

TS  
AWARDS  
2020

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# teach SECONDARY

Independent advice from the UK's top education experts



**DAVID  
OLUSOGA**

"I didn't attend school  
– I survived it"

## 5 STEPS TO BETTER APPRAISALS

### REVISION PLANNING

Prepare for  
success in 2021

**KATHARINE  
BIRBALSINGH:**

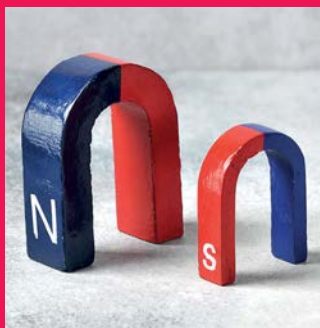
"I'm an  
education  
radical"

WHY SOME  
SCHOOLS  
HAVE A  
MISOGYNY  
PROBLEM

## MAKE THOSE MINUTES COUNT

How to maximise your lesson time

ISSUE 9.7 | £3.99



### *Learning Lab*

5 stubborn learning myths  
you should avoid

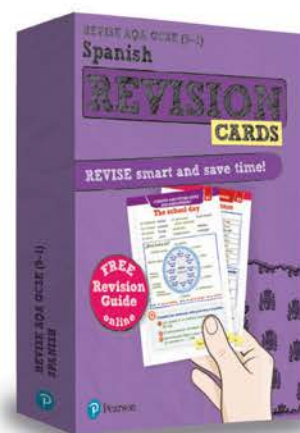
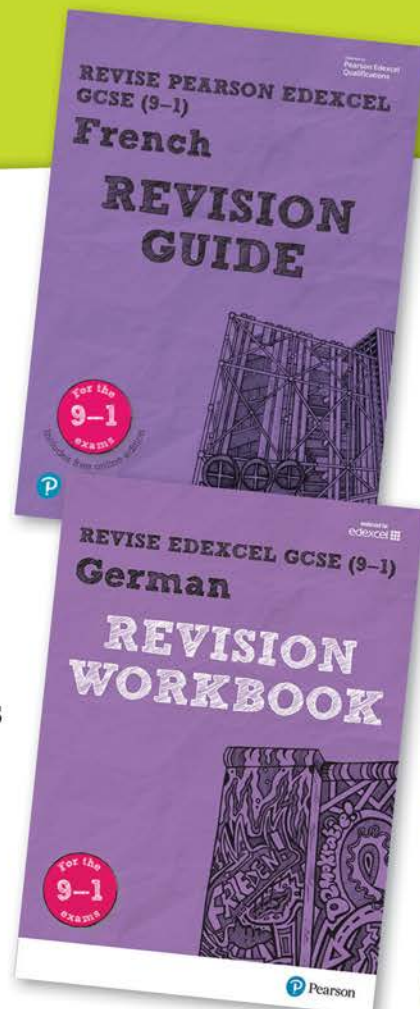
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## FROM THE EDITOR

### “Welcome...”



So, the country's secondary schools are back and fully open – well, 84% of them are, according to the latest government figures at press time. Which will probably have changed substantially by the time you read this. Even with the rapid planning that took place over summer, the likelihood of a rise in coronavirus cases and regional lockdowns was always going to make autumn a tumultuous time, and so it's proved.

Less predictable, perhaps, was the nature and timing of a couple of government announcements in late September. First, there was the guidance it issued to accompany the new statutory RSE curriculum, including a warning that schools shouldn't use resources from organisations that have expressed support for ending capitalism, and teacher training materials instructing teachers to explain the harms of 'cancel culture'. Both seemed almost deliberately designed to further fan already fiery sociopolitical arguments playing out across the teaching profession and the broader public sphere.

Not long after, the government placed a new legal obligation on schools to provide remote learning for any students absent due to COVID-19 concerns. A more obvious priority, at least, but one that came in for considerable criticism from school leaders for the lack of trust it seemed to convey.

And yet the work of schools continues, because it has to. It's usually around now that departments will have plotted out the coming months for their Y11s and be embarking purposefully on that revision stretch leading up to GCSEs, except this year ... no one knows what's actually happening next summer. Be that as it may, managing your time well, preparing for the unexpected and equipping your students to handle whatever form of maths and English assessment finally emerges is probably wise. We hope you find something useful in our revision special starting on p73.

And finally, I'd like to draw your attention to David Olusoga's recollection of a school experience (p25) that's horrific and anathema in many ways to how things are now, but one only removed from us by a scant few decades. As Black History Month once again reminds us how diverse, complex and illuminating the history of humanity really is, we should look to remember and move past the bigotry and brutality of our more recent past too.

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser  
editor@teachsecondary.com

## On board this issue:



Jodie Underhill is a research associate at the Incorporated Society of Musicians



Andrew Morrish is a former headteacher and MAT CEO



Zoe Enser is a specialist advisor for English at The Education People



Adam Riches is a senior leader for teaching and learning



Julia Knight is vice principal at an international school in Bahrain



Martin Illingworth is a senior lecturer in English education at Sheffield Hallam University

**teach  
SECONDARY  
AWARDS  
2020**

**AND THE  
WINNERS ARE...**

See pages 44-57

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### All the right notes

How schools can teach music in a post-COVID world

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Make every moment of those KS4 lessons count



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Maximise your lesson time, get your students to think like mathematicians and remember that yes, you absolutely can revise for English exams...

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# WRITERS' AWARDS 2020

## HIDDEN TALENTS

Awaken your pupils inner author

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Writing competition for children aged 4-14

**Judged by Greg James**

[explorelearning.co.uk/writersawards](https://explorelearning.co.uk/writersawards)



### 1st Prize

- ★ Apple tech bundle worth £2000.  
Including 13" Macbook pro + iPad
- ★ £1000 in experience vouchers
- ★ PLUS £500 worth of books for the winners school

# The newsletter

Grab a coffee and spend five minutes exploring the lighter side of CPD...

## The UNINFORMED teacher's guide to...

### MISS RONA

With apologies to that nice Miss Rhona in humanities who took you under her wing when you first started and showed you where the coffee machine was, everyone knows who 'Miss Rona' is.

Her name is whispered furtively by Shane in Y10, who now realises that jokingly inviting half the year to an illegal rave perhaps wasn't a great idea and is now fearing that Boris Johnson will turn up at his parent's front door waving a £1,000 fine. Her name is spat with venom by Natasha in Y8, because she was *this close* to having that birthday party before the new rules came in. Her name is mockingly invoked by Sean in Y9, as he continues to explore the most bewildering uses for a face mask imaginable. And chances are, her more formal designation has probably passed your lips too, driving home after yet another exhausting day.

Yes, the feminine anthropomorphism seems a little on the nose. Coming in 2021, then, Mr Co. You thought she was bad? Wait till you meet *that* guy...



## BEAT THE BUDGET



### What are we talking about?

Climate Change Negotiations for Schools from the Royal Meteorological Society

### What the targeted age range?

KS4/5

### What's on offer?

Downloadable documents, labels, slides and factsheets that a class or group session can use to simulate their own world climate change conference. The activity is modelled on the annual Conference of Interested Parties (COP26), which was originally due to take place this November, but is now postponed until November 2021.

### How might teachers use the resource?

Students taking part are assigned a

country to learn about, before attending mock 'briefing sessions' where they will find out about climate science and how countries can respond to climate issues relating to finance, adaptation and mitigation. In groups representing specific countries, they decide on their greenhouse gas emission pledges should be, and proceed to negotiate these with the other countries.

### Where are they available?

metlink.org

### DON'T QUOTE ME...

"Use of the word 'visits' in preference to 'inspections' in certain Ofsted documents does not in any way detract from the fact that the visits nevertheless fall within the broad concept of inspections."

*Ofsted's alleged response to a legal challenge brought by the NAHT*

## Think of a number...

### 84%

The proportion of fully open secondary schools on 24th September 2020 – down from 92% on 17th September

Source: gov.uk

44% Percentage of parents who feel schools don't have sufficient precautions in place to protect their children from COVID-19  
Source: childcare.co.uk

9% of 15-year-old students across OECD countries do not have a quiet place to study in their home  
Source: PISA 2018 Results

### ONE FOR THE WALL

"My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together"

**Desmond Tutu**





## Remote learning to be legally mandated

The DfE has published a Temporary Continuity Direction under the Coronavirus Act 2020 which places a legal obligation on schools to provide remote education for children forced to self-isolate at home due to coronavirus.

At the time of writing, the directive will come into force from October 22nd 2020 and remain in place until the end of the current school year.

