose behind the change in culture you want to see? Did you engage people and encourage them to own what needed to be achieved? Or simply give them a to-do list?

2. BE HONEST
Leaders reap what they tolerate. If something doesn't fit with your organisation's culture, it's your responsibility to be honest and address it. Leaders must often embrace discomfort and have difficult conversations that will ultimately lead to positive outcomes, so meet with your SLT. Ask what they've observed and share what you've learnt yourself. If they agree that things have started slipping, take action.

At the next staff meeting, acknowledge that you perhaps haven't been sufficiently clear with everyone about why change was needed and their roles in making it happen. Be honest, stress that it's okay to make mistakes and explain that you want to help people better understand the 'why' in what they're doing.

3. HAMMER IT HOME
The only way to make a new culture stick is for its advocates to become broken records for the cause. Every minute of every day, you and your senior colleagues should go out of your way to catch people getting it right. Overdo the genuine 'thank-yous' and allocate time each week – in meetings, assemblies, emails – to acknowledge those behaviours and attitudes that support the new way of doing things. You'll see colleagues gradually feel more valued and increasingly commit to the new vision.

Failing to resolve small issues can cause bigger problems to arise later on. If you notice a derailing behaviour, address it, though bear in mind that minor failings will often be unintended. Always approach such situations courageously, humanely, quietly and personally.

Katherine Powell is an executive coach and director of Lead Without Limits

🐦 **@LeadWOLimits**

Assessing for dyslexia

If it's possible that a child may have undiagnosed dyslexia,
what should the process of finding out involve?

An assessment for dyslexia should consider four key aspects – the strengths, difficulties, range and variations of scores, and learning differences shown by the pupil. These factors, in addition to their background and ongoing school performance, can help to pinpoint whether the child has dyslexia or any other specific learning difficulty.

Even if no diagnosis is made, the assessment should still provide key information that can contribute to a learning profile. This information can help towards the development of a learning programme and inform any other curriculum considerations that need to be made.

Strengths

It's important that the learner's strengths are noted in the assessment. Quite often, children with dyslexia can have visual strengths and may prefer to use visual strategies for reading. They might score quite highly in visual activities across various tests.

In reading, the student may have a strength in comprehension but a difficulty in reading accuracy, or the reverse may apply. If the student's strengths are in social skills, sport or practical activities, these also need to be highlighted in the assessment and report. These can offer a 'lead in' to the student's interests, and help with motivation.

Difficulties

Children with dyslexia can experience a number of difficulties, but the main one will typically be related to the decoding or encoding of print – that is, reading, spelling or both. These difficulties can be due to challenges with phonological processing, or in recognising and retaining sounds in words. They may have difficulty in blending; putting the sounds and letters in words together to make a word.

If the latter applies, reading can become a time consuming and disheartening ordeal whereby each word needs to be sounded out and processed and have an impact on their reading comprehension. This in turn can influence the child's enjoyment of reading.

Memory

Children with dyslexia can have difficulties with their short term, working or indeed long term memory. Working memory difficulties may be seen when a child is processing two or more pieces of information at the same time. A backwards number span test is often used for this, which involves a remembering numbers, putting them in order and saying them backwards. Children who have long term memory difficulties will need a great deal of overlearning and repetition before retaining information fully.

People with dyslexia often have a weakness or difficulty with processing speed, where their pace of work doesn't match their processing ability. As well as the obvious effect of running out of time in finishing work, this can also make comprehension of text difficult because material is being processed too slowly for the child to get the 'flow' of the text.

Strategies

We often find that pupils with processing speed difficulties develop the habit of working quickly to keep up, and will sometimes rush through tasks to complete them before the allocated time. More likely than not, this strategy will lead to a higher level of mistakes, which can be discouraging for the pupils who feel they have worked hard to meet requirements.

Other factors that can be noted in an assessment include motor and co-ordination difficulties, and the organisational difficulties that can accompany them. These can be important in gathering evidence for an SpLD such as dyslexia, or perhaps dyspraxia.

Dr Gavin Read is a practitioner psychologist, consultant and author; Dr Jennie Guise is a practitioner psychologist, author and founder of Dysguise Ltd. This article is based on an edited extract of their book, Assessment for Dyslexia and Learning Differences, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers

BUILD AN INCREDIBLE
CURRICULUM

Ofsted might be playing catch-up, having conceded that curriculums have narrowed in recent years, but schools can stay several steps ahead when developing theirs, says Jeremy Hannay...

In 1995, Ottawa – my home town – became known for being more than just the nation's capital city. We were now the home town of the globally successful singer, Alanis Morissette. Her album *Jagged Little Pill* sold more than 30 million copies, won five Grammys and remains among *Rolling Stone*'s Top 500 Albums of All Time.

One of my favourite songs on the album is 'Ironic.' I'm sure you've heard it – "*It's like rain on your wedding day; it's a free ride when you've already paid; it's the good advice that you just didn't take...*" The song's lyrics describe various ironic scenes – the fearful flyer who finally boards a plane for the first time, only for it to crash. The 98-year-old who wins the lottery and dies the following day. Having 10,000 spoons when all you need a knife. You know – frustrating, 'either cry or laugh out loud' situations.

I'm now of the view that the recent actions of Ofsted – a newly formed entity at the time of the record's release – deserve a whole new verse in the song of their own.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

For almost a decade, Ofsted has harshly penalised schools returning data and performance results in English and maths that they deem to be poor. Ofsted has had a hand in creating floor standards, devising definitions of 'coasting schools' and implementing questionable progress measures. These actions have resulted in headteachers being pushed out, teachers being fired and schools being forced into academisation.

England is now seeing its highest ever teacher attrition levels and lowest ever recruitment numbers. There are schools like mine, Three Bridges Primary School in Middlesex, where deprivation, transience, free school meals and EAL are high. We've had to invest significant money, development time and support into improving and accelerating achievement across English and maths as a result, because keeping your job hasn't depended on delivering pupils a substantive education – only results.

In 2018, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, expressed concerns that schools were narrowing the curriculum (see tinyurl.com/HMCI-comment-sep18) and that there was an endemic pattern of prioritising data and performance results ahead of the real substance of education. Isn't it ironic? Don't you think?

TWO-STEP PROCESS

That said, Ofsted's announcements shouldn't prevent schools from changing their tune. Building an incredible curriculum is entirely possible, regardless of budget or resources, so long as it's seen as a two-step process.

The first step involves posing the following pair of questions to staff, pupils and parents:

1. What are our aspirations, hopes and dreams for our young people and ourselves, now and in the future?

2. What knowledge, skills and habits of mind do they, or we, need to uncover this?

This will ignite a discussion that can be used to inform the development of a bold, beautiful and bespoke 21st century curriculum. A basic thematic analysis will help school leaders narrow down the thoughts of all stakeholders to common themes that will permeate your curriculum.

The second step – one often neglected – is to engage in deep thinking around subject-specific pedagogical design. This is part of what we at Three Bridges like to call 'the hidden curriculum'. It's important that time be given to all leaders and teachers so that they can explore how learners learn best in any given subject, and how your instructional diet aligns with your core values and curricular themes. A curriculum with a focus on equity and global citizenship, for example, might struggle to align with a heavy diet of rote learning and direct instruction.
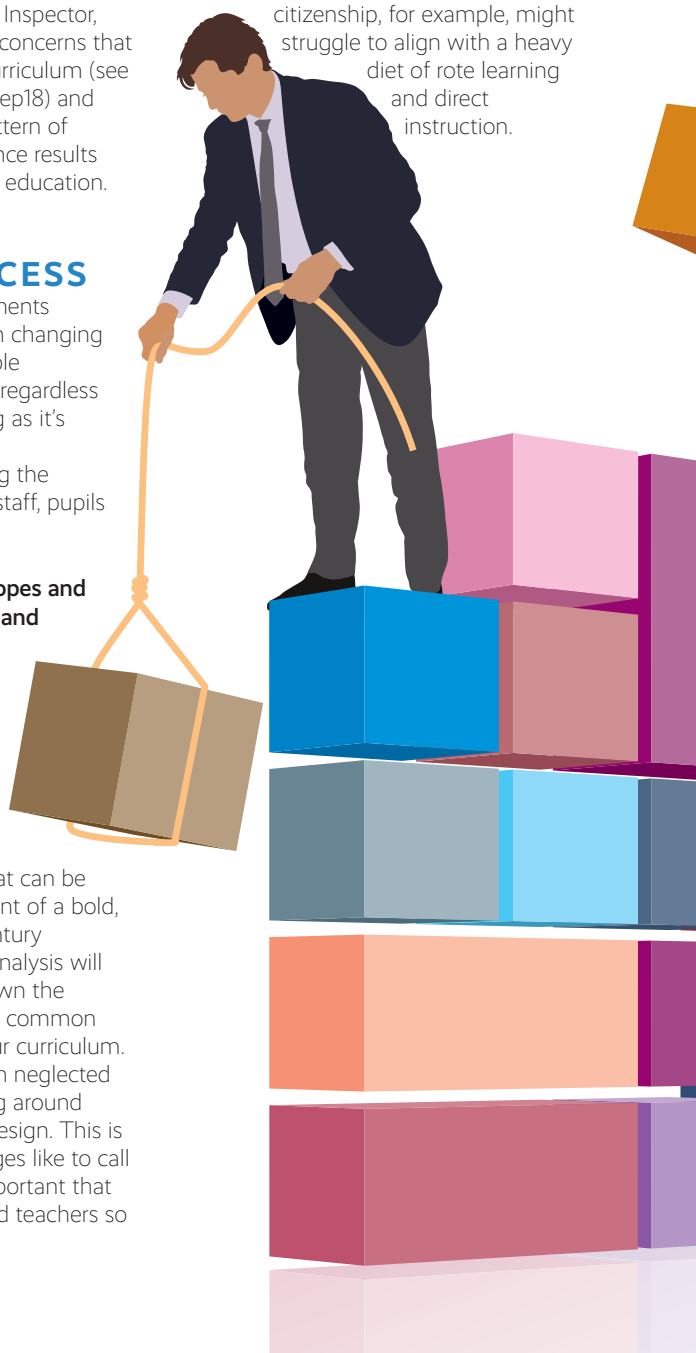
Incredible learning is a practice of freedom. The interaction between teachers and learners in the presence of knowledge is one aspect of learning, the power relationship between the two requiring intimate attention. Incredible schools won't merely discuss equity or refer to global citizenship – they're mindful of those everyday, subtle interactions between teachers and pupils in the presence of knowledge. We must acknowledge that what we learn, how we learn it and who we are as educators are instructional, and that all three of these considerations should form the curriculum of our schools.

WHAT WE DID

At Three Bridges we found ourselves facing three options when it came to redefining our curriculum:

"What we learn, how we learn it and who we are as educators are instructional"

a) Start from scratch

This would mean building learning progressions for the themes, finding resources that matched them and designing the subject content, units, lessons, resources and everything else, all from nothing. Pursuing this path will involve rebuilding your pedagogy to suit your learners and your curriculum – a massive undertaking, but possible given the right conditions.

b) Source a stock curriculum

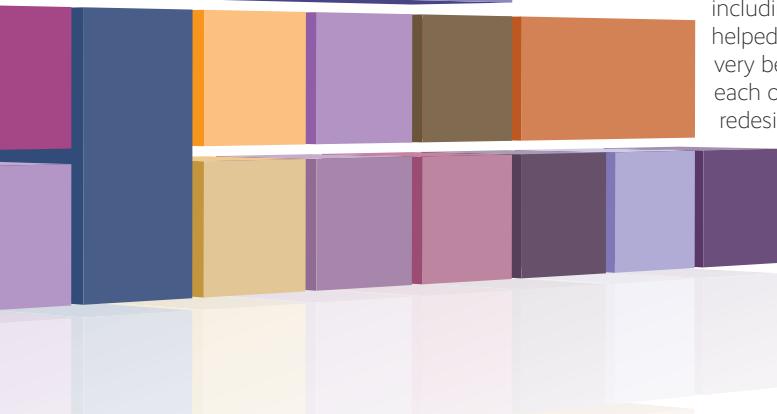This would entail using an 'off the shelf' solution containing existing units, lessons and resources all ready to go, aligning them with our new themes and then either going with the instructional design in the prepared lessons or adapting them and using our own.

c) Design a hybrid

Find a curriculum that aligns with our themes, design from scratch the bits it doesn't have and align the resources provided with our pedagogy.

We chose option C. After examining the broad themes, we found that we aligned most closely with Oxfam's educational resources. We therefore used those in tandem with some other resource bases to design units and lessons for each subject. We also visited other providers, like the Inspire Partnership and School21, which offered values and pedagogy aligned with our own beliefs about education as a practice of freedom. We worked with a consultant, Karen Brooke, who supported us in decolonising our content and coaches, including Alex Bell, who helped us to become our very best, as we challenged each other to redefine and redesign what we believed to be possible. The truth is, however, that it's a never ending journey.

PITFALLS AND POSSIBILITIES

1. **PITFALL – OFSTED IS COMING!**
   The fear of an imminent inspection can set in, prompting a school to simply buy in the best curriculum they can find and do an INSET or two, before observing, monitoring and scrutinising it in action. This will only serve to tick a box and provide a false positive.

2. **POSSIBILITY – USE A NEW MAP**
   Develop an idea of the direction you'd like to see your curriculum go in. How many themes should it have? What might the implementation look like? Based on your existing pedagogical practice and underlying beliefs, it should be possible to find a suitable curriculum solution from the options currently out there and identify those schools using them effectively.

3. **PITFALL – OFSTED'S 'INTENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT'**
   I'd never heard of these terms before the arrival of the new framework. Getting stuck on those terms and arranging your curriculum around them will almost certainly lead you to a very mediocre place. Do what's best for you and your school, then fit the terms around that.

4. **POSSIBILITY – A DECOLONISED CURRICULUM**
   The curriculum development process gives us all an opportunity to interrogate what we've been teaching, especially stories from '*other*' cultures. What is '*other*,' exactly? It's a chance for us to re-examine representations of race, religion, gender and sexual orientation in our programmes of study. How European are they? How white are they? How real are they?

Jeremy Hannay is the headteacher of Three Bridges Primary School

@HannayJeremy
noordinaryclassroom.home.blog

BE AN ENGINE FOR CREATIVITY

Hannah Day looks at how primary schools can ensure their arts provision enables pupils to realise their true talents and potential in the years to come

Creativity in schools can be covered in a number of ways – most explicitly through subjects such as art, D&T and music, but creativity ought to be a school-wide consideration. Creative thought can be encouraged in any number of subjects, through activities that encourage experimentation and exploration, and by adopting a mindset that supports students in investigating, assessing and refining their skills.

For its 2017 'Creativity and the arts in the Curriculum' report (see tinyurl.com/nasuwt-creativity), the NASUWT surveyed trends in teacher numbers and total hours taught in KS3 to KS5 art and design, D&T, drama, media and music between 2011 and 2015. In every subject and key stage, it identified decreases in hours taught that ranged from -8.2% for music to 21.9% for D&T. The only creative subject that seemed to buck the trend was media, which grew its KS3 teacher headcount and hours taught by 12.5% and 4.5% respectively.

The report's figures convey a stark and simple message – that creative subjects are reaching fewer students, and that the provision for those being taught them is shrinking. Since the report's publication there have been no significant changes in this area in terms of broader curriculum priorities, government policies or communications from Ofsted.

WHY IS CREATIVITY IMPORTANT?

According to government's own statistics, the creative industries employed over two million people in 2018, equating to 6.2% of all UK jobs. Add those employed in the cultural and digital sectors, and the size of that workforce tops four million.

However, creative education extends far beyond being a training route for those wanting to work in, say, the film, TV, publishing and architecture sectors. Lessons in creativity help develop skills that benefit young people across all areas of life. GCSE and GCE qualifications – the courses that primary schools lay foundational skills for – encompass research, developing ideas, evaluating and recording progress, and refining and turning those ideas into coherent outcomes. These are all skills that are worth developing, whichever future paths your young people ultimately end up taking.

Ensuring that creativity is valued throughout your curriculum can additionally feed into wider pupil attainment and assessment outcomes at primary level. This can be seen in research carried out by The Cultural Learning Alliance (see tinyurl.com/cla-cfcl) which offers an array of supporting statistics. These include the finding that participation in structured arts activities can increase cognitive abilities by 17%, and the discovery that learning through arts and culture can improve attainment in maths and English.

CREATIVITY IN YOUR OWN SCHOOL

Many primary teachers are skilled creative practitioners, and keen for creativity to occupy an important place within their school. Here are eight ways of marshalling that enthusiasm, supporting your teachers and boosting your school's creative provision.

1. IDENTIFY KEY STAFF

Let the whole school know that you're looking at revising your creative provision and find out who might have an interest in this. Those colleagues with relevant expertise and skills can then help you with the steps below, ensuring that any resulting changes aren't simply imposed from the top down. Don't forget to involve your TAs and support staff, and consider bringing a parent representative on board.

2. MAKE CREATIVITY PART OF YOUR SCHOOL ETHOS

Is creativity something you intend to value as a school? Do you wish to see it become an integral part of your provision? If so, make this commitment clear. Decide what creative learning will look like at your school, both in terms of dedicated arts lessons and the building of creative skills into other academic subjects. Once this is agreed, devise a brief statement that sets out this commitment clearly and refer back to it over the course of your planning.

3. ANALYSE YOUR CURRENT OFFER

Who does what? How do they do it? How successful are they? Out of the creative learning sessions that have already been planned and resourced, which can be shared with the relevant key stage? Which practices might you need to re-work, improve or replace with something better? What ideas do your staff have that might need some support to get off the ground? Empower those staff to present their ideas and give them the assistance they need.

4. SET ASIDE RESOURCES

This could be a tricky one, given current circumstances, but one solution might be to set up a single 'creative space'. Similar to how sports halls support PE teaching, this can serve as an area that's regularly booked out for different classes to use at different

> "Lessons in creativity help develop skills that benefit young people across all areas of life."

times, thus preventing resources from being spread unevenly throughout the school.

I've often put out calls for resource donations from staff and parents, and our reception knows that we operate an 'accept anything' policy when it comes to donations. It's amazing what you can sometimes find in a random bag of items. Put together a general list of items you're likely to need frequently, such as card, fabric, yogurt pots and egg cartons, which can be sent home periodically, thus encouraging donations to be made throughout the year.

PTAs can be drafted in to help with focused fundraising, and businesses in your local area will often be happy to help with donating resources. The Arts Council doesn't provide funding to schools, but it does fund public libraries, museums and individual applications for projects that your school might ultimately be able to access. Get in touch with the education officers at your local galleries and museums and find out what they can offer you.

5. PARTNER WITH PARENTS AND LOCAL CREATIVES

Thanks to the parent body at my daughter's school I now know an illustrator, a silversmith, a boat designer and a furniture maker – and those are just the people I've met. Who else might there be? Who are the people that make up your students' families, and what might they be able to offer?

6. WORK ACROSS SCHOOLS

The model of one teacher working across several schools is one that's often used by primaries and MATs for certain specialist subjects, such as languages. Could there be space in the budget for a primary art, drama or music teacher who may be able to teach while the class teacher uses their PPA time?

7. TRY SOMETHING NEW

The Children's Laureate, author Cressida Cowell, is currently championing an initiative called 'Free Writing Friday', where students are given time and freedom to write whatever they wish, without it being marked. The idea is to encourage their creative imaginations by allowing them go with their ideas wherever they may lead, temporarily freed from having to worry about their spelling and punctuation.

8. TRAIN YOUR STAFF

From books such as *Teaching Primary Art and Design* by Emily Gopaul, to organisations such as The National Society for Education in Art and Design (nsead.org) and their related training, make sure your staff know where to get backup from the wider community of art teachers and practitioners.

Taken together, these pointers should help to either kick-start or strengthen your arts provision, while helping prepare your students for a future in which the ability to approach any number of situations creatively will likely give them the edge...

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

ARE YOUR STAFF
PART OF THE PROBLEM?

When confronting challenging behaviour, it's possible for teachers' own strategies to make a bad situation worse, says Peter Nelmes

Being in a room with a troubled child who is in a state of crisis can be a challenging experience. If there is a charged atmosphere, or a risk of someone getting physically hurt, adrenaline can kick in. I certainly recognise that the number of factors I can focus on shrinks, and it becomes easy to forget to see what is happening from the child's point of view.

Such experiences can be draining and disorienting, even if the threat of violence does not become a reality. It is important, however, that the chaos and heightened emotions that the child is feeling do not become the decisive factors which determine the nature of the shared meanings that are constructed between teacher and pupil. It is important that the teacher is able to keep the interaction safe and productive for everyone at all times.

ADAPTING MOODS

To ensure that the shared meaning has the characteristics which we desire, it is essential to monitor and manage our own levels of arousal. When two people are in a room together, their arousal levels will eventually match. If I am calm with an angry child, one of us is going to adapt our mood. This means that I very rarely shout or raise my voice.

This emotional matching is quite well-known, but less recognised are the other undesirable ways in which we can allow the pupils to affect the nature of the interaction. When I am interacting with a friend there is a degree of mutual regulation about what constitutes acceptable talk and behaviour. With a troubled child, that lack of regulation from your interlocutor can leave one's own internal structures exposed and vulnerable.

There is a risk that the adult, instead of ensuring that the shared meaning is fair and morally structured, allows what the child is bringing to the interaction – chaos,

> "If I am calm with an angry child, one of us is going to adapt our mood"

anarchy or something darker – to shape the nature of the shared meaning. When I first started teaching, a considerable number of colleagues seemed to have internalised some of the anxieties, angers and resentments that the children were feeling. Like the children, they were using ill-advised and self-defeating behaviours. Some were acting very much like the children themselves, using 'strategies' such as:

DEVALUING THE EXPERIENCE

This could include things like finding any excuse to avoid teaching. 'It's rained all day, so the *kids haven't gone out, or had a proper break. Let's just have a pool competition this afternoon.*' This is usually a vote winner with the children, because they are rarely thinking long term. Furthermore, an adult who has fun like this instead of doing 'boring work' is showing that schoolwork can't be all that important, right? Such adults were rarely the ones who the children went to for help.

THREATS OF PHYSICAL FORCE

'First I'm going to ask you nicely to do something, then I'm going to tell you. Then there will be a consequence.' This approach is particularly favoured by anyone with resentment or anger issues of their own, or anyone who feels that they have not been listened to in their life. It is a fairly draconian way of ensuring that the meanings in the classroom are the ones you want to create. Even if it is balanced by a very sensitive child-centred approach, it runs the risk of being counterproductive and can lead to a spike in the number of challenges and even restraints.