Commenting on the new directive, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said, "It's vital these students have access to high quality and consistent remote education. I know that through the incredible hard work of our teachers and staff, pupils will continue to receive the education they deserve through this academic year, whatever the circumstances, and I will do everything I can to support our schools, colleges and young people in making sure that's the case."

The publication of Temporary Continuity Direction coincided with the announcement by the DfE of a new remote education support package. This includes a further 100,000 laptops being made available to disadvantaged children lacking access to a connected device and clinically vulnerable children (on top of a reserve supply of 150,000 laptops), and an expansion of the EdTech Demonstrator IT support programme for schools and colleges.

## SAVE THE DATE

9-13 NOVEMBER Youth Climate Summit | 17-20 NOVEMBER Schools & Academies Show 2020 Online | 30-31 JANUARY Strictly RE @HOME 2021

### 9-13 NOVEMBER

Youth Climate Summit  
Online  
[transform-our-world.org/youth-climate-summit-2020](https://transform-our-world.org/youth-climate-summit-2020)

This year's Youth Climate Summit will see schools around the UK come together online for a week-long festival of themed discussions and activities, timed to coincide with this year's postponed COP26 conference. Schools and teachers are being invited to submit their own ideas for session ideas and fringe events.

### 17-20 NOVEMBER

Schools & Academies Show 2020 Online  
Online  
[schoolsandacademiesshow.co.uk](https://schoolsandacademiesshow.co.uk)

The organisers of the Schools & Academies Show have announced that this year's event will now be taking place virtually, having been due to take place at the NEC. Those connecting to the event's dedicated online platform will get to hear from leading education experts and practitioners and drop in on a range of panel discussions

### 30-31 JANUARY

Strictly RE @HOME 2021  
Online  
[natre.org.uk/strictlyRE-2021](https://natre.org.uk/strictlyRE-2021)

StrictlyRE @Home is the upcoming online incarnation of NATRE's annual conference. Preceded by a series of twilight sessions throughout January, the event itself will be placing particular focus on matters relating to curriculum, religion and worldviews, and anti-racist RE. Those booking before 31st October 2020 will receive an early bird discount..

## KEYNOTES AND CORRESPONDENCE

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

### THE HEADLINE:



### Keir Starmer address online Labour Party conference

**WHO?** Keir Starmer, Labour Party leader

**WHERE?** The Labour Connected online event, speaking from Doncaster

**WHEN?** 22nd September 2020

I think you can measure a country by how good it is to grow up in. And it's a test of our compassion, how good it is to grow old in. The young and the old have been badly let down by this government. Our children and young people have been an afterthought. And the gap between the best and worst-off families threatens to get even wider.

This inequality scars life chances, and I fear it will leave a lasting legacy for a generation of children. The government promised catch-up support, but it's failed to materialise. And now the failure to get tests for children and teachers who need them means kids are missing out this term as well.

Opportunity for the young should go way beyond party politics. It has to be a national mission to end the deep injustice that a child's future is determined by their postcode, not by their potential. What we need is a national strategy with clear targets to close the education gap at every stage in a child's development. A strategy enforced through an independent body, such as the Children's Commissioner, and embedded in everything that we do.

If the Prime Minister won't act, we'll set up our own taskforce and get on with it. Because if levelling up is to mean anything, it must mean closing the education gap and making sure no child is held back.

I can see in my mind's eye the country I want us to be. Properly funded universal public services. World-class education which unleashes everyone's potential.



### THE HEADLINE:

### School leaders and governors issue Covid testing plea to Prime Ministers

**FROM?** Association of School and College Leaders, National Association of Head Teachers, National Governance Association

**TO?** Prime Minister Boris Johnson

**WHEN?** 15th September 2020

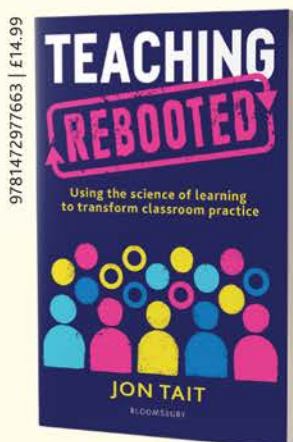
Schools and colleges are frustrated that having spent the summer painstakingly putting in place safety measures to enable reopening, they are immediately encountering a lack of testing and public health capacity. They feel the government should have foreseen the likely demand on the system, and ensured that it was able to cope.

But this frustration is overshadowed by a deep sense of foreboding about the potential for the system to become ever-more riddled with delays as more cases emerge. This would be increasingly disruptive to children's education and make staffing unsustainable.

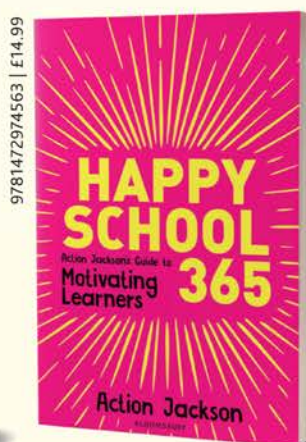
# New from Bloomsbury Education

## Our top 2020 titles for teachers and leaders

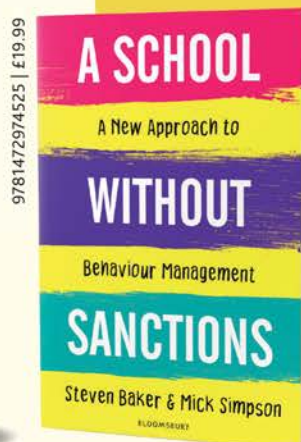
### For Teachers:



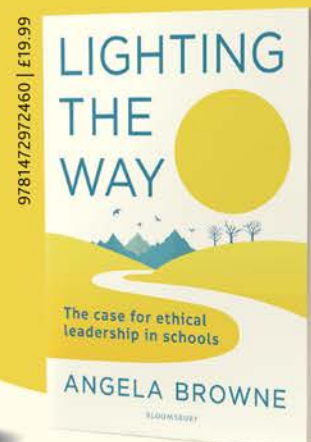
Uncovers the most important pieces of educational research on the science of learning, and provides practical ideas to embed them in classroom practice.



Motivate your learners to succeed with Action Jackson! 21 easy-to-implement ideas to motivate young people and build their confidence.

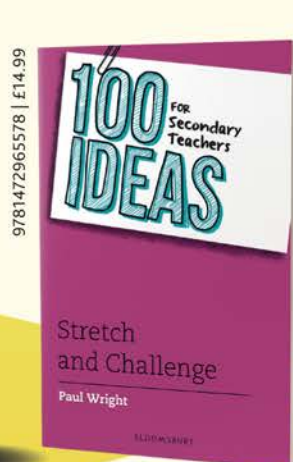
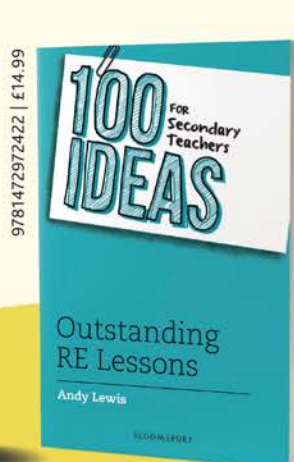
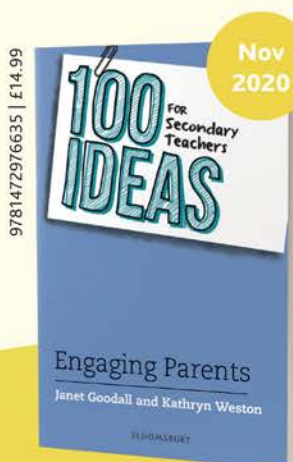


Explores the reasons why challenging behaviour occurs and offers practical solutions for meeting it with compassion.



A new, positive, ground-up approach to leading a school in times of challenge, from Angela Browne, experienced leader and star of the BBC2 documentary series *School*.

### New in the 100 Ideas series:



The 100 Ideas series offers busy teaching professionals easy-to-implement strategies to improve and inspire their classroom practice.

### Discount for Teach Secondary subscribers

Order before 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 to receive a 20% discount at Bloomsbury.com on these titles, using the code **TS2020**



# MATHS CORNER

Intriguing problems to inspire curiosity

## Largest Product

[nrich.maths.org/1785](http://nrich.maths.org/1785)

Here are some different ways in which we can split 100:

- $30+70=100$
- $20+80=100$
- $21+56+23=100$
- $10+10+10+10+10+10+20+20=100$

The products of these sets are all different:

- $30 \times 70 = 2100$
- $20 \times 80 = 1600$
- $21 \times 56 \times 23 = 27048$
- $10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 20 \times 20 = 40000000$

What is the largest product that can be made from whole numbers that add up to 100?

Choose another starting number and split it in a variety of ways. What is the largest product this time?

Can you find a strategy for splitting any number so that you always get the largest product?



NRICH provides thousands of free online mathematics resources covering all stages of secondary school education – completely free and available to all. You can access the latest secondary curriculum map and check the latest Live Problems at [nrichmaths.org/9451](http://nrichmaths.org/9451) - the NRICH team looks forward to receiving your students' solutions and publishing some of the best ones on the website!

## A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

### #10 EXTENDED FAMILY

How have these pictures been simplified to make symbols?

Are they made of solid shapes or lines?

What visual features does each one use?

What makes them a family?



What would the following look like?

Night  
Sunny intervals  
Rain  
Snow  
Strong wind

A Few Minutes of Design EXTENDED FAMILY

Draw your own symbols to continue the series, keeping the same visual 'language' of simplification, line, shape and style as the original members. Now draw a symbol that does not belong to the family.

## Get Into Film



WADJDA  
(2012, PG, 96 MINS)

### CURRICULUM LINKS:

Citizenship, PSHE Education, Arabic

This sweetly uplifting film – the first ever by a female Saudi Arabian director, Haifaa al-Mansour – is about an independently-minded 10-year-old girl named Wadjda, who won't be pushed around by adults and their ridiculous rules. Wadjda is told not to play with Abdullah, because he's a boy, and not to ride a bike – because it'll stop her from having babies. It seems that all the things she wants to do, she can't.

However, Wadjda always finds solutions to her problems. She enters a scripture-reading competition, determined to win the cash prize, and buys herself a magnificent green bicycle. Then she'll show Abdullah a thing or two about what girls can and can't do, in the so-called man's world of Saudi Arabia...

### Discussion questions:

- What are some of the key themes explored in the film? Do you think this might be a personal story from the filmmaker?
- Why do you think having a bike matters so much to Wadjda?
- How does the relationship between Wadjda and her mother change throughout the film? What key plot points inspire these changes?

Head online to [intofilm.org](http://intofilm.org) to discover more inspiring films and associated resources as part of the free Into Film programme for teachers and their pupils



### Retweets

Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?

#### Professor Donna Hall @ProfDonnaHall

During an online conversation today someone mentioned those incidental "have you got a minute?" conversations we can miss on zoom; those vital seconds when you have your coat on, car keys in hand & a person with courage who's the voice of many speaks out & opens a can of worms

#### VillageSchoolHead @SmallSchoolHead

Hello? Yes, police please. I'd like to report a school who haven't immediately provided home learning and I suspect may have been opposing capitalism behind the bike sheds

Follow us @teachsecondary - and let us know what you're thinking!

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Examining has made me feel so secure in what I'm teaching, and that security is passed on to my school community and my students.

Anna Hunt

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## Last Meeting's Minutes

# “I don't know why we're doing this”

### Revisions

#### Present:

GL (Deputy Vice Principal), BN, RR, CL

#### Apologies from:

Everyone who missed the announcement, and the email concerning the meeting about the announcement. That's a fair few, but seeing as the latest announcement went out at midnight on Sunday, I'm surprised anyone made it at all.

#### Meeting held in:

The staffroom. Because coffee.

### ITEM 1

#### There should be some rules for these rules

*Emergency meeting to review the change in government guidelines regarding safety measures in school. Again. Due to the various revisions, I'm fully expecting we'll have had to organise another three meetings by the time this one's finished.*

*GL started the meeting by going through which of the new government guidelines would mean enacting a change in the school policy built around the government guidelines of 12 seconds ago.*

RR: I don't know why we're doing this. By the time we're done here there'll be another revision saying that we have to bring elephants into the classrooms to Hoover up the COVID or something.

BN: Does this new revision mention anything about providing PPE in schools? That'd be nice.

GL: Err – no.

RR: Well then, there's not really anything else we can do, is there? We've got our bubbles up. We've got our backup bubbles and our secondary bubbles. What we need to do is ensure that nobody pops our bubbles. Is the guidance about that?

GL: Not specifically.

CL: So, what's the guidance about then?

GL: Err...

RR: Come on, spit it out. Well, don't spit, obviously – that'd be terrible, considering...

GL: It's about teacher conduct during COVID. Making sure they stick to the rules and so forth.

RR: ...

BN: ...

CL: ...

GL: Right, let's move on, shall we?...

### ITEM 2

#### Masking the issues

GL: I think we need to talk about masks and what kids have been writing on them. Maybe integrate them into the uniform policy?

RR: They could be writing the lyrics to some new raunchy rap tune on them, as long as they're wearing the damn things.

CL: I saw two lads using them as catapults in the playground this morning. Thought it would make an interesting physics, lesson actually. They got a pencil sharpener halfway across the car park.

BN: I like those ones that make your face look like a skeleton. They're pretty cool. Do you think the government might shout for some of those?

CL: The kids are trying their best, bless 'em. Let's just deal with it on a case-by-case basis.

RR: Apart from Devon in 10H. If he creeps up on me with that clown face mask on again, he'll be in detention until he's 40. Bloody clowns...

#### AOB

BN to find out where you get those cool skeleton masks, and whether they do clown face ones because 'Devon will rue the day.'



### MEETING ADJOURNED

Just in time for yet another change in policy.

# Ensure *success* at GCSE with Pearson's top **French, German,** and **Spanish** resources

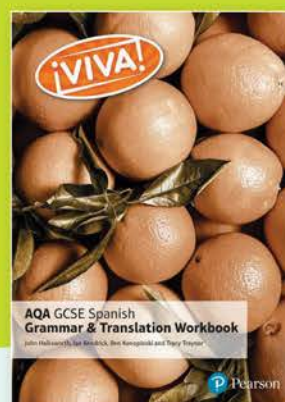
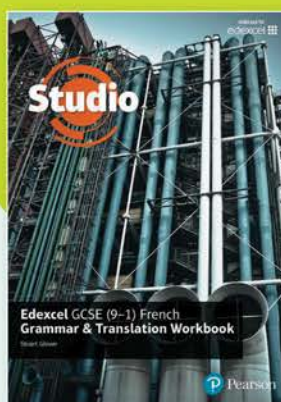
Following the recent disruption in learning, our main focus is on supporting you as you work to get every student back on track and bridge any gaps in their knowledge.

**Studio**, **¡Viva!** and **Stimmt!** are here to help and have all been designed to drive engagement through interesting, culture-focused content, and support you to prepare students for their GCSEs.

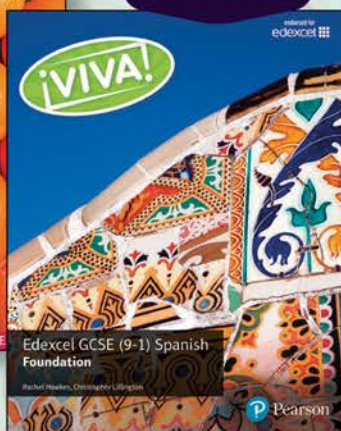
Differentiated Higher and Foundation tier Pupil Books give students the tools to apply language in different contexts, enabling them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills to the best of their ability.

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Build students' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, with our carefully planned progression and accessible approach, helping them to learn to manipulate language independently across a range of contexts.





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# The Vocab Clinic

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## TRY THIS TODAY: **CHECK SPECS**

For a novice pupil, the act of writing is incredibly complex. Researchers have argued that it's tantamount to playing a game of check (AKA chess), and indeed, writing is full of 'moves' – handwriting, spelling, word choices, editing, revising and much more besides.

Because writing is so complicated, many pupils will struggle and make seemingly simple mistakes. A simple strategy for editing and revising pieces of writing is to get pupils to wear (metaphorical) 'Check Specs'. This playful notion of wearing glasses can conceal the more serious purpose of having students take a more critical, bird's eye view of their work, and it also works well as a paired task.

## Cracking the academic code

Sentence fragments are one of the most common flaws that appear in pupils' academic writing. Put simply, a sentence fragment describes when a sentence is incomplete. The basic building blocks of a sentence typically require a main clause with a subject/verb/object (*'I love vocabulary.'*), but fragments miss a key element, or wrongly detach themselves from a main clause (*'I love vocabulary. Because it makes my writing better.'*)

Fragments have usually drifted away from the main clause in a previous sentence. Sentence combining practice, using commas, colons and semi-colons, usually fixes the problem.



## DO THEY KNOW?

The 'i before e' rule only applies to around 75% of words in English (and not to, for instance, 'weird', 'feisty' or 'heist').