NAGGING

'How many times do I have to tell you?' This is the rhetorical questioning of someone

trying to exercise their personal authority when there is none left. The only effect of words like these is to underline the speaker's ineffectiveness. Telling someone does not mean that they have listened. Why is the adult just repeating the same behaviour over and over again? Isn't that what is irritating them about the child's behaviour? Shouldn't someone look at the bigger picture here? Nagging is, in effect, teaching a child that there are times when it is acceptable not to listen.

THREATS OF VERBAL BULLYING

Some staff coped by becoming leaders of the pack, creating hierarchies – among both pupils and some staff – with themselves at the top. These were based on sporting prowess and occasional physical aggression, with 'banter' often the means by which status was assigned and maintained.

These days there is much more support, accountability and regulation than there was when I first entered the classroom. Despite this, with some staff there is still a sense of disparity between what they agree in training sessions is best practice and what they actually do. Some seem locked into styles of interaction that are self-defeating, that limit their effectiveness in creating productive shared meanings with the children.

CHANGING BEHAVIOURS

Our behaviours can be difficult to change, even when we want that change, because they are a result of our thoughts and feelings, which are shaped by previous experiences. There is a link, therefore, between our behaviour and our core beliefs. Learning techniques to change our behaviour may not work if our core beliefs remain the same.

Unless staff change their core beliefs about children, about teaching and

learning, and often about themselves, there is probably little chance that they will put techniques for improving the shared meanings they make with pupils into effect. They will likely continue to make mistakes, such as:

MISATTRIBUTING NEEDS
'You need to sit down!' Not true. In fact, I, the teacher, need you, the pupil, to sit down, please.

DEMONISING THE CHILD
'He knows exactly what he's doing!' *'She's so manipulative!'* While it is true that some children do deliberately undermine, disrupt or hurt, and that they know exactly what they are doing, it is important to bear in mind that they do not understand *why* they are doing it. They need help to learn to meet their needs through more socially acceptable behaviours.

BLAMING
'You knew exactly what you were doing – it was your fault.' The pupil is being stupid, unfair, disobedient or hurtful, and they are breaking the rules. This may be true from your point of view, of course, but from the pupil's perspective, there will be another interpretation.

Once you have made everyone safe, it is your job to try to work out the meaning behind their actions. You cannot do that if you have written them off.

PERPETUATING MYTHS
'Oh, he's just like his brother/father/mother!' This is a nice way of avoiding engaging with a problem and the feelings tangled up in it. Discount anyone who tells you myths about 'children being cruel', 'boys being boys', or 'girls fighting meaner than boys'. What pupils need is for you to help them by working out why they are behaving in such a way, not to be dismissed as the embodiment of a stereotype.

INTERNALISED SHAME
Here there is no external speech, just an anger towards the pupil who, you feel, is making you feel shame because you do not seem to be able to manage this pupil as well as other colleagues do. This is another example of focusing on your own feelings, rather than those of the child in the interaction.

DENIAL
'Yes, he spat in my face, but that's alright. He was upset, so I understand.' Removing boundaries makes everyone feel unsafe.

There is another form of denial, which is simply being poor at listening to children or noticing their needs.

SEEING PLAY AND LEARNING DIFFERENTLY
'If only you'd pay as much attention to your work as you do to that game.' Some people seem to have a core belief that learning is always a serious matter. They do not realise that, for children, one of the prime motivators for play is the learning they get from it.

I have made many of these mistakes along the way, and continue to refine my approach. It is important for staff to revise their core beliefs and their behaviours. If they do not, why should the children?

Peter Nelmes has worked with children with challenging lives and challenging behaviour since 1990 and taught and researched in a variety of settings; this article is based on an edited extract from his book *Troubled Hearts, Troubled Minds*, published by Crown House Publishing

SATS DON'T WORK: IT'S TIME TO ACT

WHAT DO HEADTEACHERS THINK?

90% agree that SATs narrow the curriculum in year 6

OVER 1/2 think SATs narrow the curriculum in other years

91% disagree with the changes made to SATs in 2016

92% think SATs have a negative impact on teachers' well-being

83% think SATs have a negative impact on pupils' well-being

PUT CHILDREN AND THEIR EDUCATION AHEAD OF SATS

Measuring whole schools on the basis of high-stakes tests taken by primary age children is unjust.

If you agree, PLEASE ACT NOW

Show your support for children's overall education and well-being ahead of the government's testing regime by ordering The More Than A Score Pledge TODAY.

Join headteachers around the country in opposing the current system.

Isn't it time the Department for Education listened to you, the experts, about statutory assessment and accountability?

ORDER YOUR PLEDGE CARD TODAY
www.morethanascore.org.uk/pledge

more than a score

All figures refer to a survey of 288 primary school headteachers carried out in March – June 2019 by Dr Alice Bradbury, UCL Institute of Education using Opinio software.

5 REASONS TO TRY...
Evidence Me

2Simple gives us the lowdown on how this assessment app can make observations easy while keeping parents fully in the loop

30 SECOND BRIEFING

Evidence Me is our award-winning assessment, observation and reporting app. It shows the impact of children's learning by capturing learners' experiences, monitoring their development and creating reports to share their progress. Evidence Me has been thoughtfully created by teachers, for teachers, to ensure all the essential features have been included.
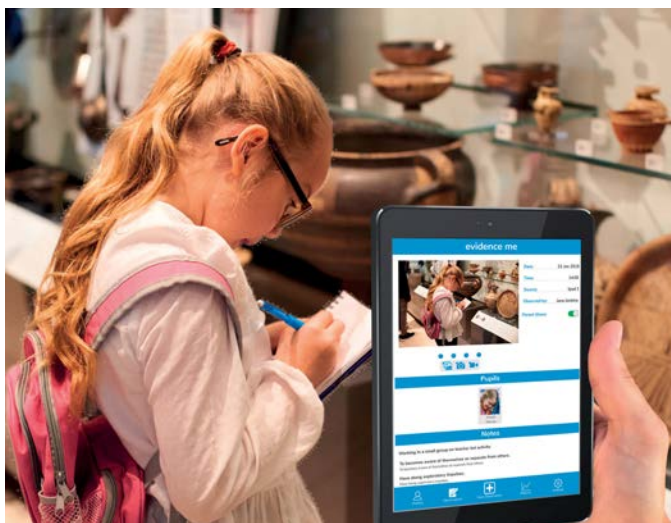
1 REDUCE TEACHER WORKLOAD

Gone are the days of Post-it notes, ring binders and scrapbooks for evidencing learning. Evidence Me has been designed to significantly reduce teacher workload, allowing teachers to easily take a photo, capture a video or write a note and instantly upload their observation to the app whilst on the go – with or without WiFi. With Evidence Me, teachers will be able to consistently form quality formative assessment while simultaneously saving themselves hours of record keeping time.

2 REPORTING AND ASSESSMENT

Our reporting has been designed to be as effortless as possible, because we know how time-consuming reporting can be. Using in-app assessment data, teachers can track, evidence and support their classes' learning with a variety of reports, including an Individual Framework Progress and Coverage Report, a Flightpath Report and a Teach Next Report. Completed reports are stored on the websuite, enabling teachers to collate past reports for as long as their licence is active, and can also be easily exported in a range of formats.

3 DEDICATED PARENT APP

Our new dedicated parent app can be used for two-way communication between parents and teachers to share information in real time. Teacher retain control over what's shared with parents, with any shared observations sent instantly to the parent app. Parents can comment on the observation and create their own by adding media and notes, before sending this back to the teacher to view without the need for emails or logging on to the websuite. It's the perfect way for parents to be updated on their child's progress and learning journey.

4 AUTO-SUGGESTING OF NEXT STEP OBJECTIVES

Auto suggesting of objectives is another great time-saving feature. When setting up Evidence Me, you can upload your preferred framework from early years to KS2, or even upload a custom framework. Once an observation has been captured, the auto suggesting tool will recommend the objectives and next step objectives based on the teacher's notes from the observation.

5 SHARE OBSERVATIONS

In a classroom or nursery setting, there will often be more than one person responsible for capturing observations. Evidence Me ensures that any observations are instantly updated on the learners' profiles across multiple devices within the same school setting. This feature saves teachers' time by making sure that multiple observations are not made of one child doing the same activity, while also updating and suggesting the next objective to capture.

HOW IT WORKS

Take observations by snapping and uploading a photo, filming a video or through simply recording a written note on your app.

You can tag an observation with an auto-suggested objective, tag the same objective to multiple children, or use the multi-photo function to show a sequence of learning.

Track progress through reporting and assessment by importing your baseline data and producing curriculum coverage reports with just a few clicks.

Share pupils' learning journeys beyond the school by exchanging feedback with parents directly through Evidence Me's dedicated parent app.

GET SET FOR THE
SCHOOLS & ACADEMIES SHOW

Read on to find out why school leaders and business managers ought to pay a visit to Birmingham this November...

The Schools & Academies Show is a bi-annual event that takes place in April at ExCeL London and in November at the NEC Birmingham. The combined attendance of both shows tops 8,000, attracting visitors from schools, MATs and LAs, government officials and members of the wider education sector.

Both shows aim to bring together senior decision makers and budget holders from schools with some of the UK's leading education suppliers for two days of thought-provoking talks, roundtables, best practice case studies and more besides. SLTs making the trip can expect to find an array of practical advice and discover a whole host of innovations with the potential to make a big difference within their settings.

Whether you're a headteacher, school business manager, finance leader or MAT executive, you won't be short of things to keep you busy. The Schools & Academies Show presents a valuable opportunity to meet and network with peers from across the country, catch up on the latest developments affecting the profession from influential policymakers and see for yourself the latest solutions from a range of leading education suppliers – many of whom will be offering show-exclusive discounts.

Visitors registering for free tickets will also get to attend a series of CPD-certified seminars and presentations taking place throughout the event, further details of which can be found at the Schools & Academies Show website.

In terms of show features, the Government Education Village is where you'll find representatives from the DfE and the Education & Skills Funding Agency ready to answer your queries. Those stopping by will be able to avail themselves of practical advice, witness mini-demonstrations of upcoming initiatives and find out more about the government's upcoming plans for the sector.

Elsewhere, the Wellbeing Demonstration Area will be serving up plenty of helpful suggestions for improving the health and wellbeing of your staff and pupils.

Attendees will get the chance to participate in live demonstrations of yoga, mindfulness, healthy eating and general wellbeing, and take away with them a number of ideas that they can start implementing at their school.

New for this year, meanwhile, is the MAT Matchmaking Area – a dedicated area for roundtable discussions tackling the most notable and pressing topics affecting MATs across the country. Those wishing to take part will need to choose the session they wish to join and register their interest ahead of the event. Also making an appearance for the first time will be the Charity Village, where registered charities will get to showcase the work they do and take their message to the headteachers, SBMs, governors and other education leaders who'll be in attendance.

And finally there's … us. The team that brings you *PSM* will be present throughout the show, exhibiting at stand J72, so don't hesitate to pop by and say hello. We look forward to seeing some of you there!

SCHOOL BUSINESS SERVICES
STAND H12
Wouldn't it be nice to have the time and insight to compare your existing school operating model against alternatives? And then create a vision that's both financially sustainable and covers business strategy, data, HR and ICT?

SBS was founded a decade ago to deliver strategy, software and support for all school types. Our experienced team act as critical partners and provide an ongoing outsourcing solution.

See our Education Business Director, Lisa Kelly, in the Business & Finance Theatre at The Schools & Academies Show on 13th November. The session will be co-presented by David Bond, CFO of Lion Academy Trust, which consists of nine primary academies. **schoolbusinessservices.co.uk**

SCHOLARPACK
STAND D16
Imagine what you could do for your pupils if your teachers, SLT and administrators had access to pupil data anytime, anywhere. Imagine if putting together your census information took only 30 minutes.

From attendance and assessments, to accidents and incidents, ScholarPack is The Key's cloud-based MIS helping primary schools save time and work more efficiently. Come and get a live demo from our friendly team on the stand to see how ScholarPack could benefit your school. **scholarpack.com/psm**
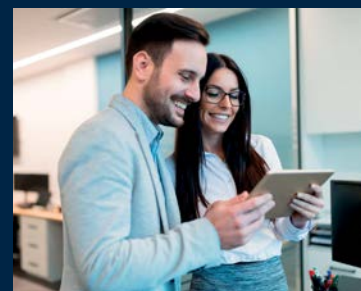
ACTIV ABSENCE
STAND A25
Sickness absence is an issue few businesses can afford to ignore – it's estimated that employee absence costs UK businesses £29bn each year.

At Activ Absence, we help companies in the UK and internationally to reduce their employee absence rates and manage their absences and holiday leave seamlessly using our cloud-based, state of the art technology.

Using Activ Absence, companies can automate the management of absence and monitor staff absence levels transparently via one central system. The system enables access to real-time absence data, facilitates the monitoring of absence trends and can be made to alert managers to particular absence patterns. Users can also benefit from its powerful absence management reports, view Bradford scores, enforce their absence policy more effectively and save money by reducing hours of HR administration. **ActivAbsence.co.uk/schools2019**

PUPIL ASSET
STAND D4
Pupil Asset software supports your school community, enabling effective leadership through informed decision making and helping you identify potential improvements and determining the impact of change. Our tools for analysing attendance, attainment, progression, behaviour, communications and more offer your school the best chance of success.

According to Sam Selby, Education Director at the Bellevue Education Group, "Pupil Asset have a clear desire to really understand what you are trying to achieve as a school. I'm impressed with their adaptability, flexibility and expertise."

Visitors to the show can book a demo in advance by contacting sales@pupilasset.com or calling 01603 631 436. **pupilasset.com**
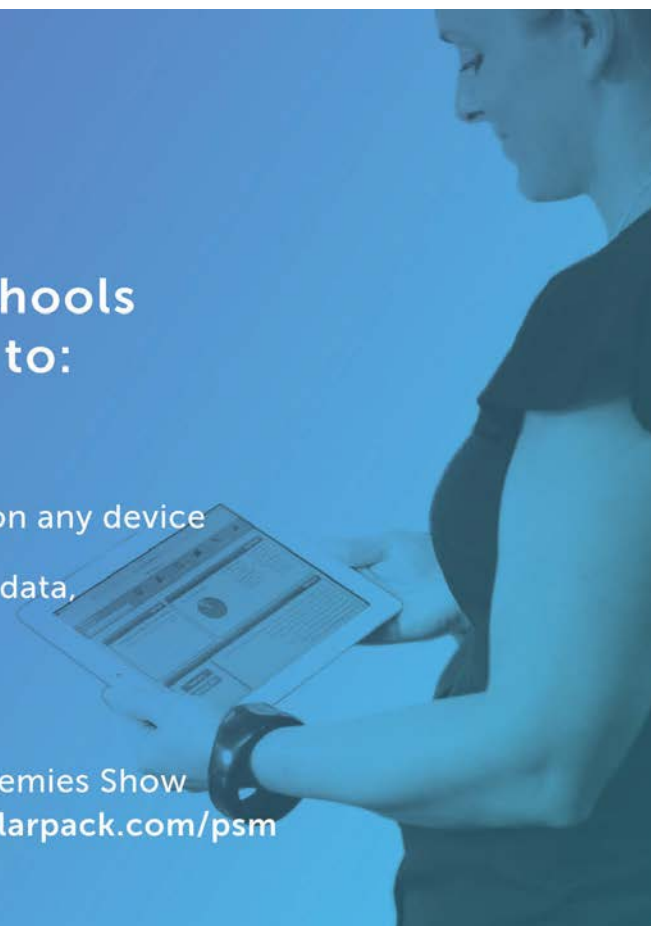
Buildings & Facilities

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE YOUR SIGNS?

Mark Harman rounds up the points schools ought to observe when installing exterior signage

Most schools will have a post-mounted sign located near the school gates, a secondary welcome sign close to the main entrance and sometimes further directional signs for visitors. When deciding where those signs should go and how they should look, this is what to bear in mind.

1. VISIBILITY

When we arrive on site we'll sometimes find that there's a large fence or hedge in the way. It sounds obvious, but visibility is key. With welcome signs, it should be clear where people are actually being welcomed to, and where they should proceed to from there. If the school entrance is some distance from the school building, it may be worth installing a finger post directional sign indicating specific areas.

2. SURFACES

Yes, if it's in soil or grass, we'll smile. If it's in concrete we might not smile as much, but we can perform an underground site survey to ensure there are no services underneath and dig the holes required for installing the sign. Main signs will usually take around two hours to install onto a soft surface, and typically double that when mounting into concrete.

3. LEGIBILITY

We don't supply many white signs. Ours are mostly designed in darker reds, blues and greens with lighter coloured text – a combination that's more legible to people who are partially sighted. The majority of our signs also include a border around the edge. This is informed by guidance originally issued by the College of Optometrists, stating that information contained within borders is read and retained more easily. There's also the benefit that brighter colours are generally more child-friendly than stark, black and white signs.

4. INFORMATION

Only include information which will stay the same on main sign panels, such as the school's name and logo. Details that could easily change, such as a main phone number or the headteacher's name, should be placed on a secondary slip beneath the main sign, as replacing that will be considerably cheaper than changing the main sign itself.

I can recall a school in Essex some years ago which was in Special Measures at the time. Every year for three years they had a new principal. Each time, egos would take over and they'd install new signage throughout the whole school – it was a complete waste of money.

5. DESIGNS

Schools tend to supply us with their own artwork, having previously used it to develop and promote their identity. However, a crest designed to look good on a sheet of A4 paper may not necessarily scale to an eight by four feet sign – the quality has to be good. We'll sometimes need to tidy up a graphic that we've been supplied, but that's included in the price and we'll often give schools their revised artwork so they can use it for other purposes.

6. MAINTENANCE

Our signs are all applied with a surface film that makes graffiti easier to remove and protects them from UV exposure. In our experience, signs are less at risk from vandalism than they are from fading over time. To keep them looking good, send your site manager out once a year with a bucket of soapy water, and your sign will continue to look as good as new.

7. SAFETY

This is perhaps the biggest consideration of all. As a company, we ensure that radius corners are included on all of our signs. We're aware of companies that still produce signs with 90° angles which we frown upon, as it's not unheard of for some signs to be positioned at children's head or shoulder height.

Mark Harman is the managing director of Signs4Schools

🖥 **schoolsigns-uk.co.uk**

THE FUTURE OF ID?

Wayne Street highlights an innovative ID card system that could revolutionise your evacuation procedure

An unplanned fire alarm goes off during the transition between lessons. There are students everywhere. Most aren't in a classroom, and it's not clear which teachers are responsible for which students. Chaos – but what if you could know exactly where, zone by zone, your students are and could open specific routes to get them out safely?

I recently visited a new property technology organisation called Unifi.Id which devises unique ID cards and software solutions. The cards employ proprietary UHF technology that allows access control systems to stay as they are, typically using PVC cards to unlock doors as you'd see in hotel rooms. The clever thing is these cards never need leave your students' pockets.

UHF stands for 'ultra high frequency', which is a technology currently used in applications such as vehicle readers (think automatic gates that unlock and open as you approach) that could make manual school registration a thing of the past. Picture it – a student enters the classroom and the system logs that they're there, the time they arrived and the route they took. They don't need to touch a card to a reader or swipe, because the software can pick them up automatically.

Integrate it into an access control system, and classroom doors could be locked and unlocked automatically as students and staff members approach. Take it a step further, and a combination of facial recognition cameras and those clever UHF cards could pick out on-site intruders.

There are some obvious downsides. Multiple potential safeguarding issues would need to be addressed, and there does come a point where this all starts to feel very Big Brother, but the benefits are tangible, especially in emergency situations.

During my visit, Unifi.Id demonstrated an evacuation scenario on a university campus. Students carrying cards are automatically logged into the system when entering campus buildings after passing a UHF sensor. Limit building access to those with cards only (admittedly an area which would need to addressed with school students) and you now know exactly who's in the building when the fire alarm goes off.

Staff and students start heading for the exits and pass the sensors on their way out, thus creating an impromptu fire register. The resulting data can be uploaded to a cloud server and displayed in real time on any internet-connected device, showing who's left the building and whether anyone's still inside. This would enable first responders to be directed accordingly, cutting down search times.

Data captured during the incident can then be saved and reviewed later. The ability to see exit routes taken and accurately measure how long the evacuation took is invaluable, and an excellent resource for improving your emergency procedures.

Realistically, it'll be some time before systems of this kind become common in the UK, but we're already seeing how real-time actionable insights can change the way we manage buildings. After all, big brothers aren't necessarily all bad…

Wayne Street is technical manager at ID Management Systems

🐦 **@idmanagement.com**
🖥 **@IDManagement**

Buildings by the book

Louise Hosking presents a concise explainer of the regulations that will govern your next construction or expansion project

The 'Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 2015' affect all schools in relation to building maintenance and/or refurbishment works (see tinyurl.com/psm-cdm-2015). Their aim to reduce the risk of accidents during small works and construction projects by mandating good design, planning and co-operation. They specify legal requirements for on-site safety and welfare facilities, while contributing to a broader recognition that the way projects are designed and managed can reduce risks to workers – and that well-designed buildings are ultimately safer to use and easier to maintain and clean.

CDM regulations apply to all non-routine project work outside of standard like-for-like replacements or planned maintenance. They define 'construction work' as the creation, alteration, conversion, fitting out, commissioning, renovation, repair, upkeep, redecoration or maintenance of a school building – including the provision of mechanical and/or electrical services.

It's important to note that official notification will be required where the project duration is set to exceed 30 days and will see 20 people or more on-site simultaneously, or where a project will exceed 500 person days. Notification should be submitted online to the HSE by the project client.

Duty holders

There should be no reason to appoint an additional person to administer CDM arrangements if the project team possesses the skills, knowledge and experience required to perform their duties. Schools must ensure they fully understand the responsibilities of the project's various duty holders and their role in the process. Duty holders in turn have a responsibility to assign appropriately qualified individuals to the project, and cooperate effectively with any other designers and contractors commissioned by the client.

CLIENTS

In projects involving non-community schools, the school itself will be the client. They will have commissioned the project in the first instance, chosen the contractors and initiated the work. In projects involving community schools, the client will more likely be an LA, which will decide what will be undertaken and how. The client is positioned at the head of the supply chain and will be expected to put arrangements in place to ensure that risks to health, safety and welfare are properly managed, which will require them to produce an appropriate project work strategy.

CONTRACTORS

Contractors manage or control the subsequent construction work. If only one contractor is involved, they must produce a construction phase H&S plan, describing how the on-site arrangements will be organised, before the project starts. Where more than one contractor is involved, the client must appoint a principal contractor in writing. The PC's role will be to coordinate all of the contractors attached to the project and produce the construction phase H&S plan.