## ONE FOR: **ENGLISH STUDENTS**

### GRAMMAR

**Derives from:** Greek – 'grammatike', meaning 'the art of letters'

**Means:** The systematic rules and usages of language

**Related terms:** grammatical, grammar school, grammarian, syntax and morphology

**Note:** Grammar was linked to broader knowledge, such as magic, and so it shares the roots of the word 'glamour'!



**I DON'T THINK IT MEANS WHAT YOU THINK IT MEANS...**

## NEW RADICAL

**In biology and chemistry** = molecules with unpaired electrons that are unstable and damaging to the human body

**In history, politics and general use** = a 'radical' in history or politics advocates for major social change

## One word at a time



Some words go from plain beginnings to taking on more provocative meanings. 'Vanilla' is one of those rare words that's changed its meaning from something provocative to, well ... something more vanilla.

Deriving from Spanish, the word 'vanilla' means 'little sheath', with origins in the Latin word 'vagina', denoting the sheath of an ear of grain. The modern notion of vanilla, connoting something plain and dull, is likely linked to the ice cream flavour and its common white colouring.

However, a little etymological exploration uncovers its much more interesting roots...



Alex Quigley is a former teacher and author of *Closing the Reading Gap* and *Closing the Vocabulary Gap*; he also works for the Education Endowment Foundation as National Content Manager

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## THE NEXT BIG THING

# HYBRID LEARNING

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### [ THE TREND ]

## HYBRID LEARNING

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### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

From remote video lessons to online platforms and learning apps, digital learning has become a fundamental feature of school education since the start of the COVID-19 lockdown and it's here to stay.

While the shift to distance learning during school closures certainly had its challenges, many teachers also found that online teaching helped them to develop new skills and approaches, which many now plan to incorporate within their standard practice moving forward.

With many teachers continuing to deliver teaching online, and a growing number adopting blended learning approaches, we at Pearson have been developing useful guidance, top tips (see [bit.ly/ts97-pearson1](https://bit.ly/ts97-pearson1)) and a series of free online GCSE lessons available via the Pearson UK Learning YouTube channel (see [bit.ly/ts97-pearson2](https://bit.ly/ts97-pearson2)) to help support you on your edtech journey.

**“Digital literacy is ultimately one of the most important 21st century skills your students can develop”**

### WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

Incorporating technology into teaching and learning practices can have lasting benefits. One of the key techniques to emerge in recent years following a growing focus on distance and digital learning has been the ‘flipped classroom’. Instead of presenting a new learning concept in class, teachers set the content for students to engage with and research online beforehand, using class time for creative collaboration and deepening understanding. This can develop students’ digital skills and their ability to think independently, while making class time more dynamic and even improving exam results and levels of teacher-student engagement.

Moreover, many teachers have found that using a variety of multimedia resources, including videos, podcasts, animations and infographics, has engaged students more deeply with the content and materials being studied, whether that be in a face-to-face or distance learning setting.



### WHAT'S NEXT?

Digital literacy is ultimately one of the most important 21st century skills your students can develop. Hybrid learning can help build such skills among students and teachers alike, but it is about more than simply adding technology to classrooms.

Together, we need to better understand and harness its unique advantages – from the opportunities it affords for individualised learning pathways, to the increased flexibility it offers in terms of when, where and how students are now able to learn. We also need to ensure that the infrastructure it requires is fully inclusive and accessible to all.

We collectively have some way to go to realising the full potential of technology in education, Pearson will be there to support you every step of the way.



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# “Eng Lit doesn’t need literal representations”

As calls to ‘decolonise the curriculum’ continue to grow louder, we should carefully consider what might be lost if we do, says **Alka Sehgal Cuthbert**

**S**tudents can succeed in English without ever engaging with ideas about postcolonialism, with literature written by a BAME writer, or with literature that features a BAME protagonist and highlights features of cultural difference.’

– Lesley Nelson-Addy, PGCE English Curriculum Tutor at Wolfson College, Oxford, writing in the NATE publication *Teaching English*

*‘Removing poetry would risk alienating Black and brown pupils even further from “a GCSE that already excludes their voices and experiences”, she says. ‘... A lot of them don’t relate to English because they don’t see themselves in it. They don’t see it as something that is for them.’*

– English teacher quoted in a *Huffington Post* report on reforms to the English literature GCSE

The above voices no doubt mean well. They want to play an active part in creating a better, more equal society. Who could take issue with that?

Yet there are some important questions worth asking here. For example, it isn’t obvious why knowing postcolonialism – essentially a form of critical social theory – should be a prerequisite for success in GCSE English. Nor is it clear that social inequalities are, or should be, the preserve of school study, particularly in English

classrooms. Aren’t the complexities of social inequalities best addressed by citizens participating in the public, adult world of politics? Shouldn’t the main task of English teachers be to develop pupils’ imaginations and their knowledge of the expressive and communicative power of language?

Finally, to assert that Black and brown pupils need to ‘see themselves’ in a subject, particularly English literature, begs the question – isn’t one of the main benefits of literature its ability to place readers inside a different state of subjectivity belonging to someone else?

## Written for you

Assertions such as the ones above are often advanced to explain why more BAME pupils don’t pursue literature beyond GCSE, or why allocations of A\*s may be unevenly distributed along ethnic lines. But in 2007, 22.7% of Caribbean pupils chose English literature A level – the largest ethnic group that chose this subject. The claim that students don’t choose literature because they don’t see themselves in it can, at best, be only partially true.

Many students have long understood what Maya Angelou powerfully expressed when she said the following: “The poetry you read has been written for you, each of you – Black, white, Hispanic, man, woman, gay, straight.” That sentiment can be extended to all forms of

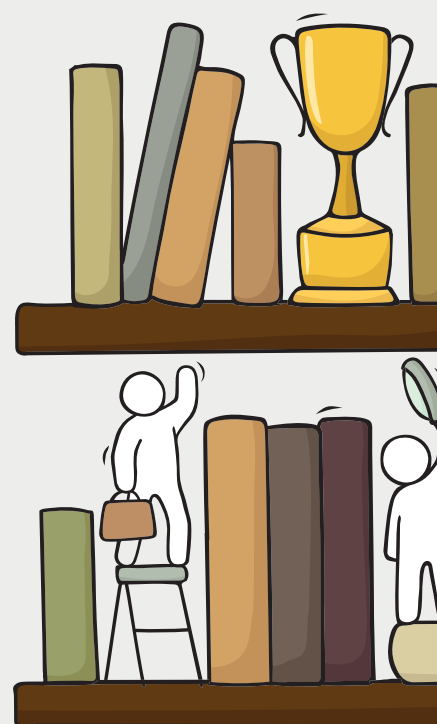
aesthetically good art that’s both concrete and universal.

Aesthetic boundaries aren’t rigid. They’re not always easy to discern, but there is a difference between a book that entertains or pleases in an easy, spontaneous way, and a worthwhile literary text. The latter embodies aspects of subjective, universal experience within the creative confines of the literary form. Such literature might initially seem unfamiliar, strange or ‘difficult’, but it can touch you in a very deep, potentially transformative way. The literature we choose for our curriculums doesn’t need to literally represent people in terms of skin colour or social experience, but it does need to be good enough that it can capture pupils’ imaginations, so that their capacity for vicarious experience – and vicarious relationships with characters – is extended and deepened.

Picture a class of 8- and 9-year-old Bengali boys and girls from inner London, enthralled while reading about the exploits of a white-skinned, red-haired orphaned tearaway called Pippi Longstocking who lives in a Swedish rural idyll. The eponymous book by Astrid Lindgren was first published in 1945 and is widely acknowledged as a children’s classic. Its appeal lies in how Lindgren is able to convey complex emotional and psychological themes that all children are likely to feel at some point in their lives,

irrespective of skin colour, socio-economic status, class position, gender and so forth.

The book’s characters express a longing for freedom, whilst simultaneously craving the security of the family home. There are tensions between wanting to be a rebel, while feeling a need for social approval. It portrays the experience of profound loss and avoidance of being existentially ruined by the experience. Above all, *Pippi Longstocking* is about the power of imagination itself. Through well-written fiction, pupils can come to recognise the relationship of their





## Join the CONVERSATION

The Academy of Ideas Education Forum gathers monthly to discuss trends in educational policy, theory and practice. Find out more at [academyofideas.org.uk/forums/education\\_forum](http://academyofideas.org.uk/forums/education_forum)

inner *subjective* world to the outer *objective* world of language, through which the former is made meaningful.

### Other justifications

Why, then, do so many voices across the profession seem so willing to forget the inherent power of literature – including its utility as a tool with which to fight racism? I'd venture that one major contributing factor is the decades-long march of educational instrumentalism that began to emerge in the 1970s. When our political, cultural and academic guardians lack belief or confidence in the universality of canonical knowledge, the resulting vacuum becomes filled with

other justifications for education.