Designers

It's the job of the designer to prepare drawings, decide on the layout, issue bills of quantity, specify materials and propose any structural changes. A principal designer must be appointed in writing by the client on projects involving more than one contractor. The PD's responsibilities will include collating site hazard information before work begins and compiling an H&S file over the course of the project. The latter will detail how the project was completed, including 'as built' drawings, specifications, details of materials used and operational/maintenance manuals. The file will then be presented to the client at the project's conclusion and referred to in future for hazard information ahead of any further construction work on the site.

Louise Hosking is managing director at the health and safety consultancy, Hosking Associates

@hoskingassociat
hosking-associates.com
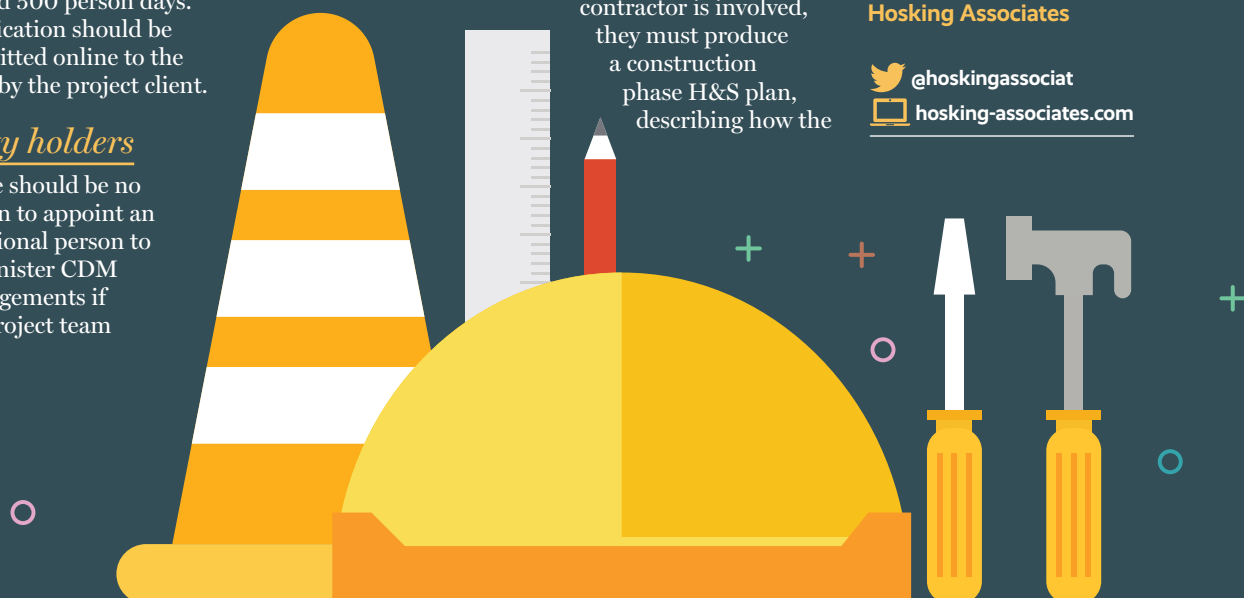
"I KNEW THAT WE COULD DO BETTER"

Unsatisfied with the efforts of design professionals, the staff and parents at Halberton Primary set about remodelling the school's library space on their own terms...

"Teach a child to read, and keep that child reading, and we will change everything. And I mean everything."

Earlier this year, that quote from Jeanette Winterson weighed on my mind while I searched for inspiration, trying to devise a vision for our library at Halberton Primary School, Devon. What special environment could we create for our children to encourage them to read, and keep them reading?

Having never undertaken anything like this before, I contacted a library design company and asked them to share some of their ideas with me, but was distinctly underwhelmed by what they came back with. I knew that we could do better. This, then, is the story of how a small team created 'Shirley's Library'....

GETTING STARTED

The initial creative spark came when I saw the wooden shelving used by an independent book shop here in Tiverton called Liznojan. It looked great, was sustainably sourced and prompted me to wonder whether our library could be based around a similar design.

One productive Pinterest session later, I'd created a woodland-themed 'library inspiration' board. I invited the school's parents to get involved by submitting some ideas of their own, and was delighted to find among the responses we received one from Kayleigh and Will Diggle – Liznojan's co-founders. Together, we formed a 'library group', drew up an action plan and devised a draft timetable for turning our vision into a reality.

As the summer holiday got underway, work on the library began. The room was stripped of all furniture, books and carpets, and the empty shell repainted in shades of green. The paints used were predominantly water-based and derived from natural materials – prior to this, we barely knew that vegan paint was even a 'thing'.

The conversion work mostly took place over July and August 2019, undertaken by a team of around eight parental volunteers, ably assisted at times by several Halberton pupils. To help shape our woodland theme, plain stools were bought and spray painted to resemble toadstools. A mini picnic bench and curved wooden bench were purchased

to provide alternative seating. An old wooden cable reel was repurposed to provide a secure base for the library's centrepiece tree (more on which later) and a combined seating/desk space.

We then added a raised platform made from untreated pine timber – a material certified eco-friendly by the Forest Stewardship Council, which contains no nasty preservatives. The platform's components were screwed together, leaving open the possibility of reusing them in future. Though originally designed to be 45cm high, the height was eventually altered to 25cm to prevent the slope from becoming too steep. Surplus wooden posts and artificial grass from our federated school, Uplowman Primary, were used to strengthen and support the structure.

A SPACIOUS GLADE

The library's shelves were created using reclaimed scaffolding boards sourced from the construction industry, which had been deemed no longer safe for site use. Treated with oil, they provide a rich focal point for the room while displaying our books.

Between the shelves we added tree trunk 'risers' fashioned from local ash trees that had been found to exhibit early symptoms of ash dieback disease. These were carefully selected and thinned from local woodland areas, so as to exert minimal impact on the wider ecosystem.

Also present is a treehouse feature constructed by parent and builder Ian Awcock, which makes further use of surplus material from Uplowman and employs waney edge cladding sourced from the local, independently-owned Milverton Sawmill.

The beautiful artwork adorning the library's walls was meanwhile painted by local artist, Jamie Whyte. As he recalls, "Knowing I'd have only seven days to complete it, when I first saw the room I was daunted by the size of it; having measured up, I discovered the wall space amounted to around a thousand square feet. To cover it, I painted three layers of trees in a simple illustrative style, working some more detail and texture into the foreground trunks using household emulsion mixed with acrylic paint."

AN UNUSUAL REQUEST

The library's low energy, A* rated lighting system is dimmable and calibrated to a warm colour that makes the space glow, while consuming around half the energy of our old lighting system. Another new addition are the space's USB plug sockets for use with the tablets our children use, the sole purpose of which are for quizzing the children once they've completed an accelerated reader book. We've consciously tried to minimise the amount of digital technology used within the library, in favour of maximising opportunities for our children to develop a love of reading books.

As you enter the library, you encounter Ben – a two metre-high Ficus Benjamina tree sourced for us by the local firm, Urban & Rural Plants. We also consulted with

another friend of the school, carpet fitter James Pyatt, who explained what we could do in terms of creating a woodland scene using artificial grass indoors – not a request he gets very often! We were impressed at how he and his son were able to skilfully and seamlessly transform our room into a visibly lush environment.

In this library, comfort is key. Keen to let the children choose their preferred spot for reading, we specified a number of cushions that would allow the children to sit comfortably wherever they wish. One of our parent volunteers, Maria Little, created bespoke 'envelope cushion covers' for us out of materials donated by a local mattress company.

COMBINED EFFORTS

So far, the children have been using the library every day and look forward to spending time there. The treehouse has proved very popular, so we've taken to randomly and fairly selecting our 'treehouse children' each day.

It was great to see how excited the children were upon being introduced to the

space for the first time, but what I find more exciting is just seeing them read. From crafting the components to paying the invoices, this project wouldn't have been possible were it not for the combined efforts of our fantastic team. This library could change everything for our pupils. And I mean *everything...*

Christine Campion is head of teaching and learning and SENCo at Halberton Primary School

 @halbertonp

 halberton.school

Boost pupils' independence

James Rhodes highlights the points schools should consider when designing and implementing a manual handling system

Many children with disabilities and SEN can benefit from a broad-ranging physical curriculum which covers every aspect of their development. With each unique child comes a varied learner profile, incorporating strengths, needs and short and long-term goals.

Designing accessible areas for children with physical disabilities requires careful consideration and ought to be undertaken in conjunction with an occupational therapist and other healthcare professionals. Whether it's an adaptation to an existing building or forms part of a new installation, manual handling systems enable children with complex needs to move freely around a room or hall with ease, facilitating their independence.

Factors to examine when installing such systems within a special or mainstream school setting include the following:

WHICH SYSTEM?

A wide variety of hoisting systems are available – the most effective one for your setting will depend on the physical environment and the specific functions needing to be carried out.

Free-standing portable tracks to support hoists These can be easily carried and transferred from room to room via a fixed track. A free-standing system will make no structural requirement on ceilings or walls, making them easy to remove when the lifting system is no longer needed.

In situ ceiling hoist track Ceiling hoists and associated tracking are designed for multipurpose environments such as halls, swimming pools, showers and sensory therapy areas to provide lifting and patient transfer assistance. These systems can run through doorways into adjoining areas.

Gateway systems Also used in multipurpose environments, these connect neighbouring rooms via flexible turntables to help navigate tight curves, enabling transfers from bedrooms to bathrooms or bathrooms to living rooms.

TRAINING AND MAINTENANCE

A safe-patient handling policy, compulsory manual handling training and regular assessments are all essential for staff involved in moving and lifting individuals. Poor moving and handling practice can lead to back pain, musculoskeletal disorders and even accidents for those doing the lifting (not to mention discomfort and loss of dignity for the person being moved). Lifting equipment should be properly maintained and cleaned in accordance with the setting's existing disinfection policies.

A SEND CURRICULUM

Chailey Heritage Foundation provides education and care for children and young people with complex neuro-disabilities. Most have cerebral palsy with associated complex health needs and many others have visual impairment and dual sensory impairments; all are wheelchair users.

The school has developed its own curriculum based on individual learners' needs, with physical development a key area of focus. The school's use of a mobility, track and hoisting system to create possibilities for learning is therefore vital – children are encouraged to take part in physical activities to improve their ability to sit, encourage postural and head control, improve their limb control and dexterity, and develop their coordination and spatial awareness.

A series of hoists within classrooms further promotes socialisation for the children, freeing them from inhibitive equipment and allowing for better communication and more natural interactions with their peers. That could be as simple as having the ability to touch each other, or something more involved such as participation in various verbal and physical games.

"It's easy to forget the importance of physical contact as part of a child's natural interaction with another child", says Helen Springall, a SEN teacher at the school.

"Free from cumbersome equipment, mobilised children with severe physical disabilities are able to build closer relationships and interact in a way that was previously denied to them. This mobilisation gives them a freedom and independence to select the games and activities they want to take part in – and pushes boundaries not just in their physical development, but opens their minds to new opportunities and aspirations."

James Rhodes is marketing manager at Hillrom (Liko), in charge of early mobilisation and falls prevention

hill-rom.co.uk/uk

AUTOMATION IS YOUR FRIEND

Save yourself time by getting computers to do the hard work for you. Terry Freedman explains more...

Every school should embrace the idea of ICT automation. It saves time, reduces workload and can minimise the likelihood of error. But what do we mean by 'automation' in this context?

It's best to think of it as a spectrum that spans simple applications to others that are far more ambitious. Here are some examples that might prove helpful for your setting...

TEMPLATES

Arguably the most basic type of automation is the humble template. If there are particular documents you want staff to complete, creating a template is simple way of making everyone's lives easier and ensuring that the returns will all follow the same format.

FORMS

You can take this a stage further by using certain types of software. Word, for instance, will let you create fixed electronic forms with editable areas for others to enter information. These can appear as drop-down menus if you need to limit people's range of responses, or you can impose a maximum character limit for written responses.

Forms can also prevent people from using their own fancy formatting, should you wish – once a form has been created, it can be saved as a template. Many applications will allow you to create forms of various types, so it's worth exploring your software of choice and seeing what it's capable of.

PROACTIVE SPREADSHEETS

A common feature of well laid-out spreadsheets is conditional formatting. If you use a spreadsheet to keep track of your school's hardware inventory, conditional formatting will help you see at a glance whether some items of equipment experience faults

more often than others. Set up a conditional formatting rule to highlight in red any printer, for example, that's required attention more than once during the last half term.

LINKED SYSTEMS

More useful still are management information systems, which will automatically acquire data from multiple sources and present it to you on a single screen, enabling you to gain insights into possible links between pupils' attendance, standards of behaviour and academic outcomes. If Harry's scores have started dropping seemingly out of the blue, the data may well indicate his unauthorised absences and 'late' markers have started rising at around the same time.

PROACTIVE SYSTEMS

A step up from linked systems are those that don't wait for you to identify warning signs – they'll tell you about them. It's possible, for example, to set up a rule whereby if a pupil is late to school three times in as many days, the deputy head will be automatically notified and the pupil assigned to a 'late' group. With that kind of setup in place, the school will be better equipped to investigate what's going on and contact parents before an issue gets out of hand.

AUTOMATED MARKING

Finally, there are the numerous app-based test creation programs that will mark simple tests for you automatically. These can not only save teachers valuable time, but also enable them to focus on common errors. When configured appropriately, automated marking systems can drastically increase the speed at which teachers are able to receive feedback on whether pupils have understood the work covered.

We can expect other forms of automation to become ever more affordable, powerful and useful to schools in the years ahead, not least in the form of adaptive learning systems based on artificial intelligence, and perhaps even 'bots' capable fielding basic general enquiries from parents. Watch this space…

Terry Freedman is an independent education technology consultant and writer

🐦 **@terryfreedman**
💻 **ictineducation.org**
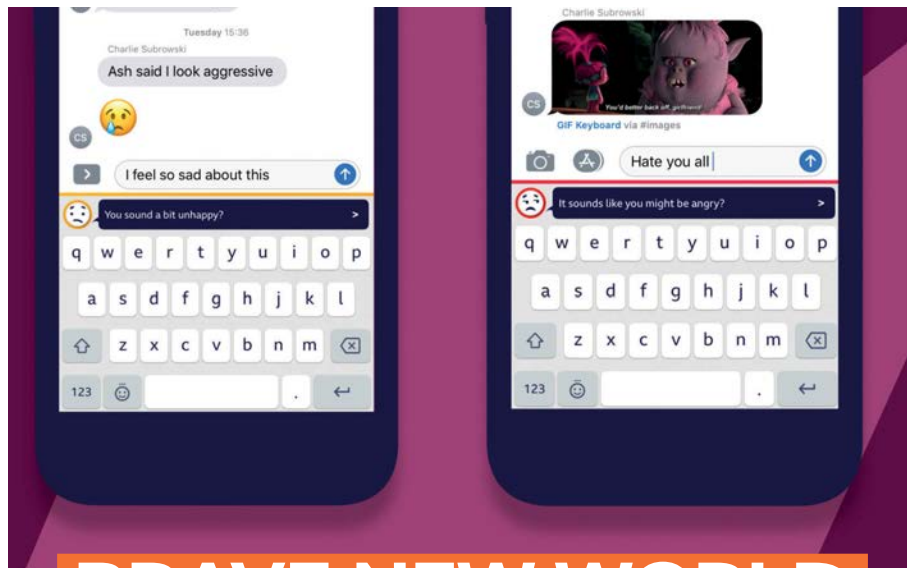
BRAVE NEW WORLD

How a new BBC-developed mobile app is looking to change children's early experiences with smartphones for the better

The day a child receives a smartphone to call their own is a watershed moment. Opinions will differ as to when that moment should arrive, but the chances are good that a healthy proportion of children within your school will have a smartphone of one sort or another that belongs to them.

Whether their phone travels with them to school or not, what they do with that phone while at home can have a significant impact on their behaviour in the classroom and the playground – from staying up late to play games, to combative social media exchanges that translate into arguments at break time.

To help tackle the kind of difficulties that can accompany children's first steps into the online world, the BBC has launched a new wellbeing app by the name of 'Own It'. Once installed, the app steps in to offer pop-up behavioural nudges and suggestions when a young smartphone user's behaviour seems to stray outside of the norm, or when they appear to lose composure.

Contexts in which the app will be triggered include the composing of messages containing certain negative words and sentiments, and times when it appears the user may be about to share their mobile number via a social media platform. Own It will also serve up 'snackable' information tips concerning smartphone use late at night, and the implications this can have for their wellbeing.

The app will also serve up specially commissioned content from the BBC's

Own It information portal, including informative resources intended to help young people make the best possible use of their time online and develop healthy online habits. One of the app's broader aims will be to encourage children and parents to have open discussions about online experiences, but the BBC stresses the app itself won't pass any direct reports or feedback to parents, and has even stated that no data relating to the app's activity will leave the device.

According to the BBC's Director-General, Tony Hall, "Ensuring children have a happy and healthy relationship with the internet is an increasingly important issue of our time. The internet is a powerful force for good – but the truth is it wasn't set up for children. Everyone understands the problem. It's now time to act on a solution. The time for debate is over. We must act for the wellbeing of children, to reduce cyberbullying that can destroy lives and to give children the skills to thrive safely in the online world."

Among those expressing support for the app has been the Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield OBE, who said: "I greatly welcome this new app, a genuinely thoughtful and clever attempt to build emotional resilience and children's wellbeing in the digital world. I particularly like that it uses tools and techniques that are familiar to our children, but at the same time doesn't encourage them into the very behaviours we're all trying to teach children to avoid."

💻 **bbc.com/ownit**

Why robotics belongs in primary schools

Ricky Ye makes the case for why it's never too early for children to learn about the world of robotics and AI…

With the rise of artificial intelligence, there's growing concern over the prospect of automation replacing the workforce, even in professions such as teaching. However, this is unlikely to be the case. Rather than acting as a replacement for us, robotics will actually accompany us as we move further into this new technological era. They'll become an integral part of both our personal and professional lives.

As such, the earlier an understanding of robotics can be established, the better equipped young people will be to navigate this new landscape – which is why pupils must start learning robotics from primary school onwards.

It's vital that future generations be provided with skillsets that will enable them to adapt and thrive in the next chapter of their lives. What students learn during their time at primary school really sticks with them; they gain a base level understanding that remains ingrained in their brains throughout the rest of their lives. However hard maths might become later down the line, every secondary and college student will still remember their times tables. Giving children the chance to acquire this level of base knowledge about robotics and AI from a young age would be invaluable.

AI and robotics moreover offers the scope for providing pupils with skills and benefits that can help them in many different areas of their lives. For example, robotics lessons have been reported to help students with autism engage more with STEM subjects, since they typically involve concentrated activity that produces measurable, predictable results. Beyond that, we live in a world that's becoming ever more dominated by STEM. It therefore follows that every student should be given the opportunity to engage fully with those topics that will likely shape the future they're ultimately going to be living in.

Introducing pupils to robotics at an early age is an effective way of demonstrating the avenues and possibilities that the world of STEM makes available to them. Robotics can be both fun and instructional, and without it, many young people might not appreciate the future career paths they could potentially enjoy by pursuing an interest in STEM subjects.

Robotics is also an inherently creative field, and as such, can engage the interest of students that may not otherwise

naturally gravitate towards STEM. Some STEM-related industries are currently struggling to attract young people, with a recent CBI survey revealing that when it came to recruiting staff, 40% of employers have had difficulties in taking on enough STEM graduates. The problem is only likely to worsen as careers become ever more STEM intensive, unless steps are taken earlier on.

Despite the growing prevalence of AI in our lives, there's a widely held belief that it's too complex a topic to teach younger minds. Yet in fact the opposite is true – students must be introduced to it from as young an age as possible.

This is the time, after all, when students' minds are most open to learning about complex topics such as AI and robotics, enabling them to develop a fluency that would be much harder to achieve later on in life. In a world that's already inextricably linked with technology, we mustn't fail to equip the next generation – and those who come after them – with the skills they'll need to thrive in tomorrow's landscape. And this should start with introducing robotics into primary school classrooms.

Ricky Ye is CEO of DFRobot

🐦 **@dfrobotcn**
🖵 **dfrobot.com**
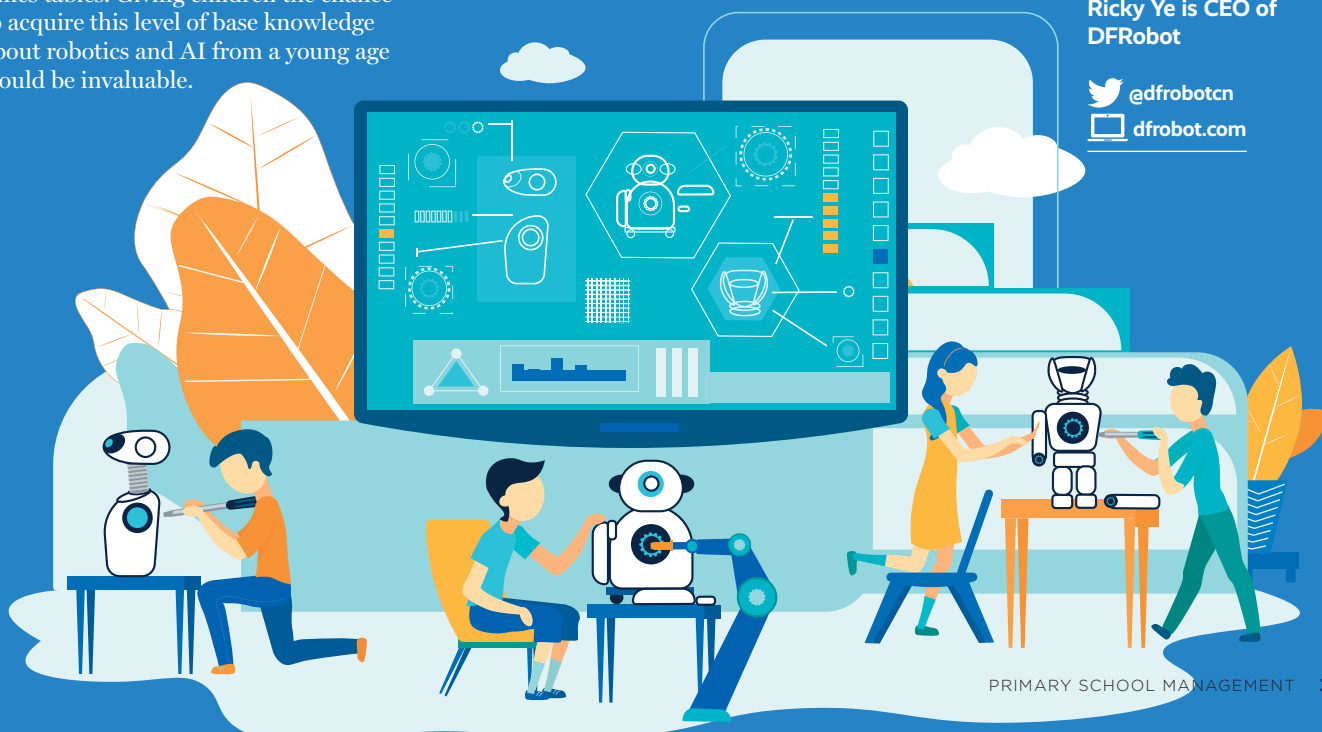
HOW SAFE IS YOUR DATA?