First, the economic. Education came to be seen as a means to the end of getting a job, with the subsequent downplaying of English literature within the curriculum in favour of English literacy. Education has since been subject to all manner of political instrumentalism, such as the belief that citizenship lessons can somehow compensate for increasingly technocratic and anti-democratic policymaking. More recently, we've seen socio-therapeutic justifications that see education as a prime site for tackling a slew of social problems.

Anti-racism is just the

latest addition to this unholy mix of instrumentalist forces, and dovetails neatly with several other therapeutic trends in schooling that have seen vulnerability and oppression almost becoming new forms of cultural capital in some quarters. It's an approach that might appear caring to some teachers, but can legitimately be seen as ethically and educationally dubious to others.

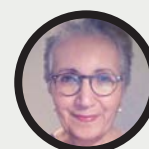
### Literal understanding

The boundaries that mark out literature as a distinct and important form of communicative language have now become so weakened that today's anti-racist educators have no problem with condoning a highly literal understanding of the subject. The previously acknowledged universality of many works of literature is often belittled as nothing more than an ideological ruse. Instead, literature is only valued insofar as it offers a literal representation of activists' chosen groups. Hence the appearance of

alphabetical picture books where 'A' stands for 'Activist' (see [tinyurl.com/ts97-activist](http://tinyurl.com/ts97-activist)).

Seriously – what does it say for your conception of politics if you believe activism to be a meaningful concept for pre-linguistic toddlers and school children? Political contestations over how society is organised belong to the realm of the adult political sphere, where we meet as equal citizens even as other inequalities may abound.

The new anti-racism to which a section of the profession seems committed piggybacks off an established model of liberal anti-racism, while shedding the older model's liberal and universal values. The wish for some administrators to put only books in the vein of Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility* onto CPD reading lists is indicative of a worldview that brooks little or no questioning. Proponents of calls to 'decolonise education' believe that race is a real and significant fact, but fail to recognise the possibility of objective knowledge. Nor do they choose to acknowledge the moral universalism evinced so concretely in my own classroom experience, and expressed so eloquently by Maya Angelou and others.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alka Sehgal Cuthbert is a teacher, independent academic and writer, and co-editor of *What Should Schools Teach? Disciplines, subjects and the pursuit of truth*, 2nd Ed., due for publication in the New Year by UCL IOE Press; she also a supporter of the Don't Divide Us statement on education ([dontdivideus.com/education](http://dontdivideus.com/education)) and can be followed at @ASCphiled



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When getting students to concentrate, teachers should be aware of both the biological factors beyond their control, and the social distractions that are very much within their power to tackle...



# David Didau

**A large part of any teacher's day will be spent trying to get kids to pay attention. Biology isn't on our side in this, claims neuroscience, since our ability to attend is governed by the pre-frontal cortex – an area of the brain which isn't fully developed until we're in our mid-20s.**

Psychologists have been interested in attention for well over a century. In 1890, William James, the grandfather of psychology, wrote that attention, "Is the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what may seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought." Students are all too easily distracted. The kind of selective attention needed to block out background noise or activity takes continual effort to maintain. Sooner or later, we all give in to distractions.

One popular myth to be aware of is that human beings can multitask. Many people think they can multitask effectively, but they're wrong. True multitasking – defined as 'engaging in two or more conscious thought or information processes at the same time, with no loss of speed or accuracy' – is something modern computers can manage with ease, but that the human brain is simply unable to do. Not even women's brains.

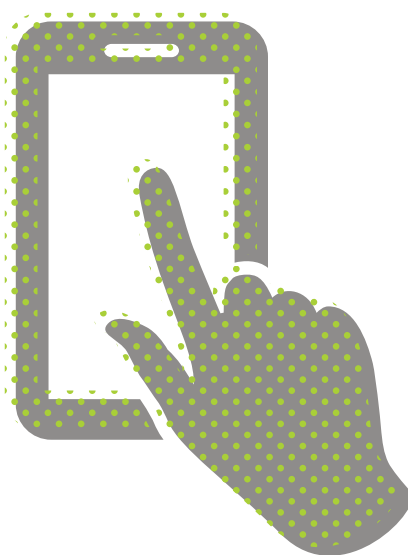
## Attention switching

According to the Nobel Prize-winning psychologist, Daniel Kahneman, "Anything that occupies your working memory reduces your ability to think." That's not to say that having your working memory occupied

makes thinking impossible – just harder. Of course, almost everyone can walk and think at the same time, but the effort of maintaining a walking speed above about four miles an hour makes engaging in complex cognitive tasks very difficult.

If someone asks us to think about a complex problem when we're walking, we'll often stand still in order to give the matter our full attention. Think about what we do when called upon to perform a complex driving manoeuvre; if we want to reverse park our car, we'll turn down the radio so that we can better concentrate.

The best we can do is switch our attention between tasks, but every time we shift our attention (from, say, history revision to a social media site) we pay a 'task-switching penalty'. This penalty means that for a period after switching, our brain struggles to shift from one mental track to another and engages in what's termed as a 're-engagement search'.



Every time we make a switch between tasks we lose time and become much more prone to making mistakes.

## Easily distracted

Psychologists have studied differences between students who describe themselves as 'heavy media multitaskers' and students who claim to be 'light media multitaskers'. When the two groups are tested, the heavy multitaskers are worse at everything – including multitasking! It seems that regular task-switching results in being slower at detecting changes in visual patterns, being more susceptible to false recollections, taking longer to task-switch and being more easily distracted.

Further studies have shown that regular task-switchers also have less grey matter in brain regions associated with controlling attention. One study has even claimed that regular task-switchers are significantly more likely to be involved in road traffic accidents.

Another study into attention divided students into three groups, and gave each group the same exercise. The first group had their mobile phones switched off and placed in front of them. The second group had their phones switched off but placed behind them, while the third had their phones removed to another room. Interestingly, the first group performed significantly less well on the exercise. Researchers noted that even though their phones were off, students kept glancing at them as if expecting a notification.

Allowing students to use one-to-one devices in lessons, it seems, comes with a cost. In short, task-switching is likely to lead to lower test performance, increased time needed to study to mastery, decreased concentration and a higher likelihood of dying in a traffic accident. You have been warned.



David Didau is an independent education consultant and writer. He blogs at [learningspy.co.uk](http://learningspy.co.uk) and is the author of several books, the latest of which is *Making Kids Cleverer: A manifesto for closing the advantage gap* (Crown House)

The calls to reform GCSEs were getting louder even before the chaos of this summer – how long now until they become impossible to ignore?

# Melissa Benn



**Who would have thought that one of the most significant outcomes of the global pandemic would be a growing campaign for reform of our exam system?**

There was widespread public anger this summer at the sight of many teenagers, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, sacrificed to an algorithm explicitly designed to maintain outcomes at roughly the same level from one year to the next – regardless of personal effort.

The subsequent outrage at this government-endorsed shambles has now emboldened those calling for a more fundamental change to qualifications and assessment, and reforms to GCSEs in particular.

## Forward and back

The GCSE was first introduced in 1988 and was originally intended to mark the achievements of those leaving school at 16. Since then, however, the raising of the school leaving age to 18 has rather obviated the need for certificates of final achievement two thirds of the way through a student's path through secondary education – yet the exams have stayed stubbornly in place.

Attempts at GCSE reform stretch back a long way. In 2004, the former Ofsted chief inspector Mike Tomlinson proposed a set of diploma-style qualifications that would have integrated GCSEs and A levels into a broader framework. Reading that year's 'Final Report of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform' now (see [bit.ly/ts97-mb1](http://bit.ly/ts97-mb1)), complete with its imaginative proposals for fewer exams, richer forms of learning and more robust vocational qualifications, it seems a real pity that the then New Labour government didn't take up its recommendations.

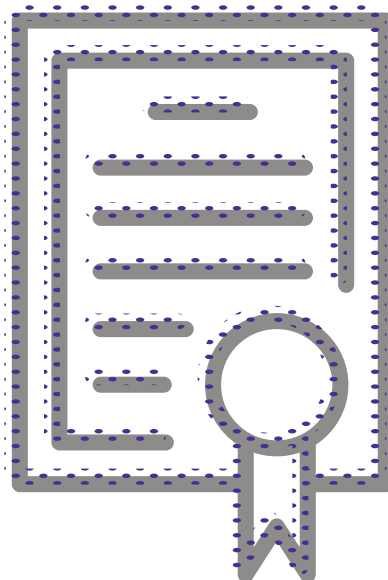
The Coalition government of 2010 then took a giant step backwards. Under

Michael Gove's stewardship, the curriculum was redesigned, exams were made much harder and narrower in focus and coursework was all but abandoned. Teachers and heads understandably resented the implication that they hadn't previously 'imparted knowledge to their students', and were worried that disadvantaged students – and schools – would suffer as a result of the reforms. They anticipated a steep rise in anxiety among pupils.

## Three proposals

Their concerns then were justified on all counts. Each year a third of students – the so-called 'forgotten third' – fail to achieve a level 4 GCSE pass in English and Maths. Teenagers have become increasingly stressed by ever harder exams, at the same time that teachers have been leaving the profession in droves. Even before lockdown, heads in disadvantaged areas had started to rebel against the practice of being judged and found wanting by a narrow range of results.

It's therefore no surprise that



discussion of GCSE alternatives is now taking centre stage, with three notable entities calling for reform. First, there's the 2019 report from the Edge Foundation, which proposes replacing GCSEs with a 'holistic Baccalaureate' at 18. This would provide a record of not just students' academic achievements, but also examples of their creativity, assorted skills and personal development. The proposal has the backing of both education select committee chair Robert Halfon and Sir Kenneth Baker, architect of the very legislation that first ushered in the GCSE all those years ago.

Then there's the loose coalition of private and state school leaders set up by Peter Hyman, Tony Blair's former speechwriter. They propose reforming the existing qualification so that it includes a fuller, more sophisticated transcript of student achievement and a greater role for moderated teacher assessment. Finally, there's the National Bacc Group, which is putting forward the idea of a 'holistic, wrap-around award'.

What these proposals have in common is a greater emphasis on diverse assessment, a wish to end to premature specialisation and a desire to break down the academic/vocational divide.

No-one's pretending that devising and implementing a new national framework won't take years of patient consensus building, but it's hard not to see these mushrooming calls for reform as signs of a quiet but clear rebellion by education professionals against what they see as top-down interference by a few over-powerful ministers and special advisers.

And the public seems to agree, according to a 2019 Edge Foundation poll which found that 73% of parents to secondary schoolchildren felt there was too much emphasis on exams.

After this summer's chaos and stress, those figures will only rise. But is this government ready to listen?



Talk to today's young adults, and you'll see just how large the disconnect is between what they learnt at school and the skills they value now. Where are we going wrong?

# Martin Illingworth



**For my book, *Forget School*, I recorded interviews with young adults between the ages of 20 and 30 about their experiences at school. On the whole, those I interviewed weren't disaffected at school (though some were). Most were individuals who'd done well and got plenty of GCSEs and A Levels. But there was a pattern to the ways in which they saw school as remote, abstract and – at the far end of the scale – irrelevant to the needs they encountered in adulthood.**

One of the saddest things that emerged during my research was that these people learned to be confident after school, which I found really disappointing. Another common theme was that these adults were acutely aware of the limits of their qualifications, and harboured limited aspirations for themselves.

Most were self-employed, though some were in the position of employing others. I asked the latter group what they looked for in a new employee and one young woman – a wedding designer who had started her own business – said, “A people person. Somebody who's creative and perhaps has their own portfolio.” I asked whether she might look for an A-level in art or a fashion degree, but she wasn't bothered about her prospective employees having either of those.

The young people I spoke to were wary not just of how valuable their own qualifications were, but also of imposing the need for qualifications on other people. In the course of my wider research, I also came to notice how many large

companies are now shifting away from barring candidates for interview if they don't have the right qualifications.

Conversely, teachers remain pretty much locked into seeing the attainment of qualifications as being their *raison d'être*. Indeed, when I left school, it was it was reasonable to expect that if you'd done well and gained some qualifications, you had an education that would be suitable for life and prized by society. But I don't think either of those things are particularly true any more.

Yet there's still this insistence that students use pen and paper when sitting their English GCSEs, and complete tasks along the lines of 'Write a letter to a friend', which few people now do in longhand. Or 'Write a newspaper report' when hardly anybody under the age of 30 regularly reads a newspaper.

As time moves on, such practices will become even more niche and abstract. There are many areas of the curriculum that will be affected by societal changes happening much faster than they once did. In maths, for instance, what will we do when there's no physical money? How will we teach

number and value?

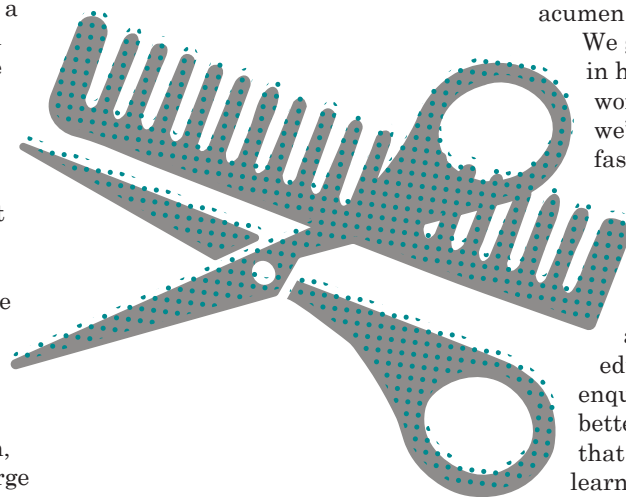
We're not having these bigger conversations around education at the moment, but we need to. Which bits of geography are actually going to inform a child's later life? Which areas of history should they be dipping into?

## General acumen

One notable thing to come out of the coronavirus crisis is how teachers were given a role in making judgments around what their children would have got for their GCSEs. That's how assessment largely works in Canada, for instance. There's no national curriculum and no exam boards, but there is a local regulatory system. Teacher boards examine the work kids are doing for their high school diploma, and teachers are able to develop individual tests for individual kids.

I would advocate getting rid of exams and instead giving every student an 'e-portfolio' containing a record of their experiences, achievements, completed projects, artworks, essays and more besides. If students could carry this with them after school, that wedding designer would be able to look at an applicant's portfolio and gauge their levels of experience and general acumen.

We genuinely have to move on in how we prepare children for the world of work, because right now we're not. The self-employed are fastest growing proportion of the workforce, particularly where young adults are concerned. Many people now work two or three jobs to support an overarching life goal. Children and young people need an education that's much more enquiring and better suited to an adulthood that will increasingly involve learning, unlearning and relearning.



Martin Illingworth is a senior lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University with responsibility for English and drama PGCE and author of *Forget School: Why Young People Are Succeeding on Their Own Terms and What Schools Can Do to Avoid Being Left Behind* (£16.99, Independent Thinking Press)

# 4 REASONS TO TRY... Black History

Resources from the British Army recognising the contributions of Black British, African and Caribbean service people

## 1 BLACK HISTORY MONTH

October is Black History Month in the UK, and these resources contribute to understanding the significance of both Black History Month and studying Black history more broadly. There is space to reflect on how this relates to modern discussions on race and diversity, including reflections from current Black soldiers to help build students' discussions.



## 2 HISTORICAL WOMEN

The assembly resource profiles servicemen and women from throughout history, while the lesson resources provide examples of the role played by Black women in WWI, including case studies of

Trinidadian, British and East African (from the Tanzania-Malawi border region) women.

## 3 ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES

These digital resources help

students understand that Black servicepeople have often been unfairly excluded from the history books, and help students consider some of the reasons for, and effects of these omissions. This can in turn contribute to wider conversations about a more diverse education curriculum, and what other stories you could explore.

## SUBJECT LINKS

- 4 Supported by consultancy from The Black Curriculum and BlackPoppyRose, the interactive lesson resources were created with teachers and experts, and offer curriculum links to history and PSHE that allow them to fit into any teacher's classroom schedule.

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0345 600 8080

[rg-nrcoutreachadmin@mod.gov.uk](mailto:rg-nrcoutreachadmin@mod.gov.uk)

## At a glance

- + These resources explore Black British, African and Caribbean people's contributions to the history of the British Army
- + The resources include an assembly presentation and interactive lesson resources with curriculum links to history and PSHE
- + The resources are available to download for free from [apply.army.mod.uk/base](http://apply.army.mod.uk/base)

# GET YOUR JEANS ON!

**PICK YOUR OWN JEANS FOR GENES DAY!**  
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Join Alex Bowen and Olivia Buckland and organise a Jeans for Genes Day, whether you are back at work or still at home and help raise vital funds to support children with life-altering genetic disorders.

Encourage everyone to wear jeans and donate, and you will be doing something amazing for children with genetic disorders.

Sign-up for your digital fundraising pack, packed full of ideas including some great home-based fundraisers.

Sign up now at [jeansforgenesday.org](http://jeansforgenesday.org)





# WHAT I LEARNT AT SCHOOL

**David Olusoga recalls how his time at school, against a backdrop of near ubiquitous racism, was less about learning and more about survival**

I went to a comprehensive school in Britain in the 70s and 80s, which was an incredibly racist time.