As sophisticated hackers increasingly turn their attention to public sector entities, David Emm offers some advice on how to keep your data secure

Primary schools are similar to small and medium-sized businesses in terms of their information infrastructure, and therefore susceptible to similar security threats. Social engineering remains a key attack method – time and again we find that organisations fall victim to an attack because someone's been tricked into doing something that jeopardises their organisation's security.

That might be clicking on a link, or opening an email attachment that seems to come from a trusted sender. Beyond that, there's the potential for attackers to exploit vulnerabilities in certain applications, such as a PDF attachment that's been modified to install malware when clicked on. Phishing and the use of exploits are still proving to be very successful approaches for bad actors, and remain the principal mechanism by which systems come under attack.

CULTURE OF SECURITY

These types of attacks have grown increasingly sophisticated over time and continue to resemble moving targets – last month's scam may not look anything like this month's. There's always new content to capture people's interest and new deception strategies. Somebody targeting a school organisation may go the extra mile and attempt to masquerade as the headteacher or someone at the LA, making it that much more likely that their email will be clicked on.

Yes, it's possible to analyse the constituent parts of a phishing email and teach people the warning signs to watch out for, but it's better to develop what I'd call a 'culture of security'. Rather than telling people how to respond to this or that phishing email, it's more about encouraging a kind of 'informed

paranoia' – *'I didn't expect this email and it's asking me to click on something – I should probably check with someone.'*

It's effectively a digital counterpart to what schools already do in the real world. If a teacher encounters a stranger when walking the school corridors, the teacher will likely greet them before asking about the purpose of their visit and whether they have an appointment. We don't currently model those same behaviours in the digital space, which is why developing that wider culture of security is so important.

THREAT LEVEL

The overall level of threat has remained fairly consistent over time, though the method of delivery has changed considerably. We've recently been researching malware masquerading as digital textbooks and essays, and found that criminals are increasingly targeting

The National Cyber Security Centre's 'Cyber Essentials' scheme (cyberessentials.ncsc.gov.uk) aims to help organisations of various sizes keep their information secure into the long term and provides a range of resources concerning internet connections, how to secure devices, controlling access to data and protections against malware.

Those wishing to further develop their cyber security practice can opt to become Cyber Essentials certified at Basic, Entry or Plus levels, which can help their organisation move with the times and adapt to ever-changing information security threats more effectively.

education entities. We identified more than 356,000 such attacks on Kaspersky users over the past year involving malicious essays, books and other forms of data downloaded from sites purporting to help people with their work.

The most likely weak points of a primary school's ICT network will obviously be any machines that aren't protected by security software or haven't had their operating systems and applications properly updated. The classic illustration of what can happen as a result is the 2017 WannaCry attack, where organisations which hadn't applied a particular update were left vulnerable to the threat it posed.

Another thing which doesn't help is that certain networks can be very 'flat' – configured so that all users are given the same level of access, with everybody allowed to connect to everything, write to everything and see everything. This can play right into the hands of any attacker, so look at ways in which you can adopt a default of 'least privilege'. If somebody doesn't need to access to something, don't give it to them.

During a ransomware attack the perpetrator will want to hit as many machines as possible. If my machine is restricted from writing data to the network drive, any malware that infects me won't be able to either.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

As well patching our digital resources, we should think about trying to 'patch' our human resources too. Are some staff regularly putting off the installation of important system updates? Are they logging in every session with an unrestricted administrator's account?

Presently we're seeing fewer ransomware programmes in the wild, but we aren't seeing the rate of attacks go down. What seems to be happening is that such attacks are becoming more targeted. Three years ago they were much

more indiscriminate, whereas now they're focused more on specific organisations.

Maintaining regular backups will get you out of that invidious position where you can find yourself contemplating whether you need to pay a ransom for important data to be released. Even simply dragging and dropping important data on to an external USB drive will give you some added security.

Another really important area is passwords. Obvious risks include easy to guess passwords and reusing passwords across multiple accounts, so it might be worth using a password manager. These have become far more flexible in recent years, to the point where they can now work across multiple machines, including mobile devices.

The National Cyber Security Centre (ncsc.gov.uk) has previously suggested viewing your password arrangements as a hierarchy – if somebody knows the primary email address and email password that I use for important authentications, then I'm in real trouble. For that email account, it may be best to use a personally devised, complex and well-remembered password, while leaving 'lesser' accounts that aren't associated with other services to a password manager.

NON-TECHIE TRAINING

So how should schools seek to improve their staff's awareness of network vulnerabilities and build a robust culture of security? One of the best things you can do is remove these concerns from the realm of the 'techie'. If information security is seen as strictly a technical issue, it's likely that 'technical people' will be asked to do the related educational

work – but if you're constantly immersed in this field, it's possible to take a great deal of knowledge for granted.

Technical abbreviations, acronyms, basic security concepts – it's important to be aware that many colleagues won't have that internalised that kind of information, and to pitch any education and training at a level people will understand. Instead of organising a one-off training session and ticking it off as 'job done', make it an ongoing process.

Think back to public information campaigns about road safety, for example, which would drip-feed information via multiple channels. Put posters up. Create a 'Spot the difference' display with a series of technical gaffes in one half and offer a prize for whoever can spot the most. Be imaginative, while ensuring that the information you impart remains accessible.

Finally, it's worth remembering that the awareness you're raising can also benefit colleagues in their personal lives by helping them protect their own computers at home and educate their children.

David Emm is principal security researcher at Kaspersky

@kasperskyuk
kaspersky.co.uk

Community Engagement

RESIDENTIALS HELP ADULTS TOO

Residential trips offer the perfect opportunity for leaders and staff to work out their differences and get to know each other properly, says Louis Walker...

Across the country this past month, children (mostly Year 6s) will have returned to school with one thing on their minds. No, not the SATs – they'll be focussed on their upcoming residential school trip.

We know how important these are for children's development; how they help to build independence and develop skills not easily acquired in the classroom. How they can give children experience of overcoming adversity, and establish a trust and rapport between teachers and pupils that should hopefully see them through what will be the most challenging academic year of their lives to date.

For the teachers, leaders, other staff and parents volunteering their help, however, there's unlikely to be quite the same level of excitement. Nervousness, or perhaps even dread, might better describe their emotions as they prepare to spend the best part of 100 hours straight in the permanent company of many, *many* children.

Yet these journeys also represent a unique development opportunity for those leaders and teachers taking part. It affords the chance to build trust and camaraderie between colleagues that can prove invaluable, particularly when so many schools and leadership teams are facing numerous tough choices.

ALL EQUALS

The head at my school entered his job having been left with some tough choices of his own. The school's outgoing head had put off a number of difficult budget decisions, ostensibly so that his successor could reshape the school as he saw fit.

However, the result was that soon after being appointed, the new head found himself having to make a series of redundancy and hour-cutting decisions that were largely resented by staff. A number of LSAs and some teachers left the school that year, in apparent protest against the

direction the school seemed to be taking.

He, more than anyone, needed the chance to present a different side of himself; to be seen in a context outside of his office. The day he joined the residential trip gave him precisely that…

After a day spent seal watching, fossil hunting and walking through knee-deep mud, followed by an evening visit to a nearby swimming pool, we'd reached the hour when the children were asleep (or at least quiet), allowing the adults to settle down in the tiny makeshift staff room for a well-deserved glass of wine.

Everyone had done their bit during what was a difficult, if rewarding day. We'd all been equals, working through adversity together, and that evening we began to treat each other like human beings.

The head listened as we teachers described our lives before becoming educators and our current home lives. We talked about the kind of things we all need to know when building the sort of friendships that will enhance our working relationships.

GREATER UNITY

This shared experience made everyone who was there far more amenable to what our head had to say. After the trip, our attitudes towards him thawed considerably, and the sentiment spread rapidly from the Year 6 staff to the rest of the school.

That trip did far more to establish unity among senior leaders and experienced staff than any CPD session. It wasn't just the children's lives that were enriched by what those days consisted of.

Everyone has the opportunity to grow when venturing out on a residential trip, adults included. Yes, there will always be a school to run – but taking a short time away can pay dividends for those wanting to lead a school where all staff share mutual respect and common goals.

Louis Walker is a primary school teacher based in Essex

LET'S DEBATE

Get your pupils engaging with some of the most pressing environmental issues of our time via Born Free's new debating initiative

Given that they're the ones who'll be contending with the impact, it's hardly surprising that children and young people have become increasingly vociferous and active in calling for action to tackle climate change and environmental harms.

Now the international wildlife charity Born Free is encouraging schools to engage with that strength of feeling by getting students involved with its 'Great Debate' initiative. Conceived as an annual project, the initiative will provide KS2 to KS4 teachers with a series of free cross-curricular lesson plans, activities and resources aimed at prompting a meaningful debate under the banner of a main overarching topic that will change each year.

The initial launch topic will be *'Plastic: Whose responsibility?'* with talking points set to include the impact of plastics on environmental, wildlife and human health, the long-term damage plastics can cause and where responsibility for their ubiquity and ongoing efforts to dispose of them should lie.

The project is being backed by science and wildlife presenter Liz Bonnin, who has recorded a video to introduce this year's topic. She comments: "The full impact of plastics on our environment is only just beginning to be discovered by scientists, but what they're saying from studies so far is that we can't underestimate how damaging plastics can be to our environment and natural world if not properly used and managed.

"I've seen Shearwater chicks bringing up plastics from their stomachs. I've seen seals entangled in fishing nets. I've seen how corals are dying because plastic is delivering toxic loads of bacteria to an already stressed ecosystem. When it comes to our terrestrial wildlife, scientists are beginning to discover that the chemicals in and on plastic can be incredibly toxic. The more I learn about the scale of this problem and how it can impact our natural world – including human beings – the more I know that it's important to act now, before it's too late."

Laura Gosset, head of education at Born Free, in turn notes that "Future generations will have the tremendous responsibility of protecting our planet from a catastrophic decline in wildlife from which our ecosystem may never recover. There will be significant implications for wildlife, habitats and people alike. That's why Born Free's education team is committed to fostering a love for the natural world, increasing awareness of the threats and challenges facing wildlife and empowering young people to make sustainable choices."

Schools taking part will receive five complimentary one-hour lesson plans with accompanying worksheets, PowerPoint presentations and a summary of learning objectives and curriculum links. Schools will be able to organise their debates at a time of their choosing, though any completing all five lessons and the debate by the end of the autumn term will have the option of including their students' feedback in an official report, which Born Free intends to present to government in order to draw attention to young peoples' voice regarding plastic.

bornfree.org.uk/great-debate

#BFGreatDebate

How to contain viral outbreaks

A number of the children and some of your colleagues all seem to have 'come down with something' – what should be your next move?

The last thing any school wants to do is to send out those dreaded letters highlighting a head lice infestation or worse, an outbreak of norovirus. While outbreaks such as norovirus aren't life-threatening, they can be very disruptive in a school setting due to their highly contagious nature.

An outbreak is defined as when two or more people experiencing a similar illness are linked in time or place, and when there's a greater than expected rate of infection compared with the usual background rate for the environment in which the outbreak has occurred.

Warning signs

With many childhood infections, a child may be contagious for a day or two before symptoms start to show, so it's not always possible to know early on whether children are spreading viruses or bacteria to each other. It is, however, possible to limit the spread through effective hand washing, which is the best way of preventing infection spread, particularly those that cause diarrhoea, vomiting and respiratory disease.

If headteachers suspect an outbreak, they should contact their local health protection team (HPT) to discuss whether further actions are needed. The HPT will need to know the total number of children affected, the nature of the symptoms, the date they started and the number of classes affected. The HPT will then likely advise the headteacher to contact parents and inform them of their responsibilies regarding infection control.

The HPT will regularly contact the school during an outbreak to collect information about any new cases. Schools should therefore ensure that all incidents are recorded and information clearly logged.

To help control the spread of an outbreak, isolate all individuals with symptoms, be they staff or pupils, and alert anyone who's been in contact with them so that they too can check for symptoms. Those affected should avoid contact with pregnant women and people with impaired immunity.

Containing the spread

Anyone unwell during the day should be sent home as soon as possible. The risk of disease spreading will be reduced considerably if infected people are removed as soon as possible, so ensure that there's a parental pick up plan in place to minimise the length of time that sick children remain on site. If a child is unwell and waiting to be collected, they should be cared for in an isolated area where they can't further infect other children.

The same rules apply to staff – they can return to work once they're no longer infectious, but may need to receive clearance from their GP before this can happen. Government guidance on how to manage infectious diseases can be found via tinyurl.com/gov-infection.

Communal play should be stopped until the outbreak has been contained and communal hot spots should be cleaned more regularly than usual. The flu virus, for example, can live on surfaces for around 24 hours. Give commonly touched areas, such as toilet doors and seats, flush mechanisms, fridge handles and switches, a daily wipe down to help contain germs.

Clean and disinfect all doors, cabinet handles, drinking fountains and toilet surfaces at the end of each day, ideally using paper or disposable towels to clean. Reusable cloths should be disinfected or washed at 60°C after every use.

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

🐦 @firstaidforlife

🖥 firstaidforlife.org.uk

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CAUSES AND EFFECTS

Charities and schools have more to offer each other than cheques and cake sales, insists Anne Kazimirski...

There are some classic images that come to mind when we think about charities and schools. A cake sale to help fight cancer, or the lunchtime pop-up stall set up by the local youth club; maybe a visit from a volunteer to talk to the students about an issue such as homelessness.

Each of these reflects a reality about the relationship between schools and the broad institution of charity, but there's s a lot more going on. In fact, we can break down charities' interactions with schools into three groups: benefiting from fundraising, providing services and raising awareness of social issues.

FUNDRAISING AND SERVICES

Fundraising for local or national charities is a regular school activity, with some partnering up with colleagues in more deprived areas of the country or developing countries to share proceeds. I'd love to see a greater commitment from hard-working PTAs, particularly those in wealthier areas, to pass on a greater proportion of proceeds raised to schools in more deprived areas or to outside causes.

My heart sinks a bit to see funds sometimes going towards what seems, to me, non-essential revamping of facilities whilst other schools struggle most basic equipment, or the local homeless shelter has to turn people away.

Services range widely in focus, from addressing inequality to supporting non-academic outcomes or working with vulnerable children, as outlined in a 2016 report by my organisation, the charity think tank NPC.

SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIPS

Some charities also provide specialist support which can help young people succeed at school against all odds. Nottingham-based Imara, for example, supports children and young people who have been sexually abused, helping them recover from trauma while also working with school staff and providing training on how respond to child sexual abuse and trauma within a school context.

A relatively new development is charities partnering alongside schools on systems change, with the goal of altering underlying structures such as policies, resources or power structures to improve the response to a social problem.

Save the Children UK's Early Learning Communities programme aims to improve early learning outcomes for children growing up in poverty through systems change. The charity is focusing in on four communities in England and Wales – Feltham in West London, Margate, Newport and Sheffield – and has set up partnerships with local services, including schools, to explore how working together through a whole system approach can fundamentally change the way children living in poverty are supported to learn and develop.

Educational institutions are also increasingly bringing in charities to raise awareness of risks such as county lines with staff, parents and students. Schools are well placed to spot needs, but don't necessarily have the resources or skills to cater for them, which makes partnering with local and national services a great way of improving support for students and families.

In the meantime, of course, the UK's school system itself is changing and having an impact on how charities and schools interact. The current system has given rise to a number of potential commissioners of services to schools, including LAs and MATs, as well as schools themselves. As we move towards a system made up entirely of academies, the routes for charities into schools will become more fragmented, but the relationship between them will hopefully survive. These new ways of partnering offer opportunities for both charities and schools to tackle the issues that matter to them most.

Anne Kazimirski is head of measurement and evaluation at NPC and leads the Youth Investment Fund evaluation and learning project

 @npcthinks

 thinknpc.org

HOW WASTEFUL
IS YOUR SCHOOL?

Rachel Rowley looks at how schools can reduce, reuse, repurpose and recycle their waste more effectively for the good of their local environment...

Schools have a huge role to play in waste management. By setting out a clear waste management plan, they can not only help to protect the environment while making cost savings, but also set a positive daily example to staff, students, families and community groups, and do their bit to promote long-term, environmentally-aware lifestyle choices.

The same applies to any refurbishments, construction works and other extensive projects that a school might be considering. With appropriate preparations in place, a number of waste and cost savings can be realised throughout the process.

SCHOOL WASTE IN PERSPECTIVE

UK primary schools produce a significant amount of waste. According to research carried out by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), primary schools produce up to 45kg of waste per pupil each year. The DfE estimates that there were approximately 4,727,090 pupils attending state-funded primary schools in England during 2018/19 (see tinyurl.com/dfe-ns-19), which amounts to the creation of more than 212 million kilograms of waste annually.

At the same time, however, WRAP's research indicates that up to 78% of the waste material produced by schools in England each day – such as food, paper and card – can be easily recycled or composted. The question to therefore consider is how much are you throwing away?

To understand the types of waste you have and how they're being produced, it's vital to set a school benchmark via the carrying out of a waste audit. This will help identify possible areas of improvement

– often challenging conventional approaches to waste disposal in the process – and compel you to think differently about your existing waste disposal procedures.

You'll then be able to provide your staff with a plan to actively reduce the amount of waste produced by the school through early intervention and making better choices from the outset. An audit should also deliver an accurate forecast of potentially reusable and recyclable items, and prompt considerations around alternative disposal options for certain items, such as charitable donations. This will help you develop a waste management strategy that the whole school can adhere

to, and give you a means of clearly identifying results and where cost savings can be made.

BE 'WASTE WISE'

School leaders have the ability to cascade best practice behaviours towards waste and recycling across the whole school, and further out to the wider school community, including families and community groups.

Everyone, from pupils and teachers through to caretakers, kitchen staff, office staff and governors, need to be actively engaged with, and have ownership of, a school's waste management strategy. This can be done by implementing composting initiatives for food waste and following a 'reduce, reuse, repurpose and recycle' approach to dealing with packaging and spent stationery supplies, as outlined below:

Reduce

Make a conscious effort to produce less waste. Review your procurement processes, streamline your orders where possible and seek out recyclable items. Office staff should only print out documents when absolutely necessary, and efforts should be made to reduce the presence of single-use plastics in your school as much as possible.

Reuse

This is where thinking differently about waste really comes into its own. Old games and toys can be donated to local playgroups, hospitals and charity shops, while spent packaging and stationery can be used in a multitude of creative and imaginative ways. These might include recycling used classroom paper supplies for papier-mâché tasks, and employing egg cartons, cardboard boxes and toilet rolls in various arts and crafts activities. You can find plenty of inspiration via Pinterest, YouTube and elsewhere.

Repurpose

Why not encourage your pupils' critical thinking and problem-solving skills by turning old objects into new ones? Empty food jars are perfect for storing paper clips, rubber bands and other small items; old wellington boots can be repurposed as colourful planters. Your pupils could be set the challenge of submitting entries to a 'recycled robot competition'. The kitchen staff can help to implement a combined composting scheme and worm farm.

Recycle

Recycling education is paramount if the school community is to properly understand the importance of recycling and changing behaviours. Provide recycling/segregation points in busy areas around the school and deliver clear instructions as to what should go where. The main priority is to raise awareness – hold an assembly on the topic of waste and its environmental impact; provide information on your website; put posters up; provide training to teachers and ancillary staff; set targets. A good way of maintaining this is to appoint recycling monitors who can help ensure that your on-site segregation proceeds smoothly. Regularly check bins for signs of contamination and establish a reliable reporting system so that any issues can be promptly ironed out.

Draw up a list of responsibilities that each group within the school will need to adopt and provide relevant training. Rigorous auditing and establishing best practice to follow can help schools simultaneously reduce the amount of waste they produce by up to 25%, save costs, help the environment and educate their pupils.

Rachel Rowley is a waste management and environmental specialist at Encore Environment.

@encore_enviro
encore-environment.com

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

Russell Lunn, headteacher at Sywell CEVA Primary School, recently engaged a new school's programme, Waste Wise Kids, to help educate the school's community about waste and sustainability.

"We've found that introducing the topic of waste management to our pupils has spurred the whole school into action," he says. "The children are so excited to show how capable they are, and to think of new ideas for how the school can reduce waste."

Spratton Hall in Northamptonshire has meanwhile created an Eco Club for pupils to put recycling initiatives into practice. According to headteacher Simon Clarke, "They've shown commitment to acting environmentally responsibly by taking part in a number of activities, such as making compost heaps, making and recycling wrapping paper; birdwatching for the RSPB; making bird feeders from recycled packaging; and collecting rubbish in local villages."

Waste Wise Kids is a UK-wide teaching programme aimed at four-to 12-years-olds that focuses on waste, recycling and sustainability. Freely available to all primary schools, it's structured around educating children about the waste hierarchy, examining different waste types, what happens to waste after it's disposed of and its subsequent impact on the environment.

The programme includes an on-site presentation, various tasks and experiments, competitions and handouts (printed on recycled paper). Children are actively encouraged to think about the waste created at home and at school, and what they can do to reduce, reuse, repurpose and recycle. Schools can request a Waste Wise Kids presentation pack or an on-site visit – a key objective of the programme is to see the notion of being 'waste wise' integrated across the curriculum, rather than being seen as an add-on.

encore-environment.com/waste-wise-kids

RECRUITING FROM DOWN UNDER

Having run out of recruitment options, the London Borough of Havering recently seized the opportunity to widen its search for teachers considerably...

Schools in the London Borough of Havering are currently having difficulties with teacher recruitment. There are schools with vacancies that they've yet to fill, which are finding that the pool of potential recruits is much smaller than it was. Some have been able to arrange temporary appointments for the 2019 autumn term, but still need to fill those posts next year.

That's why this October, I'll be flying out to Australia in order to establish contact with some good Australian teachers who will be suitable for those vacant posts.

The trip is being organised through a partnership with Supply Desk (supplydesk.co.uk), based on need and because the Borough lacks the resources for such an undertaking. It's certainly a new experience for me, though when working as a deputy in Croydon 16 years ago, I recall the LA sending some leaders out to Canada for recruitment purposes, so it's a strategy that's been tried before.