School was always an arena, a violent place where I tried to not be a target and kept away from people. I made friends as I got older, once I was able to defend myself and it was no longer dangerous to be my friend. You can't blame young children for not wanting to associate with people who are targets, when they're trying not to be targets themselves.

I talk to Black and Asian people my age and their school experiences were the same as mine. This was a society saturated with casual racism. There was no point in reporting racist incidents at school because my teachers were racist themselves. I was once beaten up by a teacher at secondary school on a camping trip. I heard teachers say racist things in front of the class about me.

I didn't attend school – I survived school, and certainly wasn't educated there. I was educated primarily by my mother and myself, through regular visits to the local library. I only studied A Levels because my friends and I worked out that we had to hothouse ourselves. We spent the weeks before the exams doing past papers over and over again, which is how



we passed and went to university. I was educated despite my school.

My mother ultimately taught me how to read, because I'm dyslexic. When I was 15, after years of my mother appealing, I was eventually tested by an educational psychologist and found to be dyslexic. Even then, my school refused to acknowledge the test because it got in the way of a more simple argument – 'Black people aren't clever' – which is what they wanted to believe.

There was only one teacher I ever had respect for, who I still know. He was a history teacher, understood what was going on and would intervene at times when I was being attacked verbally or physically. When we met again a few years ago I learned he was Jewish and it all made sense – why this one teacher could see what was happening, while the others explained it away or dismissed it. He recognised racism when he saw it.

I wouldn't wish my

experience of school on anybody, and am very glad that for the most part, it's not the experience of young Black and Asian people today, but it wasn't out of step with Britain at that time. We were forced out of our home after our house was attacked by the National Front. It's not the case that school was a repository of racism and prejudice while the rest of the world wasn't – the rest of the world was too.

After publishing my book *Black and British – A Forgotten History* in 2016, I started hearing from people – in the street, on the Tube – that I needed to write a version for children, which hadn't occurred to me. *Black and British* itself was a homage to *Staying Power* by Peter Fryer, which I read when I was 16 and was undoubtedly the most important book I ever read in my life. A combination of guilt and feeling encouraged by other writers led me to do it, so the decision was made at the start of this year to write two further versions – one for children aged 12 and up, and a fully illustrated version due out next year.

There seem to be some people now who think Black people talking about their history is somehow a threat to their own, but I don't understand why someone would feel that. Black history is British history. The problem is that history has already been re-written to take those stories out – slavery, the most exploitative aspects of Empire. Putting those stories back in doesn't negate any others. We're an incredibly global nation. The idea that this isn't everyone's history is ridiculous. This is a shared history.

Professor David Olusoga is a British-Nigerian historian, broadcaster and BAFTA award-winning presenter and filmmaker; *Black and British – A Short, Essential History* is available now (Macmillan Children's Books, £6.99). Next year will see Olusoga present a fourth series of the show *A House Through Time*, exploring the lives of residents over multiple generations of a single house in Leeds; follow him at @DavidOlusoga

*I wish to be a teacher*

**Leah, 7**

Brain tumour

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more independent  
since her wish."  
Mum, Elaine*

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# *This odd school year —* **WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?**

We know that COVID-19 precautions have dramatically shaken up how schools operate, but what does that look like in practice? **Laura McInerney** crunches the numbers...

**1 The recovery position**  
Pupils have spent months at home, with some doing work and others not. Schools have responded to this in different ways, according to over 8,000 teacher-submitted answers to Teacher Tapp questions in summer and early autumn. One thing we do know is that three in 10 secondaries have adopted 'recovery curriculums' that focus on diagnostic testing to work out gaps in learning, and then re-teach or consolidate skills teachers would otherwise expect children to know already. Planning these lessons is likely to involve a substantial workload. On the plus side, around 80% of teachers said they knew of no pupils planning to sit out the first half of the autumn term, but unfortunately that figure was higher in more deprived areas – not a surprise, given their typically lower average attendance, but a possible contributing factor to further inequalities.

**2 We're all cleaners now**  
Many teachers have become part of the cleaning crew. Teachers will usually try and keep their classrooms tidy, but it's rare to see them wiping down computers, door handles, desks and other surfaces. This year, however, around half of all teachers said they're being expected to contribute to cleaning, and therefore spend at least a few minutes each day ensuring their surfaces are sparkling. Bear in mind that over 70% of primary colleagues said they'd be expected to wipe down surfaces, with 17% expected to contribute to regular deep cleans. In other countries, cleaning is already seen as part of a teacher's job, with nations such as Japan getting students mopping and dusting classrooms every day. Students also clean up after lunch, which may well be required here this year, with the majority of schools running their lunches in shifts to maintain social distancing.

**3 Homework goes online**  
Teachers regularly told us throughout the pandemic that teaching from home would likely change their practice once they returned, with most citing homework as an area they felt would be changed permanently. Having experienced using online platforms for uploading, marking and communicating with pupils about homework, 78% of teachers told us they'd be changing their approaches to homework in future. Changes to classroom activities and assessment were only slightly behind, being considered by 74% and 69% of teachers respectively. Several schools began the academic year with 'No physical marking' policies in place to reduce surface transmission of COVID, while 18% of secondary teachers stated that all of their homework will now migrate online. That might mean the end of 'The dog ate my homework' excuses, but expect to see a flurry of 'Our WiFi was down' justifications...

**IS YOUR  
SCHOOL DOING  
ANY OF THE  
FOLLOWING  
THIS YEAR?**

	Private secondary teachers	State-funded secondary teachers
No marking of physical work	10%	17%
All homework hosted online	19%	18%
Aligning of school curriculum with Oak National Academy	-	2%
Split lunches/breaks	80%	88%
Staggered start times	41%	63%
Removal of some subjects from this year's curriculum	2%	4%
Changes to school uniform	19%	6%

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

## CLASSROOM LIFE

# The benefit of foresight

Deputy headteacher Mark Deans describes how West Bridgford School was ahead of the curve when it came to building its remote learning provision

**W**est Bridgford School is what you might describe as a classic 'leafy suburb' school. We're a mixed comprehensive in a southern area of Nottingham, with student population of 1,600, and very lucky to have great parents and students.

We're also fortunate to have a headteacher who, early on, bought into the idea of using technology

in the classroom and extending the use of technology-assisted learning into the home.

I was appointed as a deputy head around 10 years ago, with a specific remit to develop our home to school communication technology. At the time, I was head of the IT and computing department and a senior IT and computing examiner, having been of the ZX81 generation and developed a love of tech from an early age.

## Marginal gains

Our head is a keen cyclist, and became very taken with Dave Brailsford's 'marginal gains' philosophy. As such, we've always been searching for marginal gains ourselves, looking for the next strategy that will improve our students' access to learning.

We knew back then that homework wasn't being used very effectively, with parents, students, and teachers often feeling that it was being done simply for the sake of 'being done'. If we wanted to make gains in this area, students would need to see learning at home as something worthwhile, tailored to them and easily accessible.

However, it wouldn't have been enough to announce 'Okay, we've now got a new virtual learning system – off you go, teachers.' If we had, the whole project would have been an absolute disaster. We therefore drew up a clear project plan and established our aims, recognising that teachers, parents and students alike would need to understand the project plan over time and where we were going with it.

## Less work, better outcomes

Teachers can sometimes be their own worst enemies, in

that they'll do everything in their power to try and improve outcomes for children, working above and beyond the call of duty. Our approach was to explain that instead of taking in 30 essays and writing extensive feedback on each, they could get better outcomes from using interactive quizzes. They would need to invest effort upfront in building the quiz and drafting the feedback students saw for correct, close or incorrect answers – but they'd then have a resource that could be used annually to give high quality feedback and provide students with a great learning experience.

Some teachers found the idea of getting good or better outcomes by doing less work a little difficult to get their



**MARK DEANS IS A DEPUTY HEADTEACHER AT WEST BRIDGFORD SCHOOL; FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [WBS.SCHOOL](http://WBS.SCHOOL) OR [D2L.COM](http://D2L.COM)**







heads around, at first, but if you have the right tool and appropriate staff training in place, you can deliver.

We introduced the new provision in years 7 and 10 at first, so that our teachers wouldn't feel overburdened by it. Our thinking was that if we could secure that gain in the first year, our teachers would then feel encouraged by our expansion of the platform to other year groups.

After a year of using Moodle (moodle.org) we came to realise that our next big gain would necessitate moving to a different learning platform, so we went shopping. We came across D2L's Brightspace VLE through Trent University – a university local to us with whom we often partner – which credited Brightspace with much of its recent success at the time, especially its online environment. That was three years ago.