OUTMODED TRADITION

For us, we've found that the traditional approach to recruitment is no longer effective. There was a time when we'd place an advert in the press which would generate applications, and then interview on the basis of those. For three years I've not succeeded in recruiting anybody using those traditional methods. It's more common now for us to source staff via agencies, sometimes recruiting off the back of that, but the costs can be huge – often you'll be paying some 28% percent of the salary as a 'finders fee'.

An increasingly common strategy is to recruit through networking, talking to people who know people looking for new opportunities, and encouraging them to apply for jobs we might have once advertised. Social media is another avenue – one I'm not an expert in – but members of my senior team have proved to be quite adept at distributing information about posts we're looking to fill.

However, the difficulties we have in recruiting staff remain particularly pronounced in certain areas. I recently attempted to recruit a geography teacher within Havering three times, but didn't receive a single application. I did previously have a very different experience in Brighton and Hove, though being a city with two universities, both offering teacher training programmes, it's a comparatively easier area to recruit for.

Schools in outer London boroughs with recruitment needs have historically had it harder. One doesn't have to travel far to get to an inner London borough, where salaries can be £2,000 to £3,000 a year higher, due to London weighting. It was a similar situation when I was based in Croydon – it's always been a challenge.

RESILIENCE AND PASSION

The plan is for me to spend eight days in Australia and visit three cities – Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide – where I'll be interviewing candidates at a series of university venues. Many people have told me how envious they are of me flying out there, but I'm expecting it to be exhausting – I'll barely have time to adapt to the time difference before having to fly back again.

In preparation, I've spoken to colleagues and other headteachers in Havering about the vacancies they have, most of which have a January start, and what they want to see from potential candidates. As well as passing on their feedback, some have also produced profiles of their schools for me to show the candidates when I'm out there.

> "For three years I've not succeeded in recruiting anybody using traditional methods"

My role will be to conduct initial screening – specifically, identifying and then lining up people who will undertake interviews with the schools themselves via Skype. I won't be directly recruiting as such, but rather rooting out the best possible candidates.

In terms of what I'm looking for, those candidates will need to convey the sense that they'll be able to cope with working a very long way from home. They'll have to demonstrate a desire to work in the UK, of course, and speak to why they want to work in the UK. I'll also be endeavouring to gauge their skills as teachers and their knowledge of teaching and learning, since for the most part they'll be fairly new to the profession. They'll have to demonstrate a degree of resilience and a clear passion for teaching (all of which I'd obviously be looking for in candidates over here too).

TWO-YEAR PLAN

Within the last 10 years I've previously worked alongside colleagues originally from

Australia, New Zealand and Canada, all of whom were very strong teachers. It helps that in Antipodean schools particularly there's a great deal of cultural similarity with our own. They're broadly used to similar behaviour management policies and have similar expectations for their students, meaning they tend to fit in quite well.

That said, they also bring with them in a slightly different perspective, of course. Having grown up in a very different part of the world, they're often able to bring distinct knowledge and prior experience with them upon starting. I've always been very pleased with the performance of Australian colleagues I've worked alongside previously, though there have unfortunately been times when I've lost a couple, due to them having to return home following the expiry of their two-year residential and work visas.

The teachers I'll be trying to recruit will be below the age of 30 and able to enter, live and work in the UK under those standard two-year visa rules (though any who happen to possess a British passport won't be subject to the same terms).

We're not looking to recruit any licenced teachers on the trip, as doing so is considerably more complicated. Licenced teachers are more experienced, but in order for them to move over here, their destination school would require a licence themselves to employ overseas teachers. By comparison, younger NQTs are able to come and work in the UK for up to two years, without those restrictions.

BENCHMARK FOR SUCCESS

As of right now, my school is fortunate enough to be fully staffed. There's therefore little incentive for me to take on this task – in some ways, I'm being quite altruistic in doing so – but I'm optimistic. I've had some Havering schools inform me about the posts they're recruiting for, and therefore already have good idea of the ideal person spec.

If I can help fill 80% of Havering's current vacancies by connecting the right schools with the right candidates, I'd consider that a success. It would help Havering increase its pool of good teachers in the Borough, because obviously all of us want every child to have the best experience with their teachers. And if we can get good teachers to make the trip from Australia to the UK for vacancies we're unable to fill ourselves, it'll have been worth the effort.

Mike Fairclough is headteacher at West Rise Junior School

THE WOW FACTOR

If you've never previously considered teaching styles of world music, you'll find the financial and educational returns are compelling....

The government's National Music Plan calls on schools to deliver a high quality music education to their pupils, insisting that every pupil should have the opportunity to learn an instrument and make music with others. These are laudable objectives, and with the right approach, schools can meet them and at the same time develop pupils' life skills, increase teachers' productivity and see a range of cross-curricular benefits.

For many years, Drums for Schools has provided teachers with a means of teaching various world music styles, including African drumming, Indonesian gamelan, Brazilian samba, Caribbean steel pans and Japanese taiko. These styles are popular with children and school staff alike, but also extremely effective prompts for learning.

Drums for Schools

Contact:
Drums for Schools' 30 player world music packs start at £157 for World Percussion and £597 for African Drumming, equating to £1 per pupil, per year for a school of 300 pupils. Teaching is carried out by schools in-house, using supplied instruments, teaching guides, lesson plans and online audiovisual materials. See **drumsforschools com** or follow @DrumsforSchools for more details

INCLUSIVE

The instruments involved are easy for beginners to get to grips with and require relatively little time to be spent on acquiring technique, allowing the majority of lesson time to be spent actually playing. There's still scope for differentiation, however, by, for example, assigning the more complex patterns and sophisticated rhythms of an African drumming lesson to those pupils who are more able.

RIGOROUS

A term's lessons will see pupils covering elements of music, musical notation, improvisation, composition and performance. Drums for Schools' world music programmes dovetail neatly with traditional music syllabi while linking across subjects, and can be a useful hook on which to hang other curriculum work involving history, geography, languages and even maths.

PROGRESSIVE

World music programmes need not be 'one term wonders'. Our teaching guides and repertoire of ensemble pieces allow for continuous progression over the course of a school year or longer. Lateral progression can be built in by, for example, starting with African drumming before adding a module on steel pans, helping to reinforce learning and provide a broader musical perspective.

COST-EFFECTIVE

Crucially, teachers themselves take the lead in developing their school's musical culture. This prevents music making from becoming just a weekly one-off that comes and goes with visiting music professionals; instead, new teaching skills can be developed in-house and extended to every pupil. Moreover, instrument sets and teaching materials cost from as little as £1 per pupil per year.

Legal & HR

RECOGNISE THE SIGNS

Ann Marie Christian on what teachers need to know about recognising and reporting cases of potential child abuse

Schools' legal safeguarding obligations are outlined in the DfE's Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance (see tinyurl.com/dfe-kcsie), which was first issued in 2015. More recently, the DfE has issued further guidance conerning child sexual exploitation (see tinyurl.com/dfe-cse-17) and sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges (see tinyurl.com/dfe-sv-17). Taken together, these guidance documents provide specific details on what practitioners should do in response to such incidents.

UNCONSCIOUS BEHAVIOURS

Children between the ages of 3 and 17 who have experienced, or been exposed to sexual abuse may themselves exhibit harmful sexual behaviour, often unconsciously. Among younger children these types of behaviours will typically occur through play, particularly around toilet and changing areas. They may demonstrate a predilection for genital exposure and/or apparent difficulty with understanding social boundaries, especially with touching themselves and others.

Among older children the first indication for teachers may be a statement from one pupil that another has touched them, withdrawn or aggressive behaviors, or rumours about sexual activities involving other children. Such accusations can cut across genders – girls may accuse boys, and boys may accuse girls, including same sex children.

Depending on the severity of what's occurred, a child may mimic certain acts – perhaps something they've seen in pornography, or an act previously done to them – such as licking their lips, dancing in a sexually suggestive manner or rubbing their genitalia inside or outside of their clothing. A child may engage in the latter

unconsciously as a form of self-regulation, similar to thumb-sucking, or while unaware that such behaviour in public is socially unacceptable.

WHEN TO REPORT?

The challenge for schools is to gauge whether this type of behaviour is developmentally appropriate for the child's age. Young children are naturally fascinated by their bodies and how they work, making it sometimes difficult to distinguish whether the types of indicators described above are part of their natural development, or stem from an experience that has breached their personal boundaries without them realising it.

Sometimes a child may talk about something that's happened to them in an abstracted way, using the vocabulary available to them. In one case I'm aware of, a young girl on her third day at prep school said that she felt 'Sore sitting down', because her brother 'Tickled and hurt her down there.'

When any such indications come to a teacher's attention, they should immediately inform the school's DSL verbally and follow it up in writing. The DSL will then inform the incident to the LA's child social care team for advice or referral, depending on the severity of the query. Be aware, however, that social care teams aren't the police and won't arrive within minutes. Concerns or referrals should be reported as soon as possible so that the DSL can contact Children's Social Care immediately for advice. A social worker may need to see the child before they leave the school, but it can take a few hours for the necessary planning and any discussions with police to take place first.

Ultimately, initial teacher observations, combined with prompt reporting, are crucial when it comes to identifying cases of abuse – teachers are social services' eyes and ears.

Ann Marie Christian is an international safeguarding and child protection consultant, trainer and author

@annmariechild

annmariechristian.com

WHAT'S A 'REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT'?

Concerns over the costs of making 'reasonable adjustments' are often misplaced, says Lesley Mifsud

All schools must comply with the Equality Act 2010, showing that they've made 'reasonable' adjustments which enable all pupils to access their facilities and services. More specifically, the school is required to demonstrate (with their Accessibility Plan) that they're taking positive steps to ensure disabled pupils can fully participate in the education provided by the school and enjoy all associated benefits.

Many schools fear that in order to comply with the Equality Act, their Accessibility Plan must include many costly areas of improvement, but that isn't necessarily the case. Many reasonable adjustments are in fact relatively inexpensive, often involving a change of practice, rather than the purchase of expensive specialist equipment.

For example, a school can ensure that all classes for a wheelchair-using pupil are located at ground level – a *reasonable* adjustment that will grant the pupil access to both the building and the school's curriculum. It would be *unreasonable* to expect a school to install a lift to allow access to the upper levels of the school.

The point of an Accessibility Plan is for the school to have provisions in place should a disabled pupil join. In other words, the school's duty to make reasonable adjustments is an anticipatory one – schools need to think about what disabled pupils may require, and what adjustments might need to made for them.

It's worth noting that the Equality Act 2010 doesn't actually state what's considered reasonable. While this may cause confusion for some, it's actually designed for flexibility; what's reasonable in one circumstance may not be reasonable in another. It's not possible to say what would, or wouldn't be reasonable in any given situation, but there are certain factors which will inform the decision. These include issues such as the financial cost of making an adjustment, the practicality of the adjustment in question, the resources available to the school and resulting impact on other pupils.

Take, for example, a disabled pupil with an education, health and care plan who attends a mainstream school and uses an electronic notetaker in lessons. The note take and the support they need will already be provided through the EHCP, meaning that the school won't have to make any reasonable adjustments before being able to provide this aid.

This process works both ways. At one school we visited recently, there was a disabled pupil with diabetes who required insulin injections. Although this child did not have SEND as such, a lack of daily support would put him at a substantial disadvantage to his peers. In this case, it would be considered reasonable for the school to provide support.

To summarise, what's reasonable and what's not is fluid. If an adjustment costs nothing to implement, it's most likely reasonable to do so. Although there's no lawful definition of what's considered reasonable, schools can be reassured that most adjustments involve simple, practical changes rather than structural building changes.

Lesley Mifsud is head access auditor and CEO at EA Audits

@eaaudits

ea-audits.com

Difficult conversations with ... site staff

Are your site staff on the same page?

Of the numerous difficult conversations my team and I have supported, ones involving site managers are among the most common. They come up for many reasons, but the main ones are:

• Not prioritising tasks
• Not completing routine tasks, like Legionella tests
• Not doing tasks quickly enough

We see a lot of 'power' dynamics in these conversations, where the site manager projects dominance or superiority over the head, SBM or person having the conversation. When addressing issues such as those listed above, there are some key points to observe when starting the conversation. Doing so will bring about greater clarity and dramatically increase the chances of a positive outcome.

Avoid talking about 'regular tasks' or 'jobs.' Be specific as to what these actually are, whether it's emptying the bins or locking the school gates by 5pm. If the concerns you have involve multiple tasks, state how many there are so that the site manager knows what the scope of the conversation will be. Number the tasks and go through them; the more specific you are, the easier it will be for them to make the changes you want.

Talk about timing

You may need to raise the issue of frequency (how often a task should be done), the due date for a one-off item of work or how they should report the completion of routine, but relatively infrequent tasks. If they know when you expect something to be done by, you'll both have clarity as to what the expectations placed on the site manager are. If they can't complete the task(s) within your preferred time-frame, see if a different completion date might be an option.

Power plays can show up in a number of ways. They may manifest physically, as sitting in a dominating way ('manspreading', though women do it too), or through a patronising tone and condescending language – *'If you'd been here as long as I have...'*; *'You're young for a head...'* Other examples include them talking over you, being dismissive or making light of what you're asking by deploying humour.

If these behaviours are preventing you from tackling the issue at hand, think about your response. People will react differently when talking to someone who's dominating them, but often in ways which won't help, and which the individuals in question typically won't be conscious of. For example, some might join in with humourous barbs; sometimes this can work, but sometimes the effect will be to encourage the other party to dominate even more, our body language becoming increasingly submissive in the process.

Instead, try to create equality in your conversation. Adjust your body language to mirror theirs and maintain the tone of a professional trying to move an issue forward. That's not to accuse those reading this of failing to sound professional; it's to point out that power play behaviours can bring out our submissive side, which we then betray through our own tone of voice.

If and when the time comes to have a difficult conversation with your site manager, I hope these suggestions help. That said, there's an overarching philosophy that's worth following when having a difficult conversation: *'If what you're doing is getting the result you want, keep doing it. If not, try something different.'* Good luck!

Sonia Gill is founder of Heads Up, helping school leaders on their journey to outstanding via bespoke training programmes, and author of the books *Successful Difficult Conversations in Schools* and *Journey to Outstanding*

@UK_HeadsUp
ukheadsup.com

DUTY OF CARE

EduCare gets us up to speed with the most notable changes to this year's Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance

Following a series of amends last September, the DfE's statutory Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance (see tinyurl.com/dfe-kcsie) has now been updated for 2019.

While there aren't a huge number of changes, there are new references to a number of important safeguarding issues, including upskirting – now a criminal offence – and serious violence. As such, it's vital for schools to possess knowledge of both these and the other issues that the latest guidance addresses.

MULTI-AGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

The 2018 revision of KCSiE included a section on 'Multi-agency safeguarding transitional arrangements', but this entire section has now been removed. This is because when the 2018 revision was being finalised, details of what the new local arrangements would involve were still in a period of transition.

The DfE has since published the guidance document 'Working Together: Transitional Guidance' (see tinyurl.com/ dfe-wttg) to support the move away from local safeguarding children boards and serious case reviews to a new system of multi-agency arrangements and local and national child safeguarding practice reviews. This will see the involvement of three safeguarding partners – the LA, a clinical commissioning group for an area within the LA, and the chief officer of the local area police. These partners will work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, while identifying and responding to their needs.

With the new local arrangements needing to be published by the three safeguarding partners no later than 29th June this year and in place by 29th September, KCSiE 2018's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements guidance no longer applies.

SAFEGUARDING FOR ALL STAFF

Part one of KCSiE is the section which all staff working within an education setting must read in order to be compliant. To improve the flow of information and ensure that the guidance remains clear and navigable, some areas have been amended:

Upskirting

Since 12th April 2019, upskirting has been a criminal offence in England and Wales. Following its reclassification as a crime, the KCSiE guidance has been updated to include upskirting as an example of peer on peer abuse.

According to KCSiE's definition, "Upskirting typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm." Under the Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019, upskirting offenders can be arrested, face up to two years in prison and have their names placed on the sex offenders register.

Dawn Jotham, EduCare's Development lead for education and pastoral adviser comments: "In KCSiE 2018 we saw a need for schools to adapt and extend their child protection policies to refer to peer on peer abuse. Now there's an additional requirement to include reference specifically to upskirting. What may seem like harmless fun can have deeper consequences for both the victim and the perpetrator, and everyone should be made aware of this."

> "KCSiE 2019 states that tackling serious crime isn't simply a law enforcement issue"

Serious violence

Serious violence has now been added to KCSiE as a specific safeguarding issue, following the introduction of the government's Serious Violence Strategy in 2018 (see tinyurl.com/gov-svs). While noting that homicides, knife and gun crime account for around 1% of all recorded crime, it identifies such offences as having a significant impact on communities and throughout wider society. KCSiE 2019 hence states that tackling serious crime isn't simply a law enforcement issue, but one requiring interventions from a range of other areas, including education.

The Serious Violence Strategy's main areas of focuses include tackling county lines; early intervention and prevention; supporting

communities and local partnerships; effective law enforcement and criminal justice response. The latest KCSIE guidance states that, "All staff should be aware of indicators which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries."

In Dawn Jotham's view, "When a young person begins to show signs of exploitation or vulnerability to exploitation, and are therefore at increased risk from serious violence, we should be able to intervene as early as possible to help reduce the risk factors and increase the protective factors."

PART TWO – MANAGEMENT OF SAFEGUARDING

In this section, a paragraph has been expanded to include the government's forthcoming PSHE reforms, which will see the teaching of relationships education in all primary schools, and relationships and sex education in all secondary schools, become mandatory as of 2020.

"PSHE will be a focus of change for many schools from September 2020," says Dawn Jotham. "Schools operating under the DfE will be required to teach PSHE subjects and give due regard to the statutory guidance. PSHE subjects should be taught following the principles of keeping children safe, and prepare children for the world they're growing up in. The content should always be age appropriate."

Following the recent launch of Ofsted's new inspection framework, KCSiE now also cites the way in which "Inspectors will always report on whether or not arrangements for safeguarding children and learners are effective," with a reference to the regulator's own guidance for inspectors on inspecting safeguarding.

SAFER RECRUITMENT

Paragraph 173 of KCSiE refers to the types of DBS checks required for school governors. This has been extended to include the recommendation that schools carry out a section 128 check. These are used to check the names of individuals who have been barred from being involved in the management or governance of independent schools, academies and free schools, under the terms of a direction made by the Education Secretary. Individuals who are the subject of a Section 128 order are disqualified from being governors. A further paragraph has been added to clarify that enhanced DBS checks aren't mandatory for Associate members.

Annex A of the guidance has meanwhile been updated to communicate additional information regarding specific forms of abuse and safeguarding issues – it's important that all education staff working directly with children read this carefully. Finally, KCSiE's paragraph pertaining to 'So-called 'honour-based' violence' has been extended to clarify that female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage are both examples of so-called 'honour-based' abuse. Dawn Jotham adds, "The government has recently consulted on a proposal to introduce a mandatory reporting duty on forced marriage. If implemented, this will mirror the duty already in place to report known cases of FGM."

To ensure your organisation is prepared for the new guidance, you'll need to consider the above and any ways in which your policies, procedures and practices may need to be updated in light of the changes.

EduCare is a leading provider of essential duty of care and safeguarding training

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THE AFTERMATH OF A SACKING

Letting a member of staff go for issues related to their conduct is never easy. Rachel Foster looks at what the process of containing the fallout might involve...

A school taking the decision to dismiss a member of staff will have done so in accordance with their disciplinary policy. Dismissals are therefore not 'snap' decisions – there should be no headteachers modelling themselves on Lord Sugar and declaring "You're fired!" within the education sector!

However, the context of a dismissal can vary. It might arise from a one-off incident that amounts to an act of gross misconduct – in which case the staff member involved may have already been away from the school site for a period of time due to suspension – or be the end result of an accumulation of smaller disciplinary issues.

In any case, specialist HR advice should be sought in such cases, particularly when the outcome could potentially result in a termination of employment. School leaders considering dismissal as a potential outcome in such instances should be able to plan accordingly for the aftermath.

CONTEXT IS KEY

The position held by the dismissed employee can be fundamental in terms of the impact their dismissal has upon the organisation, along with other factors such as the longevity of their service and the visibility of their role to pupils, parents and other agencies.

In rare cases, the events leading to the dismissal may result in multiple members of staff being dismissed, or in some staff receiving lesser sanctions under the school's disciplinary process. In some instances, the events in question may have left one or more 'victims' who remain in place at the school, and will understandably require some form of appropriate support in coping with said events, such as a referral to occupational health.

These and other contextual factors shape the ripple effect that any dismissal will have for a school and its stakeholders – not least other staff, but also pupils, parents, governors and potentially the wider community too.

ADDED COMPLICATIONS

This ripple effect can be amplified tenfold in circumstances where the 'outside world' has already been made aware of some of the facts feeding into the school's decision to dismiss – if, for example, the events took place outside school, or came about as the result of a complaint.

Unrest within a school community can also attract media attention. Preparing for the possibility of such attention, and managing your response to it, will require some specialist assistance from, for example, an LA or MAT press officer. High profile dismissals can be one of those events that pose the potential for real reputational damage.

In extremely serious cases of dismissal – those involving gross misconduct relating to fraud or safeguarding failures, for instance – it may be that other agencies need to become involved, such as the police, the courts, the Disclosure and Barring Service, Teaching Regulation Agency or Ofsted.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

As previously noted, the fallout from a staff dismissal won't be isolated to that one employee, but will affect to varying degrees levels of trust, morale and wellbeing among your wider staff. Headteachers should therefore ensure that all levels of management involved in disciplinary matters are properly trained in the school's policies and procedures.

Just like any other employer, schools have a duty to ensure that disputes are handled fairly and consistently across their organisation. That includes the terminology used to discuss such matters, agreement on what sanctions should be applied and when, and an acceptance of the absolute necessity for confidentiality to apply to all personnel matters.

> "It's best practice to reflect on why someone has had to be dismissed and the processes undertaken as a result. What caused the individual to be in that position in the first place?"

However, there is also the necessity to weigh this requirement for confidentiality against the need to inform others of particular facts at pertinent times. Striking an appropriate balance between not saying enough and saying too much can be difficult, and can carry potential legal ramifications if not handled correctly.

Unfortunately, choosing to say nothing at all is rarely a practical option, since silence can create fertile ground for gossip and risk diminishing trust in the leadership.

INFORMATION CONTROL

The level of information you're able to provide will likely depend on how the announcements are timed. Sometimes you may only be able to inform staff that someone won't be at school 'for the foreseeable future', without being able to share any further details for legal reasons. This at least enables leaders to provide workload support, put cover arrangements in place and so forth. It's also worth giving staff the opportunity to ask questions, even if you're not in a position to answer them right now.

In instances like this, staff ought to understand and appreciate the professionalism you're affording them. Use the opportunity to reinforce to your staff the need for confidentiality – though again, care should be taken with how you phrase this. It's always recommended to obtain specialist HR advice on how to communicate with your school's staff at such times. Different levels of information will be needed by your governors, parents and pupils. The messages they receive have to be consistent, but careful consideration should be given as to the wording used, how the announcement of multiple messages should be timed and what the preferred method for disseminating such messages ought to be.

Don't forget about staff who aren't based on site at the end of the school day, who work part time or are on long-term sick leave or maternity absence. Be sure to include that one governor who doesn't have an email address. Remember those parents who haven't signed up for the messaging service and those for whom English isn't their first language. Putting these arrangements in place ahead of time will help leaders deal with the aftermath that inevitably follows a dismissal, as it may make them feel more assured about the prospect of delivering such an announcement, and help move the school's focus onto life without that member of staff more quickly than may have been the case otherwise.

NEXT STEPS

It's best practice to reflect on why someone has had to be dismissed and the processes undertaken as a result. What caused the individual concerned to be in that position in the first place? Could matters have been handled differently? Did existing policies and procedures enable the school to manage the situation in a timely fashion?

This is a time for learning as a leadership team – an opportunity to appreciate what worked well, but also to acknowledge whether anything can be improved. What can sometimes emerge from a formal disciplinary outcome, alongside the decision to dismiss, is the recommendation for a school to review certain practices. It may that an audit has to be undertaken, or that further staff training needs to be arranged, so that awareness of a particular issue is brought up to date, or an appropriate culture is embedded – for example, with respect to GDPR, safeguarding or social media use.

During this time, the school will obviously have had to carry out its normal day-to-day functions and deal with all the standard events occurring at whatever time of year the dismissal might have taken place – SATs tests, school plays, school trips and all the rest. At such times, the rest of your staff will need even more acknowledgement than usual on the part of SLT that their hard work is much appreciated, and that the school's focus will always remain on putting the children first.

Rachel Foster is HR Director at One Education

🐦 @oneeducation

💻 oneeducation.co.uk

LIFT YOUR
STAFF'S SPIRITS

Mike Fairclough looks at how three values internalised by the 44th President of the United States can help your efforts at boosting staff morale...

*I*f anyone says to you that staff morale is at an all-time low, you know you are doing something right."

This quote, uttered by Sir Michael Wilshaw in 2012 while serving as Ofsted Chief Inspector, isn't just wrong – it's downright toxic, and diametrically opposed to what most teaching professionals believe.

Let's contrast that statement with two different questions: *'How can I have an impact?'* and *'How can I make a difference?'* Those are the questions that the former President of the United States, Barack Obama, would often ask himself as a young man at college in the 1980s. Obama told an audience of civic leaders in 2017 that it was during this time that he first began to develop the social conscience that would subsequently shape his personal values, with the result that, as he put it, "All those values that my mother had whispered in my ear started to come back to me."

Schools are places where children go to learn, and where we support their development at every level – socially, emotionally, physically and mentally. Schools are nurturing environments, facilitated by teams of adults who want to make a difference to the lives of the young people in their care.

However, schools are also under huge and constant pressure. The drive to reach targets and meet the latest set of requirements from Ofsted and the DfE are just the start. Into that mix you can add rising levels of pupil violence, confrontational parents, increasing rates of mental ill-health and ever-growing safeguarding concerns, to name but a few. Being an education professional can be a stressful job, leading to the very real prospect of lowered of staff morale and the risk of team fragmentation.

During his speech, Obama went on to list three of those values that his mother, Ann Dunham, had shared with him. I'd argue that each one can be applied to the situation we education professionals currently find ourselves in, and may be worth looking to at those times when our schools don't feel as harmonious as we'd like them to be, when our staff seem to be pulling in different directions.

PRESSURE AND STRESS

"Be kind, useful and caring about those less fortunate"

Stresses at school will often be the result of workload pressures. The caretaker may find themselves with additional jobs to do, due to the cleaner taking long-term sick leave. The bursar may have to learn from scratch the details of a new government directive and implement it – on top of everything else they're meant to be doing already.

Or it could be the headteacher who's currently under fire from all directions – behind schedule with writing the SEF, dealing with an angry parent and addressing challenging pupil behaviour, – having to conceal their feelings of stress while showing prospective parents around the school. This is school life. It's what happens. But if we're not careful, it's during such times of increased pressure that teams can begin to fragment.

It might sound like a small and insignificant gesture, but being 'kind, useful and caring' to any colleagues under pressure can mean the world to them. Make a stressed-out colleague a cup of tea. Spend some time listening to them express their troubles. Offer to pick up some of the slack by performing a favour – carrying some new stock to the storage cupboard, or fetching some documents from the photocopier. Spending just a few minutes caring for our colleagues will help them feel less overwhelmed and more supported by their team.

INTERNAL STRIFE

"Be a peacemaker rather than an instigator"

This second insight from Obama's mother is very powerful, because it's not just pressure piled on by pupils, challenging parents or the system itself that can cause disharmony. It's entirely possible for an ill wind to originate from within our own ranks.

Schools can become political hotbeds when it turns out that a colleague may have an agenda that sits in opposition to the values of the organisation. Perhaps there's a new headteacher attempting to make their mark in the face of some staff who like things the way they are. Or it could be that a staff member has effectively declared themselves to be the 'voice of the people' and is stirring up trouble regarding a new internal requirement. This spokesperson gets others on board and begins campaigning for change. You know that they're motivated more by their own feelings of dissatisfaction than out of concern for the wellbeing of others, but it scarcely matters – you watch as your staff take sides and morale begins to fall.

In both of those scenarios, there's an 'instigator' at work. There's unfortunately no getting away from the fact that some people simply thrive on the drama of political division, but there

> "Notice the good points in your colleagues, however small, and let them know about it"

is an antidote to the problem – and that's to be a 'peacemaker.'

Listen closely to the complaints of others, irrespective of whether you agree with them. Ask them what they think the best way forward should be. There's no fight without two sides, so refusing to spar with others should immediately help calm things down. Being a peacemaker is ultimately about demonstrating effective diplomacy and communication for the good of the school.

PERSISTENT NEGATIVITY

"Lift people up instead of putting them down"

Negativity is addictive. People who constantly put others down can often become trapped in a behavioural cycle, using this unhelpful trait to mask their own lack of self-worth. We all have bad days and times when we're overly critical of others, but we need to nip this kind of negativity in the bud if it's threatening to become the 'norm' for us.

Avoid getting sucked into negative conversations about colleagues. If you find yourself caught in the middle of an awkward staffroom discussion, try to articulate the positive side of the relevant person's character and try to stay optimistic.

When walking down corridors and greeting people, look them in the eye and smile – not through gritted teeth, but in the spirit of collaboration and positivity. Above all, notice the good points in your colleagues, however small, and let them know about it. Everyone has their strengths and positive qualities – often, it'll be because they don't recognise those attributes in themselves that a colleague will have low self-esteem and not feel like part of the team.

MAKING THINGS BETTER

Despite what Sir Michael Wilshaw may have believed when making his controversial comments on staff morale, schools tend to be more productive when they're harmonious and pleasant environments to work in, and when staff are on the same page, pulling in the same direction.

There will always be periods in the life of a school when the atmosphere isn't as we'd like it to be. Yet we're all part of a team, and each have the potential to either make the problem worse or be a cohesive force for good. Whether staff morale in our school is currently high or low, let's continue to regularly ask ourselves those two questions – *'How can I have an impact?'* and *'How can I make a difference?'* As part of our teams, let's then make a positive impact and effect the powerful difference we all came into this job to do.

ANN DUNHAM

Barack Hussein Obama Sr and Ann Dunham, pictured in 1971; image reproduced under Creative Common licence CC BY-SA 2.0 (tinyurl.com/psm-cc-ad)

Ann Dunham (1942-1995) was an anthropologist who spent her life working for the betterment of people's lives in rural Indonesia. She researched and published works on the civil rights and working conditions of women in the country, leading to significant advances in the health and wellbeing of those she wrote about. Dunham was passionate about making a difference in the world.

The values she 'whispered' in the ear of her son, and the social conscience they inspired in him, enabled Barack Obama to have a positive impact and make a difference to the lives of Americans, when he later became the first ever black President of the United States.

Mike Fairclough is headteacher at West Rise Junior School

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Editor's Picks

If The DfE Is Going To Set Standards Through Inspections, Don't Prevent Schools From Meeting Them

TESTS

→ Schools are having to meet standards that they're being prevented from reaching, argues Caroline Collins

Weekly briefings
Get great advice from fellow leaders sent direct to your inbox by signing up to our weekly newsletter. Topics so far have included how to rethink your catering, and why heads need to stop micromanaging and start leading.

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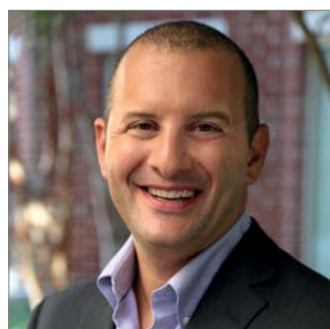
Richard Gerver on why schools need to be trusted
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WHAT'S TRENDING

1 Why we need to be 'soil people' *tinyurl.com/psmseeds*

2 How to plan your capital expenditure *tinyurl.com/psmcapspend*

3 Boost your pupil roll using social media *tinyurl.com/psmsmroll*

4 Are you a leader or a manager? *tinyurl.com/psmleadman*

5 What it takes to keep school animals *tinyurl.com/psmanimals*

Budgeting

PLAN FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

School leaders should ensure their schedules for the year ahead include those staff conversations that are vital but easily overlooked, says Hilary Goldsmith...

At the start of the new year it's always sensible to map out your calendar in advance with the main events and key dates that you know will happen. Most of those will already be on your school calendar – term dates, parents evenings, the school show – but whilst you're there, why not block out some time for the inevitable must-haves in any school leader's year?

SEPTEMBER
Write off the whole of the first week; you won't get anything done. Set at least one day aside for the email influx. Even if you've been uber-efficient and kept on top of your emails over the summer, you'll be the only one who has. Come 8.30am on the first day back, Uncle Tom Cobley and all will be sending you requests for everything from pay rises to time off.

OCTOBER
Appraisal season. Expect to see a distinct upping of games across all sectors of the school

community this month, as appraisees attempt to impress appraisers into approving their pay progression. If you want to get tough staff policies pushed through then October is the month to plan it, as only the most foolhardy or peri-pensionable will want to challenge the system at this point in the year.

DECEMBER
Pencil in some time to have a conversation with a yet-to-be-named member of staff regarding appropriate festive activities for students. That said, if you already know who it's going to be, you might as well book them in now.

JANUARY
Diarize a snow day in late January. It doesn't matter which day you pick – doing this means you'll have one free to pick up on all the stuff you didn't do on the actual snow day when it comes.

FEBRUARY

Jitters month. Everyone feels a bit wobbly in February. It might have something to do with the combination of short days, exam deadlines and next year's budget figures, but whatever the reason, all schools hit the doldrums by the Feb half term. Prepare for the tantrums and tears by planning in some time for positivity, because one way or another, it'll be emotional...

APRIL/MAY

Revision madness sets in as SATs season approaches. Write some blank spaces into your diary so that you'll be around to catch the wobbly ones – both students and staff. Also schedule in some time to be actively available for your school community. It might be one of your busiest times of year, but this is when they'll really need you.

JUNE

Pencil in time to have some fun and lighten the mood. Make it clear to staff that late spring/early summer can be about joy and celebration – not just worries about what the year's SATs scores will say.

JULY

Make time to review and reflect on the year just gone. As well as reviewing your development plans and your team's action logs, commit to meeting with every single member of staff, asking them how they're doing and finding out about their highlights and lowlights of the year.

Your time is precious, but that doesn't and shouldn't mean spending all of each day chained to your desk or in meetings. This coming year, make a conscious choice to invest time in your staff, your students and yourself. As a leader, it's your responsibility to be at the front of the line, setting a clear direction as you set off on your collective journey. Remember – if your teams can't see you, how can they follow your lead?

Hilary Goldsmith is a school business leadership consultant

🐦 @sbl365
💻 sbl365.co.uk

BETTER BUYS FOR YOUR BUDGET

ESPO's Simon Herne offers some advice for those keen to reduce their spend on everyday supplies and consumables...

Budget cuts are the bane of every school. When spending decisions get tough something inevitably has got to go, but where to start? Tea, coffee, paper, cleaning products, even the loo roll – all essential for happy, comfortable staff. With happy, comfortable staff essential to a productive, successful school, it can often be a tricky path to navigate, but the following tips can help.

We live in a world of extensive choice, where seemingly every product category has at least two competitors claiming to offer better quality and price. One easy way to save a little is to remove that choice. Many schools departmentalise their budgets, which is fine for specialist equipment but can really drive up costs for general office and classroom supplies. Pick a few key products, maintain an internal supply of them and then ensure that every department uses the same basic items – pens, paper, glue, tea, bleach and so forth.

This will allow your school to purchase products in larger quantities, which almost always produces savings. Paper lends itself particularly well to bulk-buying, being typically far cheaper when bought by the pallet. Be sure to also look out for class packs and bundle deals, which are invariably cheaper compared to buying the constituent products in smaller pack sizes.

We all love a bargain, but it's important to remember that if a supplier is selling something so cheap that they must surely be making a loss, then they're likely making up for it somewhere else – possibly through the overall cost of your order. That one individual product might represent immensely good value.

Everything else... not so much. Remove the rose-tinted glasses and look at the bigger picture.

Another thing to watch for is misleading discounts. Look at the actual price, rather than the discount being offered, as you'll often find large discounts applied to starting prices that are higher than than those offered elsewhere.

It's also important to compare prices and calculate a maximum figure you'd be willing to pay for particular items. By benchmarking the prices of key items against different suppliers, you'll be more likely to find the best deal. Be sure to compare like with like per item or pack size, and factor in delivery charges before deciding on a supplier. Don't be tempted to pick 'favourites' – suppliers will constantly try to offer competitive pricing, so carry out these checks before every order.

Finally, it's a tip you'll likely know already, but switch to 'own brand'. Branded goods may look better, carry a reputation and be widely used, but opting for generic products can make a big difference to your bottom line without having to compromise on quality.

With our intensely competitive pricing and impressive array of suppliers, we here at ESPO can help your budget stretch as far as possible.

Simon Herne is a sales manager at the professional buying organisation, ESPO

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Briefing notes – SEND funding

The National Audit Office has issued a stark warning about the financial viability of the SEND support system – what's gone wrong, and what happens now?

Those with an interest in England's system of support for children and young people with SEND will find that a new report from the National Audit Office (see tinyurl.com/nao-send-19) makes for bleak reading.

According to its findings, the quality of SEND support that children currently receive varies widely across the country, many aren't receiving help that they're entitled to, and the system as a whole is increasingly under financial strain.

The background

The NAO estimates that in 2018-19, LAs were given £9.4 billion to spend on supporting pupils with SEND – a 24% share of the £39.3 billion dedicated schools grant allocated to LAs for that year.

As of January this year, 1.3 million pupils were recorded as having SEND, amounting to 14.9% of all pupils. Of that group, 20.6% had complex needs and received legally enforceable entitlements set out in an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Among the 79.4% without EHCPs but identified as requiring SEND support, the most common types of need were speech, language and communication needs, moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and mental health needs.

The concerns

The NAO observes that 87.5% of all publicly funded pupils with SEND attend mainstream schools, but that some schools are currently being incentivised to become less inclusive. One issue cited in the report is the £6,000 per pupil SEND support threshold that affects 'schools block' funding, potentially discouraging schools from admitting SEND pupils with costly support needs.

Another serious concern is the way in which 122 LAs (over 80%) overspent their schools high needs budgets, against the backdrop of a 29% real-terms cut in their spending power between 2010 and 2018. The NAO suggests this is largely due to a 20.2% rise in the number of pupils in special schools and alternative provision over roughly the same period. Driving that seems to be a combination of greater parental involvement in where their child attends school, and funding pressures limiting the capacity of LAs to effectively support pupils with high needs.

Whatever the reasons, the upshot has been a rise in LAs transferring funds from their school reserves into their SEND budgets to cover the shortfall. As a result, school reserves held by LAs have dropped by over 80% in four years.

Inspections of 94 local areas by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission have further found significant areas of weakness in the SEND support provided by 47 of them. The main factors governing their performance were identified as strength of leadership, the effectiveness of inter-agency working in those areas and the level of engagement with children and parents.

The conclusions

Taken together, the report paints a picture of a system that's serving some pupils with SEND well and providing them with the support they need, while leaving others – especially pupils with SEND but without an EHCP – exposed to risk.

In its conclusion, the report baldly states that "The system for supporting pupils with SEND is not, on current trends, financially sustainable. Many local authorities are failing to live within their high-needs budgets and meet the demand for support."

Looking ahead, the NAO's recommendations for the DfE include reviewing the incentives arising from its existing schools funding and accountability system to encourage mainstream schools to be more inclusive in their admissions. It also proposes that good practice be shared on how mainstream schools can better support SEND pupils without EHCPs, and that the DfE clearly outline when and how public money should be spent on independent provision to support SEND pupils' needs.

MANAGE YOUR PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Imogen Rowley shares some guidance on how to ensure the resources and services you buy are purchased correctly and in compliance with the law

Maintained schools and academies need to obtain best value for money from any contracts they enter into. To do that, they must follow a procurement process when an existing contract is nearing its end or a new service or good is required. This will involve paying attention to the following areas:

1) Check responsibilities and existing contracts

Check with your LA, MAT or diocese before you start, as they may be responsible for buying certain things. However, in many circumstances you won't necessarily have to go with the option your LA recommends (a specific MIS supplier, for example), so be sure to consider which of the available options is best one for your individual school.

When existing contracts come to an end, it's good practice to re-procure and ensure the product or service still meets your needs, while giving you the best value for money.

Regardless of whether there have been any significant or material changes in what your existing supplier is providing – such as upgrades to an IT system that turns it into a cloud-based product – it's still best practice to re-procure. If the value of the contract exceeds EU procurement thresholds (see tinyurl.com/gov-buy4schools), you *must* re-procure.

In all cases, you'll need to comply with procurement regulations and your school's own procurement policy. If you're unsure as to what counts as a significant or material change, seek legal advice.

2) Write a business case

Writing a business case will help you set out what you need, why you need it, and when by. Doing this not only provides a coherent way of asking for approval to make the purchase, but more importantly enables you to record your decision-making process.

Your business case should include a draft specification (see point 4 below), an estimated whole-life cost for the contract and a comparison with prices and experiences from previous purchases. It's worth also outlining details of any potential opportunities for working with other schools in terms of lending the equipment out, or arranging a joint purchase in order to secure a better deal.

3) Notify all stakeholders

This group can include governors, trustees, your school's responsible body, technical experts, a project manager for construction projects, legal experts, and suppliers.

Identify and remove any potential conflicts of interest before you start, but if that's not possible, consider withholding the names of the companies while their bids are assessed, asking all stakeholders to declare any interests in writing ahead of time and asking different staff members to assess the bids.

4) Write the specification and work out the contract cost

Talk to the people who use, or will use whatever it is you're buying, check that the new purchase will meet their needs and talk to those who'll be approving the purchase. Whether procuring or re-procuring, research the market and find out what's available. Speak to potential suppliers and ask other schools what they've done. Think about what's essential to you, what's nice to have, and what you may need in a few years' time. Your final specification should contain a precise description of what you need, explain how it should meet the school's criteria, state the quantity and quality required and when it will be needed.

Estimate the whole-life cost of the contract so that you can decide which buying process you need to use. Be sure to cover the initial cost of the goods, works or services, VAT, delivery charges and any ongoing maintenance or support costs. Don't forget to include running costs and the likely expense of removing or dispensing with the item or service when it's no longer needed.

5) Identify the right procurement process for you

The flowchart opposite will help you decide which procurement process to follow. Remember to follow any procurement rules set by your school, trust or LA, which may have adopted different processes or thresholds to those outlined here.

Imogen Rowley is a lead content producer at The Key – a provider of up-to-the-minute sector intelligence and resources that empower education leaders with the knowledge to act.

@TheKeySL

thekeysupport.com

WHICH PROCUREMENT PROCESS TO USE?

Can you get what you need through the government's 'Deals for Schools' or through a framework agreement?

Yes

No

Check the terms of the agreement

The framework will say if you can select the supplier yourself without running a mini competition

Select the supplier from a list

Run a mini competition

1. Comply with the terms of the framework agreement
2. Decide how you'll assess the bids, following any rules the framework has
3. Decide the level of service you want
4. Decide if you want to run an expression of interest process
5. Send an invitation to tender to all suppliers who can provide what you need
6. Fairly assess all the bids you get
7. Choose the supplier that offers best value for money
8. Award the contract to the winning supplier

Establish the value of your contract

Low to medium value (less than £40k)
Check with your school, trust or authority, as it may have a different threshold for what's considered 'low' or 'medium value'

High value (over £40k, but below EU procurement thresholds)
Check with your school, trust or authority, as it may have a different threshold for what's considered 'high value'

Above the EU procurement thresholds
Goods: £181,302
Works: £4,551,413
Most services: £181,302

Some services are covered by the 'light touch regime' and have a threshold of £615,278

Seek legal advice

Seek legal advice

Research the market and get quotes from at least three suppliers

1. Decide how you will assess the bids
2. Get quotes from at least three suppliers
3. Assess all the quotes you've got fairly
4. Choose the supplier that offers best value for money

Run your own buying processes

1. Assess the market
2. Prepare your contract and tender documents
3. Advertise in the right places
4. Think about using an expression of interest to cut the number of bids you'll need to assess later
5. Send an invitation to tender to people who reply to your advert
6. Fairly assess all the bids you get, using the same criteria and process
7. Choose the bid that offers best value for money
8. Award the contract to the highest scoring bidder

Use the EU-compliant bidding process

POST-BREXIT PURCHASING

Deal or no deal, schools will still need to procure their goods and services in broadly the same way. Government guidance as to what's likely to happen in a no-deal Brexit scenario can be found at tinyurl.com/no-deal-procurement. The main change will likely be the need for public sector tenders above a certain threshold to be published via a new UK-based notification service, rather than the Official Journal of the European Union (ojeu.eu) as at present.

FILLING IN THE BLANKS

Every SBL is expected to make financial projections based on accurate information, but what if that information simply isn't available? Hayley Dunn takes a closer look…

The available evidence currently suggests that the DfE intends to require all schools to produce 3-year budget plans, at a time when those schools' reserves continue to be stretched. What that means in practice is that school leaders will be expected to take a more forensic approach to their strategic financial planning, while at the same time having to make decisions based on insufficient and/or incomplete information.

The processes of securing sufficient school funding, balancing budgets and rinsing resources for maximum efficiency are therefore all set to becoming increasingly challenging.

RISK APPETITE

Academy trusts are presently required to produce annual three-year Budget Forecast Returns, without being provided with any guidance from central government on what their future funding and cost pressures will look like. We now see in the DfE's recent 'Financial transparency of local authority maintained schools and academy trusts' consultation (see tinyurl.com/psm-dfe-fintran), a suggested proposal 'requiring maintained schools to provide local authorities with 3-year budget forecasts.'

Should that proposal come to pass, then it's vitally important that the resulting projections are as accurate as possible. After all, they'll be used to inform numerous decisions and assumptions as to how financially healthy a school is, or will be, in future, as assessed by either an LA or the DfE itself.

So what should be the practical response? My own suggestion would be to adopt a risk-based approach to your

budgetary projections. Everyone's risk appetite will be different, of course. Mine, for example, could be described as a 'low-risk appetite', since I look to make decisions based on evidence and hard facts. Some school situations, however, may call for a balancing act between the risk appetites of different leadership types – the low risk appetite of a business leader, versus the high risk appetite of a headteacher, for example. Balancing the two can be a challenge, but the budget ultimately needs to be realistic in order to prevent bigger issues later down the line.

I'd always recommend annotating the budget plan and carefully monitoring the assumptions made, i.e. any staffing structure changes, pay award percentages, employers' National Insurance rate, employers' pensions rates and inflationary rises. If any of those change, add a note with the date and make sure that said notes are clearly articulated. Making these assumptions shouldn't be the responsibility of any one individual; accountability for such vital decision-making should always be a shared leadership responsibility.

FOCUS POINTS

When the time comes to review the projections, there are some key areas I'll always look to focus my attention on first:

PUPIL NUMBERS

Pupil number forecasts are important in many ways, for reasons relating to funding forecasts, timetabling and decisions around staffing, so it's critical that these forecasts be realistic, rather than overly optimistic. There can be the temptation, even for growing schools, to overstate these numbers. Every school needs to put in place a measured approach to forecasting pupil numbers for two and three years hence, and incorporating this into their financial planning. Carefully observing trends, and carrying out your analysis based on the best evidence available to you is the surest route to obtaining the information you need.

FUNDING PROJECTIONS

Primary schools can get a better sense of wider pupil numbers in their area from their LA and local early years providers, and use this information to make reasonable and fair funding forecasts. Basic delegated revenue funding – based on school demographics and driven by funding formulas – is provided to

maintained schools by LAs. The equivalent for academies, the General Annual Grant allocation, is provided by ESFA.

Yet with no clear indications from the government as to what the school funding model will look like beyond 2020, any future budget planning you do will have to be heavily caveated with all manner of assumptions. We do know that the soft formula implementation period has been extended, with the local funding formula essentially continuing to determine allocations until 2020/21. It's worth noting that the per-pupil funding rate for 16- to 19-year-olds has been frozen until 2020; it's currently set at £4,000 per full-time pupil in Years 12 and 13, and £3,300 for those in Year 14.

STAFFING COSTS

Assumptions made regarding your staffing structure, pay awards, employer National Insurance rates and employer pension contribution rates are perhaps the most important elements of your budget, given that combined gross staffing costs typically amount to circa 80% of a school's total spend.

Information on teacher staffing costs can be sourced by keeping abreast of STRB recommendations (see tinyurl.com/strb-updates) and identifying potential pay award increases as soon as possible. You can use your own internal data to forecast incremental movement, and refer to DfE-published information in relation to grant funding for pay awards. In 2019/20, for example, the government committed to providing funds for teacher pay increases above the first 1%.

It's often difficult to know in advance of setting budgets whether certain grants *will* continue. If you decide to assume a given grant will continue, then be very clear in showing the value that you've assumed, and outline the resulting impact should that funding not transpire. What's the value of taking a risk and assuming it will continue?

TEST, TEST, TEST

I'd also recommend testing your assumptions by keeping in touch with other schools and observing what *their* assumptions consist of. This can be done

via local SBP networks, by consulting with your LA and obtaining information from professional associations.

The key thing to bear in mind when testing your assumptions is that if you're making a different decision, what are you basing it on? When analysing trends in income and expenditure over time, I find it useful to refer to the previous year's budget and outturn figures, alongside the current and future years. This allows me to review each budget line, looking at patterns and trends, and helps flag up potential areas for further investigation when significant differences can't be immediately explained.

> "Any future budget planning you do will have to be heavily caveated with all manner of assumptions"

A strategy I use when casting a critical eye over a school budget is to apply two tests:

1. **Does this cost fulfil a statutory requirement?**
2. **Does this cost have a positive impact on outcomes for pupils?**

Be explicitly clear with your SLT and governing body about what assumptions have been made. Senior leaders and governing bodies alike should be effective, critical friends during the strategic financial planning process.

Leaders can sometimes feel extremely vulnerable when involved in strategic financial planning, and fearful of the consequences of getting something wrong. If you spot an issue, raise it at the earliest opportunity and seek support. Don't feel that it's your problem to solve on your own. Leaders work best with delegated autonomy and shared responsibility; not by feeling isolated with a challenging problem to solve on their own.

Hayley Dunn is school business leadership specialist for the Association of School and College Leaders and author of *The School Business Manager's Handbook*, published by John Catt

Don't be a
STRANGER

As an SBM, how well do your school's staff and pupils know you? Sue Birchall explains why becoming familiar with each other can pay dividends…

As school business managers, we lead very busy work lives. Given our range of responsibilities for finance, HR, site management and ICT we're often running from one thing to another, dealing – often briefly – with numerous stakeholders both in and outside of our schools and academies. At certain times of the month and year we'll be found heads down in our accounts and regulations paperwork, which can often cause us to isolate ourselves, largely through necessity.

It can sometimes feel that we're not part of the wider 'school life' that everyone else enjoys, simply because we're kept so busy keeping the cogs turning. But should we do more to try and integrate and be seen?

PROPER RECOGNITION

In my view, it's imperative that our role be properly recognised for its importance to the success of our schools and academies, but for that to happen we need to be identified as being part of them. The job of SBM is often perceived by colleagues as one only concerned with money and regulation. Being seen around the building, getting involved in all aspects of the school day and working more closely with the teachers and children will help address this misconception. Because our role is very much about supporting the teaching and learning that takes place within schools and the subsequent outcomes, the same as any with any other member of staff.

'But I'm so busy, I don't have time!' I hear you cry. Fear not – the positives of pursuing this strategy far outweigh the

time investment. For one thing, the professional benefits can be quite significant. An ever-present risk for SBMs is that we can get bogged down in the sheer volume of administrative work piling up on our desks and lose sight of the reasons behind why we do what we do. Becoming more involved with the broader life of the school will give you a different perspective on how students benefit from your efforts and what your achievements within the role make possible for others.

> "Becoming more involved with the broader life of the school will give you a different perspective on how students benefit from your efforts"

Seeing how things work 'on the ground' will help inform your buying strategies and longer term planning with respect to the school's finances and resources. Make yourself more accessible to staff and students, and encourage them to share their ideas, wants and needs with you.

For me, this has proved invaluable. I'll often have my most inspired ideas when taking part in whole school activities, or when simply wandering

around the premises. Myself and the head will frequently conduct parts of our weekly meetings while on the move around the school, as this helps us to plan and strategise. It also grounds what I think I know about my school, and gives context to senior level decision-making. My own profile within the school is raised, since I'm seen to be taking part in everyday school life. Colleagues have told me that I appear more approachable, which increases my sense of belonging and gives me greater satisfaction in my achievements.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

I'm always amazed at how contributions from my colleagues and students can inspire whole new directions or change something for the better. Generally, it's the case that people won't volunteer their views without being given an opportunity to do so. Making yourself available, and communicating that you're ready to hear from them will put you in the best position to take these kind of contributions forward, often to the benefit of the school and those around you. So what should this involve in practice?

The route to raising your profile and contributing more to everyday school life can differ between the primary and secondary phases, but there are some common strategies that will apply, whatever role you're in. Some of the following suggestions might be harder to action for those working in MATs with a heavy emphasis on centralised services, but even then, partaking in at least some of the below activities at each of your schools will always go down well with your colleagues.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT DUTIES
Carrying out senior manager duties during the school day, perhaps once a week, will get you 'out there' being seen, while giving you a chance to observe various goings-on around the school. Performing a weekly lunch or gate duty will introduce you to the wider school community and help you establish better connections with staff and students.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
Taking part in whole school school activities can be rewarding, both personally and professionally. Earlier this year I attended the sports day at my secondary – as well getting to enjoy the event itself, being there gave me the chance to observe from an SBM's perspective the impact of decisions taken with respect to the day's organisation, health and safety arrangements and levels of parental engagement.

SOCIALISING
SBMs can be guilty of not taking breaks. Spending time with colleagues in the staff room isn't necessarily something you should do every day without fail, but not doing so at all represents a missed opportunity. It's a chance to meet colleagues on a more personal level and increase your sense of belonging. It presents opportunities

to *listen*, which is something I try to do as often as I can – using what I hear to identify funding opportunities, share resources and inform practice. This can extend to staff activities outside school; the more visible you are, the more likely you are to be invited.

TRAINING
I take every opportunity to run training courses on anything from budget bidding to health and safety and school trips, or indeed anything else for which I have responsibility. Keep an eye on the staff training programme within your school. You can gain invaluable knowledge by developing your understanding of how other aspects of the school operate – and a better appreciation for how everything has a cost...

SCHOOL COUNCIL
Getting involved in your School Council is a great way of meeting students and getting to know more about their desires and wants for their school. By taking part in School Council meetings, you can help guide their choices of projects and activities towards those that are achievable and sustainable, and which will deliver good value.

PARENT FORUMS AND FUNDRAISING GROUPS
Parent forums are useful for gaining

external perspectives on a range of different areas, from uniform designs to the school's marketing plan. Lending your expertise to fundraising projects can help staff and parents not only generate money, but use what they raise in a more effective way.

TEACHING AND LEARNING
Being present in the classroom helps give value to what you do, and can open up opportunities for supporting your colleagues and the pupils. I've been known to offer my services to business studies and sixth form learning projects, and have helped support a number of classroom-based activities. At a primary school I previously worked at, I was involved in organising talent days and running salsa dance classes.
Involving yourself in all the above will help raise the profile of the SBM role among colleagues and pupils, build your knowledge and passion for the school and open up new opportunities for supporting various improvements and outcomes – making an already enjoyable job even better!

Sue Birchall is a consultant, speaker, writer, trainer and business manager at The Malling School, Kent

ARE YOU USING YOUR PUPIL PREMIUM PROPERLY?

Rebecca Leek looks at how schools can ensure every penny of their Pupil Premium funding does as much good as possible…

Do you remember what you were doing in April 2011? It was the month Kate Middleton married Prince William, when tensions in Syria reached new heights, when the mobile game *Angry Birds* game was at its zenith – and when Pupil Premium was first introduced.

Since then, we've seen the arrival of a whole new assessment and accountability system, a new curriculum, two Ofsted frameworks and the turnover of five education secretaries (not to mention three prime ministers, at least at the time of writing).

EQUITABLE, NOT EQUAL

Practice has certainly changed and evolved as the years have gone by, but what's remained fairly constant is a general level of worry regarding Pupil Premium funding. That's hardly surprising, given the (quite rightly) high level of accountability linked to it. Pupil Premium outcomes aren't just published, but scrutinised by Ofsted and regularly subject to external reviews and governors' lines of enquiry.

In my experience, the worry stems from misinformation or conflicting opinions as to what school are 'supposed to be doing' with Pupil Premium. I've seen some schools track with forensic detail what's been spent on every 'Pupil Premium child' as though it were a bursary attached to the child (it isn't). I've seen desperate attempts to transform the academic achievements of a 'Pupil Premium child' within a term.

> **"It's ill-advised to throw everything into the last term of Year 6"**

With knowledge, however, comes confidence. When leading on Pupil Premium, examine the guidelines and communicate them to those who need to know them. Then, instead of being asked to achieve the unnecessary by anxious colleagues or board members, you can refer to the facts and develop your strategy from there, safe in the knowledge that your advice is based on accurate information, rather than myth. Knowing the guidance inside out brings you great freedom, given that they're clear, yet broad.

In summary, the Pupil Premium grant is designed to improve the academic outcomes of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities, and close the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers across the country. That's the long and the short of it. The guidance also states that there's no expectation that schools should spend the grant only on eligible pupils, or on a 'per-eligible pupil' basis. In essence, it's a grant to be used equitably (rather than equally), and is there to be used on a needs basis. On this, the guidance is clear.

SHORT, MID AND LONG

It's ill-advised to throw everything into the last term of Year 6, as this alone does little to improve the lifelong chances of a disadvantaged child. That might get them over the line, but it's sustained support and sustained school improvement that will have the most far-reaching and meaningful impact. I'd recommend taking a short-, mid- and long-term approach to Pupil Premium planning, since some short

term projects are perfectly legitimate. Setting aside some of a reserved 'inclusion pot' for children to attend a residential they might not otherwise be able to, for example, or for a specialist to work with a child who has experienced trauma for half a term before transition.

A longer term project might involve committing to a three-year development programme to improve an area of school practice, such as providing 'Power of Reading' training for a number of teachers each year for three years.

It would be disingenuous to list the 'best ways' of using Pupil Premium funding. What's key is that it meets the needs of your pupils. Assessing this requires careful attention, and is worth committing some spend to.

FORENSIC ANALYSIS

I once worked with a headteacher who was a master at this type of forensic analysis and would scrutinise everything. That included pupils' historical attendance data, which days they missed, which clubs they attended, even which parts children played in school productions, along with parental attendance at consultation evenings. Combined with the school's attainment data, she developed a detailed understanding of various barriers and trends. In one instance, she identified a drop-off in KS2 attendance figures, whereby children in receipt of free school meals came to school less often from Y3 onwards. This informed her targeting of support and additional investment in the

Y2 to Y3 transition, instructing the family support worker to target this age group and building a careful plan of enrichment for the entirety of Y3 that met the interests of that particular year group. Attendance subsequently went up and was sustained into Y4.

I'm a strong advocate for specialist assessment. Secondary school SENCos will often undertake specialist assessment training, so that they're qualified to assess for access arrangements. Sadly, however, few primary SENCos get to complete such qualifications. The Certificate of Competence in Educational

Testing offered online by Real Training (realtraining.co.uk), for example, is a fantastic form of professional development. Having someone on staff confident enough to conduct a range of assessments and report accurately on phonological skills, auditory processing and the like is a great asset. It won't replace input from educational psychologists, but can be a very affordable way of gaining extra insight into the barriers to learning faced by some children which might otherwise be head-scratching.

Yes, there's the worry that you may eventually lose the staff member you train, but I'm of the view that one more qualified person in education is better than none. It's just the gamble that schools have to take.

REACHING OUT

One practical advantage of the accountability standards baked into Pupil Premium is that schools have to publish their impact statements online, which can be a rich source of insight and ideas. Explore just the five schools closest to you, and there'll be something there you might not have previously thought of. Their strategies may not necessarily fit the needs of your school, but they could certainly send you in new directions.

Having tried this myself, I came to read about CPD in spaced and interleaved learning, a '100 must read' book challenge and an outreach project with one school's local university, as well as the more standard fare of increased early intervention in speech and language and additional TA support in certain classes. You could go a step further by forging links with these schools and hopping in on each other's training. I've also been able to benefit from match funding provided by other organisations – building up links with local charities, trusts and community interest companies is always something worth exploring.

Finally, concentrate on maximising your grant funding. Is your census being completed accurately? Investing a little time and training in this area will reap dividends. Some schools give out items of school uniform to families for free in return for completed initial enquiry forms regarding free school meal eligibility. The cost of a few jumpers is a small investment for what could be a high return. Persevere with the reminders and efforts at encouraging parents to inform you of their eligibility. Additional school letters, Class Dojo reminders and Facebook posts can potentially bring in several thousands of pounds, which isn't to be sniffed at during these times of tightened budgets. After all, the children deserve it – which at the end of the day is surely what our job is all about.

Rebecca Leek is director of strategy at ASSET Education and a former SENCo

Let us know your thoughts

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Here at PSM, we want to make the best magazine possible. Our hope is that by getting to know more about about you, we can create a title that reflects and responds to the most pressing topics and issues affecting school leaders and school business professionals right now. This is therefore your chance to tell about who you are, what you do, what's important to you and what we can do to make each issue an even more informative and enjoyable read. Simply visit **primaryleaders.com/readersurvey** and fill out the online form. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Leadership

FROM PROFESSION TO PAGE

As a leader, you'll have valuable knowledge and experience to share with others – so why not try and publish a book?

Following 10 years of headship I embarked on a professional doctorate, choosing to focus my research on the transition from deputy headship to headship. I tracked the progress of six new headteachers through their final months as deputies and into their first two terms of headship, and reported my findings of their experiences.

I tried to record honestly the challenges they faced and strategies they adopted. Though the participants were anonymised, I'd captured a significant amount of detail about them and therefore withheld the online publication of my thesis out of respect for their confidentiality.

However, I felt that what I'd learnt about moving into headship would be useful to new and aspiring heads, as well as governors. Keen to communicate these messages to a professional audience, I approached Crown House and asked if they'd be interested in publishing a book.

Drawing on my research findings and prior headship experience, I wrote *Making the Leap – Moving from Deputy to Head* between January and June 2016 and it was published in November that year. The advice I'd offer to other educators wondering whether they might have a book in them would therefore be as follows:

1. Develop a clear idea of what you hope to communicate and a sense of what your target audience will gain from reading what you intend to write. Think also about structure – I dedicated time in the first month to organising my material, carefully considering the content of each chapter.

2. If you're clear as to the nature and shape of your proposed book, you're ready to approach an educational publisher. You'll probably be asked to submit a written proposal with details of what will make your book distinctive from others in the market, your intended audience, how you might promote the book and who might be prepared to review it.

3. If you get the green-light from a publisher, you'll then receive a contract to sign before discussing appropriate deadlines. Often these will include the submission of early chapters for scrutiny and comment while the writing is underway. Naturally, you'll need to be sufficiently motivated and disciplined to meet those deadlines and keep going. Don't agonise over what you write – focus on getting your ideas down, then edit and refine later on as needed. Once the draft is complete, you'll liaise with a copy editor who'll highlight necessary corrections and suggest some potential amendments.

4. At this stage you may be asked to suggest possible reviewers. Their job will be to read and provide feedback on the existing draft and supply potential comments for the cover, opening pages and/or promotional material once the book is in print. I chose 14 individuals I knew to be aspiring heads, heads-elect or new heads, since they formed my primary audience. In some cases you'll also help decide who to approach for a foreword, write your acknowledgements and decide on a dedication, should you wish to include one.

5. Finally, your publisher will discuss with you the physical look of the book and front cover. As the printing process commences, consider the book's launch and how it will be publicised – some authors choose to hold a launch event.

Needless to say, receiving a copy of your published book and holding it in your hands for the first time is an incredible thrill. So ... do you have a book in you?

Jill Berry is a leadership consultant, author and former headteacher

SEND TRAINING – WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

Sal McKeown looks at whether 'virtual conferences' could provide heads with affordable SEND training

In June this year, headteachers warned of a crisis in special needs provision. The NAHT's 'Empty Promises' survey found that 94% of headteachers felt it had become harder to meet the demands for SEND support, compared with 2017 (see tinyurl.com/naht-send-19). Respondents spoke of overstretched teachers having to address the needs of children yet to undergo SEND assessments they were entitled to, alongside expectations that the schools in question manage said demand on ever smaller budgets.

We've since learned that there's to be a new review into the SEND support system and more money for SEND provision in 2020/21, to the tune of £700m – but those problems won't disappear. Teacher retention remains an ongoing issue, with schools having lost significant numbers of staff and TAs possessing valuable SEND expertise.

Expect training to be at a premium, due to the government now wanting all new teachers to receive enhanced training in behaviour and classroom management at the start of their careers. At the same time, Ofsted's new inspection framework has placed more emphasis on inclusion, wellbeing, quality of the curriculum and behaviour.

Former headteacher and ex-CEO of nasen, Lorraine Petersen OBE, is keenly aware of the pressures headteachers are facing with respect to SEND training: "Budgets will still be tight, and headteachers won't have the money to cover conference fees and travel costs. Sending one member of staff to an event, and relying on them to cascade information in after-school CPD sessions, just isn't going to work."

As a result, new training models are starting to emerge, one of the most interesting being the 'specialist virtual conference'. These aren't just webinars, but instead offer day-length CPD programmes that can be accessed live on the day itself or afterwards from home, school or another venue.

Dale Pickles is managing director of B Squared – a company specialising in assessment, evidence and tracking for pupils with SEND. In his view, "We have to raise the priority of SEND in schools, so training has to be affordable, accessible and easy to share with other professionals."

Having embraced the virtual conference model, B Squared is due to hold its next VSEND Conference on November 8th 2019. Running from 9.15am to 4.15pm, it will consist of 12 sessions and feature contributions on the topic of SEND policy from, among others, behaviour expert Fintan O'Regan, Pat Bullen from the National Development Team for Inclusion and former nasen head, Jane Friswell. Other sessions will cover leadership, mental health, school refusal and working with families. Participation in the conference will cost schools £60, and include access to all slides, materials and videos.

"This is going to be a tough year for headteachers," adds Lorraine Petersen. 'They cannot just delegate responsibility for children with SEND to the SENCo – they need to train staff in-house and make sure everyone is up to speed with changes to SEND."

For more details regarding the B Squared VSEND conference, visit virtualsendconference.com

Measure staff performance

You're clear as to what your staff performance standards
are – but whether they're met may well depend on how
you talk about them, says Laura Williams...

Meaningful dialogue between leaders and teams should be ongoing throughout the year. Staff shouldn't have to wait until the start of the next annual cycle to discover their performance has been substandard and that they're not going to be receiving an increment.

Performance management is the gateway to personal development, professional progression and succession planning. It identifies those needing support, provides assistance to ambitious staff who are ready to progress and helps highlight those forms of CPD that might be beneficial to individual colleagues.

The outcomes of this process are ultimately focused on staff pay – specifically, whether the staff in question will receive an incremental or accelerated progression through the pay scale – and it's here where things can get controversial. It's possible, however, to improve the clarity and objectivity of both your target setting and measurement of success through the language employed to discuss staff performance. The terminology I use is as follows:

Appraisal – Appraising the job that's being done; the one that's outlined in the relevant job description and person specification, and which they're being paid to do.

Performance Management – a process undertaken by those who have consistently exceeded their performance expectations and outperformed targets they've been set by a pre-determined margin.

To carry out fair appraisals and performance management for those who have excelled, a holistic performance assessment approach should be used. This means that the achievement of arbitrary targets shouldn't become the sole driver of pay decisions. Instead, overall performance discussions ought to incorporate a number of factors without being weighted towards any one in particular. Examples of this might include the stage they're at in their career, the quality of their book scrutiny or their ability to manage and interpret data.

Essentially, staff evaluation should include any element of performance that's been reviewed as a matter of course throughout the year, as part of the line management process.

Targets should support the appraisal process, but not determine it. With the right policy in place, a teacher may still receive their annual increment even if targets haven't been met – so long as it can be evidenced that they've met the requirements of their role.

Your evaluation process should allow room for exceptional performance to be recognised and valued, be it through accelerated pay or via CPD and succession planning strategies. People consistently outperforming in their role, who work above and beyond while demonstrating exceptional value, naturally deserve recognition.

How should we define 'exceptional performance'? It shouldn't be 'easy' to achieve, but nor should it be impossible. This is where targets come into their own. Exceptional performance, as set by targets, can be defined for each individual. Performance that's 'exceptional' thus won't hinge solely on meeting set standards, but on exceeding them and other targets consistently.

The truth is that some organisations are good at appraisal and performance management, but too many aren't. In my experience, the latter can usually be linked to poor polices or lacklustre management training and delivery. If you want to improve your staff performance discussions, think about the language you and other leaders use and how you articulate your policy. If leaders aren't on board with the process, or fail to execute it properly, that represents a wasted opportunity.

Laura Williams is a former MAT chief operations officer and school business manager, and the founder of LJ Business Consultancy

🐦 @lauraljbusiness

💻 ljbusinessconsultancyltd.co.uk

"Achievement of arbitrary targets shouldn't become the sole driver of pay decisions"

MOVING IN AND GETTING ON

Changing schools as a headteacher involves considerable upheaval. Anthony David explains how the process can be made easier for all involved...

Whether you're a new head or an experienced one, changing schools is always a source of anxiety. There's a good reason why some heads, once they're established, settle in for many, many years. It's like setting up a business – once you have everything ticking over nicely, why upset the apple cart and move to a new school to start things afresh?

In the current climate, some heads may well find themselves in the position of being 'asked' to lead another school. This is because heads are expensive. Hundreds, if not thousands of schools are facing the prospect of closure if they don't radically change their leadership model. This is particularly true in London, where following many years of pupil growth there's been an unexpected drop in pupil numbers. This has resulted in schools having to review their pupil admission numbers in light of dramatic falls in the size of their rolls. So whether you're being courted to become an executive head, or moving to a new school for whatever reason, here are a few tricks to help make the move as calm and orderly as possible.

PLEASED TO MEET YOU

Firstly, get to know your new staff. When entering a new establishment for the first time, you're an outsider and they're the old guard. They'll know which families need that extra bit of TLC, their colleagues' strengths (and weaknesses)

and, most importantly, the pupils. It's in their gift to share this information.

Remember that they'll be sizing you up just as much as you'll be sizing them up (and you will). If you can, set up a whole team meeting. I recently encountered a situation with a new team where they were quite intimidated by me, based purely on rumour. This was easily dispelled once we met face to face, so try and do this as soon as possible.

Given the current recruitment cycle, it's likely that you'll have secured any new role in February/March, so aim to meet the team before the end of the spring term. Keep the meeting open-ended and don't go in with an agenda. Share your experiences by all means, but this isn't the time to set out your table with high expectations. You have months of research to do before that will be needed, which arguably won't be until September.

Equally, set up meetings with the leadership team. If the deputy is staying, then it's crucial that you establish a partnership with them. These are your closest allies, making it critical that you develop a strong relationship with them. If you're starting at a new school as an executive head, then you may have a promoted head of school – a very different role, whereby you both work in partnership, but it's your vision that governs the direction of the school. Moreover, your role will include drawing multiple schools closer together. Even more so than in other models of leadership, you'll be reliant on your head

of school's experience to fill in the gaps. This is critical for the inevitable 'game-playing' that will take place between the date of your recruitment and the day you start.

THE GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

For new heads, this process of game-playing always comes as a bit of a surprise. When a headteacher departs a school, there's a precious window of opportunity for the rest of the staff to re-negotiate their contracts. The obvious recommendation here is to not agree in haste to anything. Even if the outgoing head agrees to a particular change, the obvious question to ask is '*Why wait until you're leaving to decide this?*' You could easily land yourself in a situation that you'll regret at leisure. The sure-fire way to sidestep this is to pass matters relating to staff pay and terms on to your governors.

Next, your budget. This may not seem to be at the heart of what we're trying to do – namely realising every child's full potential – but without a comprehensive understanding of your finances, you won't be able to establish a strategy for your school. The bottom line is that all schools are stretched. If you're an executive head, chances are that you've been brought in for your experience and because you represent a cost saving.

If you can, try and involve yourself in setting the school's budget. This will

allow you to influence how the available budget is spent, rather than inheriting a budget that might run counter to your own ambitions for the school.

During your first few weeks in September you'll need to work hard and fast. Use this time to identify the strengths of the school, set up your plan for the year (sometimes referred to as an SDP or SIP – essentially your business plan) and audit. You must audit all of the school's policies, with HR being the most important of all, especially if you're faced with staff changes due to budget restrictions.

Time is not on your side here. If the governors don't approve any proposals you have for reforming these policies you may have to wait until the end of term before the process is complete. Don't rush into things, and know that you can fall back on extant LA or diocesan policies, should there be any, as these will have been previously reviewed by unions.

BE SEEN

From a practical point of view, visibility is key. Make you sure you're outside in the playground at the start and end of each day. Get to know your community. This will build the type of trust that's core to an effective school. For colleagues, set up a learning walk in September with at least one other senior leader. You need to get to know how effective your teaching staff are, and if it emerges that some have unmet needs, these can be addressed with them as part of your performance management process. (Note – performance management will need to be completed for all colleagues by October.)

Equally, however, you also need to gauge the strengths within your other members of staff. In short, your task is to gather a great deal of information, on everyone, as soon as possible. The spectre hovering over your shoulder will be inspection. However far you are into the cycle upon arrival, it's essential to familiarise yourself with Ofsted's latest School Inspection Handbook (see tinyurl. com/psm-ofsted-handbook) and ensure that your strategy reflects the changes that have taken effect as of 2019/20 – the most notable of which relate to the breadth of the curriculum.

Anthony David is an executive headteacher

IN BRIEF

The start of a new academic year affords a moment to refresh. New leaders should want to hit the ground running – you've had a glorious summer to set up your plans, and now you're able to put them into action.

The advice presented here focuses on those preceding months, and the need to review the school's staff and the various political manoeuvrings in play. It then goes on to consider the key action points which, as a new head, you must carefully consider during the very first few weeks of headship.

Even if this is your third headship, starting at a new school is always nerve-wracking, often with echoes of your NQT year. Everything seems new and different – how long will it take you to adapt and shape it?

AN UNSPOKEN SHAME

Schools act swiftly to address cases of bullying among pupils – but what if the bullies can be found among your staff?

For some teachers, the summer break is less of a holiday and more of an essential sanctuary. These teachers will be desperate for the end of July and its promise of escape; in some extreme cases, they'll be suicidal and in desperate need of professional help.

These teachers are the victims of bullying. Not from children, not from parents, but from their fellow colleagues. In most cases, the bullies in question will be school leaders or members of SLT. Some might be chairs of governors, or chairs of the board of trustees. A smaller number may be line managers.

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

The bullies hide in plain sight. Everyone knows who they are, but it's often the case that whistleblowing carries with it the risk of serious consequences. Instead, everyone keeps their heads down, gets on with their work and hopes to avoid becoming the next victim.

In his 1976 book *The Harrassed Worker*, Carroll M. Brodsky describes bullying as 'A repeated and persistent destructive process of attempts by one (or several) person(s) to torment, wear down, frustrate, get a reaction from another or exclude him or her from the work environment." In a 2007 article for *The Psychologist*, Susan Cartwright and Cary L. Cooper, see it as "The accumulation, over a long period of time, of hostile proposals (and behaviours) expressed by one or several people towards a third person at work (the target)."

What distinguishes bullying from other aggressive behaviours is its persistence and the power imbalance between the bully and the victim. Cartwright and Cooper identify a number factors within the workplace environment that are associated with bullying, including a high level of competition, radical change, a climate of insecurity (such as the threat of redundancy) and hierarchical structures.

Compounding these can be a strong, 'macho' style of

management, low levels of staff participation or consultation, excessive work demands and, unsurprisingly, a lack of procedures for tackling bullying and harassment issues. It's worth noting that those factors were also highlighted by Dr Helen Woodley and Ross Morrison McGill's 2018 book, *Toxic Schools: How to Avoid Them and How to Leave Them*.

"HE WAS A MONSTER TO US ALL"

In June this year I created a confidential, anonymised survey on bullying and harassment (see tinyurl.com/psm-sw-survey) and promoted it via Twitter and LinkedIn. It had received 90 responses by the time the schools broke up for the summer, and appeared to indicate that bullying as a sub-section of wellbeing is a great concern among a significant minority of teachers.

Thankfully, the overwhelming majority of schools are led by headteachers and middle leaders who do everything they can in the most difficult of circumstances to look after their staff. However, the responses by some teachers to my survey painted pictures of destructive environments that are destroying teachers' lives.

When asked to describe how they had been bullied, one response read as follows: "Chair of Governors persistently harassed, intimidated, threatened and caused huge anxiety at all hours of the day and night, including a 2.15am phone call and late night and weekend emails designed to cause distress."

Other quotes included, "I was observed every day until I resigned. I never received written feedback," and "Undermining and repeated jokes about my competence, size, age over a period of years."

The survey also heard from a teacher who wrote "He would yell and scream and come right up against your face with accusations … he would yell at staff in front of the children … he was a monster to us all. Out of 15 new starters in September, nine of us left by December because we couldn't take it any more, or

he had fired them in a fit of rage." In a caring profession, it's shocking to come across adults who behave towards other adults in this way.

TAKE CONTROL

The bully seeks to gain control by creating a condition of powerlessness in the victim, both in terms of the relationship between the two of them and in relation to the victim's wider position within the workplace. One manifestation of this may see the bully frequently ridicule or criticise a colleague's work and attempt to isolate them from their colleagues. If you're the victim in this instance, what can you do?

However limited you feel your control to be, take some of it back for yourself. Victims of bullying can sometimes be so emotionally drained that they perceive the bully as able to influence every aspect of their life, but this is never the case. There will always be parts of your life over which the bully has little or no control.

That includes control over what and how you teach. Where you eat your lunch. Who you speak to. When you leave and arrive each day. What you do in the evenings. How you relax at home. The time you allocate to self-care at weekends...

STAND YOUR GROUND

Every bully has their own pattern of behaviour. Prepare responses to use the next time the bully singles you out, such as *'When you say that, I feel you're devaluing my work'* or *'I'm not prepared to accept this kind of behaviour. Can we pick up the conversation again when you're not as aggressive?'* The act of preparing such a statement, and knowing you have it ready, will make you feel stronger and help break the link between the bullying behaviour and your own feelings of powerlessness. Over time you'll be able to intensify the strength of opposition to your bully, and as this opposition builds, your bully's response will start to diminish.

Another strategy is to respond in writing to an issue raised by a bully, email it to them and ask for a meeting to discuss it. You then have a document to support you during the meeting, rather than making your sole focus the emotionally charged meeting itself. Consider whether you might benefit from having a union representative or a close fellow teacher sit in – someone able to take an objective view of what transpires during the meeting and prepared to intervene in order to keep things on track. Bullies don't like to be confronted, as it reduces their power.

You will, of course, need to consider how the bully will respond to being opposed, and weigh up the benefits and disadvantages of standing up to them – particularly if there's a risk of reprisal. Ask yourself, *'What are the benefits of using the statement I've prepared, as opposed to not using it, the next time I'm bullied?'*

ACT TOGETHER

Bullies rely on their victims' silence, isolating them from colleagues who may in turn be afraid of reprisals if they defend you. Find out if any of your other colleagues have been bullied before and try forming a support group. Together, write a letter outlining the bullying to your school's headteacher and/or governing body. If you're based at a trust, contact the CEO and/ or executive headteacher.

THE SAFE SPACE ALLIANCE

I have created an online community network for adult victims of bullying within their schools. As well as providing a space for members to share their experiences and seek support, the Safe Space Alliance also includes a school accreditation scheme.

By displaying the Safe Space School accreditation logo on their website, prospective applicants, pupils and parents can receive extra assurances that your school won't tolerate bullying of any kind, among both children and adults alike. Further details and entry forms can be found at teachwellalliance.com/surveys-and-support

To prevent individual teachers from being singled out, credit your letter to the 'Anti-Bullying Support Group' or similar. Refuse to attend any meetings to discuss the bullying individually and instead insist that the headteacher or chair of governors meet with staff as a group.

If it's your headteacher who's the bully, write the letter using the second person 'you', describe how he or she is behaving, the consequences of their behaviour and copy in the chair of governors, chair of the board of trustees, executive principal or CEO as appropriate.

Finally, if you're unable to stop the bullying despite your best efforts, it may be time to consider moving on.

Steve Waters is the founder of the Teach Well Alliance and a Founding Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching; the views expressed in this article are his own

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2 GET THE MESSAGE

Term dates, parents' evenings, policies, procedures and more – whether it's updating parents on important information for the year ahead, or welcoming new parents to the school community, there's plenty to share at the start of the year.

Used by over 5,000 schools and 4 million parents, ParentMail is the UK's favourite parental engagement platform. With a free mobile app for parents and a flexible, user-friendly online platform for managing messaging, forms, events and more, ParentMail saves time and money for busy office teams. **parentmail.co.uk**

HELPING HAND

Juniper Education, formerly the EES for Schools division of Essex County Council, provides software, support and professional services to over 4,300 primary and secondary schools. Its software products include Target Tracker, the market-leading pupil assessment and progress tracking tool (currently used in over 1 in 4 English primary schools) and the SE+ self-evaluation tool. Its support services span HR, finance, clerking and governance and educational visits, complementing the professional development services and staff/teacher training that Juniper Education can also offer.
junipereducation.org

4 ASSESSMENT ALTERNATIVES

More Than A Score is a coalition of heads, teachers, education experts and parents campaigning to change the current system of high stakes assessment in primary schools. They point out that government policy presently focuses on accountability to the detriment of children's education, and that the time has come to debate alternatives which would better serve schools and, most importantly, pupils. This term sees the pilot of reception baseline assessment, which is opposed by an overwhelming majority of primary school leaders. Over 5,000 schools have opted not to participate – to find out more, email campaign@morethanascore.org.uk.
morethanascore.org.uk

5 ONE OF A KIND SIGNS

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Evidence Me

An observation and assessment suite with a host of time-saving features

- An outstanding observation and assessment app
- Works offline, with support for iOS and Android devices
- Monitor coverage of curriculum areas
- Automatic intelligent objectives selection
- Instantly generates reports in a range of formats

Reviewed by: John Dabell

See the impact

Building a profile of pupils is crucial to understanding their needs, but it's a process that relies on the evidence we're able to capture and collect about them. Schools have an enormous amount of information flying around the place, of course – but actually getting hold of it can be like using a net to catch a butterfly. It's harder than it looks.

There is, however, another way of doing things, and 2Simple's next generation observation and assessment suite could well be the tool you're looking for. Evidence Me is a classroom capture system that enables you to grab meaningful moments while providing real-time evidence of learning that helps you improve the quality and consistency of formative assessment. The idea is that you perform your assessment directly in the app itself, thus saving time.

The app uses the camera functionality of your tablet or smartphone, allowing you to take snapshots of learning as it happens, wherever that may be, and add up to 10 photos or videos to each observation. The app is set up so that you can then tag your learning objectives and next step objectives. Based on the notes teachers make about observations, objectives and next steps will be suggested automatically – an impressively dynamic feature.

The workload wonders continue with the system's ability to let you tag the same objective to multiple children, and if you want, you can use your preferred early years to KS2 framework.

With the data collected, you'll need to produce reports for evidence. Evidence Me lets you do just that, ensuring that you'll always have clear and concise reports at the ready from now on. You can track a group, cohort or individual, easily import baseline data and produce curriculum coverage reports at the click of a button.

The beauty of Evidence Me is that it enhances formative assessment and can also be used for summative purposes, such as reporting to parents. There's even a dedicated parent app that can be updated directly for same-day observations.

This is a superb formative to summative 'documentation of learning' tool, as it helps us get closer to children's thinking while helping teachers understand and support learning processes. One particularly powerful feature is that you can see observations captured across the school on a single device.

Schools are always on the lookout for powerful, easy-to-use software that can take the stress out of school improvement and assessment, and that's exactly what Evidence Me delivers. Its usability, accuracy and speed is second to none.

PSM
PRIMARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

VERDICT

✔ Makes learning visible and record-keeping both secure and effortless

✔ Intelligently links to formative assessment

✔ Generates personalised learning journeys

✔ Supports an enquiry-led, investigative approach to learning

✔ Strengthens feedback and reflective practices

✔ Saves teachers' time and your school money

UPGRADE IF…

You're looking for a well-designed classroom management tool that can capture evidence of learning and progress for formative assessment on the go..

To learn more, contact 020 8203 1781 or visit 2simple.com/evidenceme

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Schools

Educater Assessment

A sophisticated tracking system to help you stay on top of your pupil data

- Finely tuned assessment tracking and performance analytics
- Sophisticated data collection to better understand your school's needs
- Ability to record children's progression from EYFS to KS2
- Gap analysis that serves up valuable learning insights
- Option to select assessment frameworks from different content providers

Reviewed by: John Dabell

Getting to grips with pupil assessment is one of the biggest challenges schools face. The need for meaningful assessment data is paramount, but so too is the need to avoid creating superfluous workload at the same time.

The Assessment module produced by Educater, as part of its broader pupil tracking and communication platform for schools, is a state-of-the-art online assessment solution that can support schools in their attainment scrutiny, while helping staff gauge where pupils are and fuel their growth. It can be used to demonstrate pupil progress and compare cohorts, thus pointing the way towards relevant and appropriate pupil interventions. Staff can use its insights to ensure the right children are being challenged at the right time and address underachievement, all from one place. What makes Assessment a 5-star offering is that it's set up to cater for each school's particular needs. Far from being a 'one size fits all' solution, it can be customised according to your specific curriculum, with unique objectives and scoring systems.

Moreover, Educater has forged partnerships with a number of external content providers, including STAT Sheffield, Rising Stars Progression Frameworks, Mathematics Mastery and NAHT Assessment Frameworks, allowing schools to pick the assessment framework that's right for them. If they wish, schools can even opt to mix and match, incorporating frameworks from multiple providers. If this bespoke feature doesn't tick your boxes, surely nothing will.

The Educater software itself is carefully laid out to provide assistance every step of the way, via an easy to use, intuitive and no-nonsense dashboard that links into every base you'll need to cover. The wealth of features on offer here is extensive, spanning planning and assessment grids, key concept grids, statement descriptors, PITA (Point in Time Assessment), EYFS grids and scheduled reports. Being browser-based, staff can, of course, log into Educater securely from anywhere at any time, quickly input their data and see their records updated in real time.

To help make sense of it all, Educater provides a comprehensive teacher manual containing a range of 'How to..' guides relating to data, report generation, groups and filtering, alongside guides setting out step-by-step assistance for subject leaders and administrators. The level of support is impressive, and goes some way towards addressing the wider teacher workload challenge.

This is a top-quality, user-friendly and seamless solution that's streets ahead of other pupil tracking systems. It's also great value, with pricing starting at £350 per year, based on pupil numbers.

PSM
PRIMARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

VERDICT

✔ Superbly tailored to schools' individual requirements
✔ Impressive data insights and rapid information updates
✔ Effective at pinpointing gaps in learning
✔ Huge potential for reducing teacher workload
✔ Can boost the effectiveness of interventions

UPGRADE IF...

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HOW DO YOU HANDLE THE PRESSURE?

Having spent 22 years in education, I don't think Ofsted is the problem – but your school's management team might be...

I've experienced eight Ofsted inspections in various schools, and fully experienced the emotions involved when receiving the result – good and bad. I've worked for nine headteachers, all very different in their approach. I've worked in Requires Improvement schools where the atmosphere is extremely positive. I know teachers in Outstanding schools who hate their job.

Teacher retention has very little to do with your school's Ofsted grade. It has everything to do with how your school is managed and how the head copes with pressures to improve the school. My summary of how three particular heads managed those pressures is as follows...

SCHOOL A – REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT

"I'll improve this school by introducing non-negotiables that suffocate teacher autonomy. I'll carry out excessive book looks and learning walks. I'll put teachers on support plans over the slightest imperfections. I'll tell staff what to put on display boards and how they should be presented. I'll regularly test children for data purposes.

"I won't invest in teacher wellbeing, or fully understand the pressures involved with teaching in this particular catchment area. Y6 pupils will spend the year in booster groups at the expense of the wider curriculum. I'll do whatever it takes to get a good Ofsted grade."

Result: The atmosphere was awful. Very good teachers left. Long-term sickness was an issue. Because the SATs results improved, the school was later judged Good. It was not a 'good' school.

SCHOOL B – REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT

"I'll improve this school by reading literature on educational research. I'll improve this school by refusing to carry out booster groups all year for Y6. I'll regularly address and discuss workload with staff and try, where possible, to cut down on non-negotiables that aren't in the pupils' or teachers' interest. I'll insist that the arts have priority in the school and stop the obsession with literacy and maths.

"I won't put staff on support plans just because their data isn't great. I'll praise staff for their efforts. I'll give autonomy back to teachers wherever possible. I want to treat staff professionally, and fully trust them to do their job."

Result: The atmosphere was great. Staff were happy most of the time. Long-term sickness was non-existent. SATs results were average to good. The school was judged Good. It *was* a good school. Pupils were happy. Teachers had job satisfaction.

SCHOOL C – GOOD

"I want more. I want this school to be Outstanding. I have no family and school is my life. I'll do anything to get the recognition I crave. I'll make staff work hard, and feel guilty for not giving up enough of their own time. I'll off-roll pupils who will affect our SATs data and make it difficult for pupils with special needs to enrol. SATs boosters will be standard from Y4.

Result: School life was the only thing the head knew. Unfortunately, she didn't realise that many teachers needed a good work-life balance. Staff retention was good, but they were on their knees. The pressure to improve was constant and excessive. The children were well behaved. The school was graded Outstanding. It wasn't really 'outstanding' – it was an illusion. The head became an academy chain director, earning big money, and was soon implementing her policies at lots of other schools.

Your Ofsted grade doesn't affect teacher wellbeing and overall job satisfaction. Teacher wellbeing and job satisfaction is *absolutely* affected by how your head decides to manage the school.

The writer has taught in five schools across a 20-year career