### From the ground up

Earlier this year, we were able to spot the coronavirus disruption coming. We commenced training for staff around lockdown planning in late February and liaised with Brightspace in early March. When we've used other learning tools, the tool itself is often all there is. By comparison, Brightspace lets us approach individuals there and ask what we need to do to deliver the outcomes we want.

We were told that they could give us rapid access to live online classrooms, so the following week we had live teachers, teaching in their own groups to students with whom they'd already built a productive relationship. Shortly after, we rolled Y10 and Y11 into full-time timetables, the only

differences being slightly bigger gaps between lessons to allow for short breaks.

Around the same time, we carried out an extensive survey of the equipment our students had at home and their ability to access our provision. We were initially concerned at how many had migrated from using laptops several years before to phones and tablets. A number of households also connected to the internet through 3G or 4G dongles rather than via broadband, but Brightspace was able to design our provision from the ground up to work with mobile devices, removing that barrier.

### A winter challenge

While the vast majority of students have engaged with the work they were set, some did struggle during lockdown. For them, we've been able to provide remote learning interventions aimed at helping them catch up, backed by a range of remote learning resources that we've produced over the last three years.

What's key for us now is planning for the inevitable wave of incoming local lockdowns. It was comparatively easier to plan around the general lockdown earlier in the year – with the school entirely locked down, we could concentrate on providing a full virtual timetable. Lockdown actions targeted at specific year groups and bubbles will entail staff juggling timetables that might see them teaching in-school classes for some periods and teaching virtually in others. Providing high quality provision that allows for that kind of mixed response will be much more

challenging. That's essentially the challenge government currently faces at a national level – encouraging the use of provision like ours, while utilising economy of scale so that individual children are able to have their specific needs properly met by a

enables teachers to reliably communicate with students and pass assessment materials back and forth with accompanying feedback.

I can see how there might be the temptation for policymakers to conclude, 'Let's roll out a big, centralised

## "We were initially concerned at how many students had migrated from using laptops to phones and tablets"

robust deployment of technology. The real lesson we've learned from lockdown is that the teachers who thrived in that online environment were those who could continue building on their existing relationships with their students. That's made considerably easier if your online environment

resource from which people can access some nice videos and animations – job done. But that not how you maximise learning. You maximise learning with the help of individual teachers using a tool that's managed properly, while providing a service to children who they know well.

## Teacher voice:

### MARC ELSTON

History Teacher

*"As an ageing history teacher, I was a little sceptical about Brightspace at first. I've seen digital platforms come and go, and it seemed like yet another new thing to learn that might disappear as quickly as it had arrived. Yet I quickly established that Brightspace offered lots of potential for sharing historical sources.*

*"YouTube has become a fantastic repository for history clips that we can now regularly share in classroom discussions. It's possible to take students 'off piste' and broaden their cultural capital by sharing art, literature and music related to the syllabus. I've personally used WWI poetry, art from different historical periods and music by the likes of Bob Dylan and Gil Scott Heron to take students slightly beyond the syllabus in ways that still relate to their historical knowledge.*

*Brightspace has also helped to provide a 'safe space' for students who often find it difficult to discuss things in class, enabling them to communicate and share their ideas with me via discussion forum threads where I can easily provide feedback and offer guidance."*

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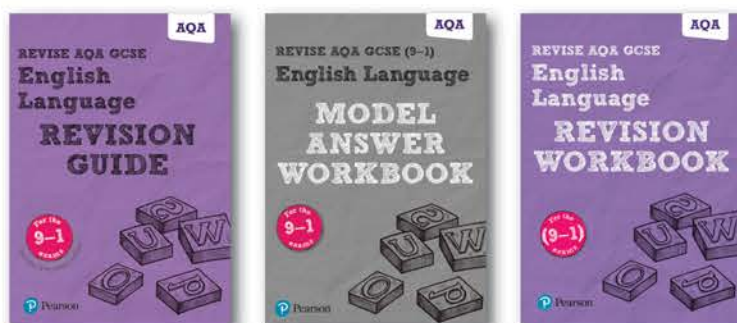
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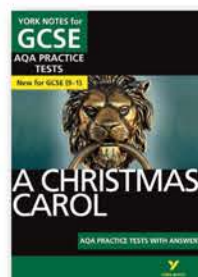
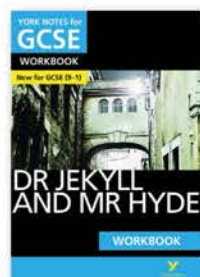
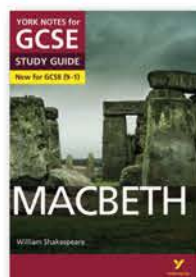
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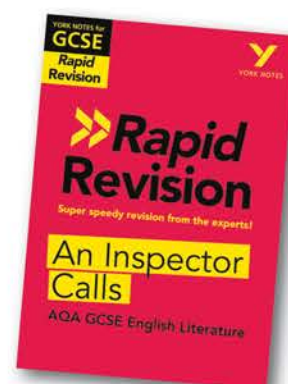
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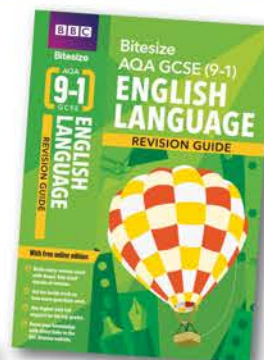
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# FOCUS ON: The arts

We examine how arts education remains a vibrant and inspiring area of study, weathering the challenges of COVID-19 and extending into whole new areas

## What's the current state of arts provision in schools?

### THE AGENDA:

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As video games continue to play an outsized role in young people's cultural lives, schools should be doing more to realise their learning potential, argues Tom Dore

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Local theatre is too important for young people's creative aspirations to give up without a fight, says author Laura Wood

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From school orchestras to peripatetic instrument tutors, what does music provision in a post-COVID world look like in practice?



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# LEVEL UP YOUR LEARNING

With video games playing a major role in the majority of young people's lives, it's time for schools to stop decrying them and start productively engaging with them, argues **Tom Dore**...

**P**ut yourself in the shoes of a teenager in the early 1960s, amid the first stirrings of rock and roll. Think how passionate and enthusiastic you'd be for this new and thrilling phenomenon. Now picture how you'd have felt if the adults around you dismissed it as a complete waste of time, or worse, a *corrupting* influence.

Fast forward to the present day, and our teenagers face a similar situation with respect to their love of video games. In Ofcom's annual 'Children and parents: Media use and attitude report' published in February 2020, it was stated that 81% of 12-15 year olds play video games, on average, for nearly 12 hours per week. Just imagine what that figure climbed to during lockdown.

I maintain that it's time for educators and other stakeholders to recognise the positives of video games, and the opportunities they can provide to

motivate and engage young people. It might be different to the pursuits we had – or indeed, the 80s- and 90-era games we might have played ourselves – when we were young, but that doesn't make the modern video gaming hobby 'wrong'. On the contrary, we should bring video games out of the bedroom and embrace them in schools.

## Character building

As a secondary science teacher with over 15 years' experience across alternative provision, state and independent settings, I've spent much time finding ways of motivating and engaging students. For many young people, an effective 'hook' might take the form of traditional extracurricular activities such as sport, music, art or drama.

However, a few years ago, when I was an assistant principal at one of the first sponsored academies in Reading, I realised we were failing to engage with a significant demographic of students that simply weren't into those kinds of clubs and activities. That's when I turned to video gaming, and in particular, 'esports'. To the uninitiated, esports refers to organised, competitive, human-versus-human video gaming with

an accompanying spectator element (and emphatically *not* the solitary 'playing against the computer in your bedroom' activity many might imagine).

Around 40 different games are currently recognised as esports, the majority being team-based. Through playing as part of an esports team, young people get to develop many of the same holistic character skills they might acquire through more traditional team-based activities – leadership, communication, decision making, problem solving, strategic thinking. They also stand to develop strong friendships and a sense of community by participating, all while having great fun doing it.

## Links to learning

The impact that video games can have in the classroom extends beyond character education. Esports offers explicit links to the computer science and digital skills that will be critical to our society moving forwards. Video games can also be used to support one of the

very cornerstones of learning, namely literacy.

The National Literacy Trust recently published the results of a research project that explored the relationship between video games and levels of literacy amongst 4,626 11- to 16-year-olds. Its findings included the statistic that 79% of young people who play video games regularly read materials relating to video games, such as in-game communications, reviews and blogs, and that 63% of the same group frequently write material relating to video games, such as scripts for games and advice to help other players.

There are a growing number of education pathways linked to esports that can support careers across a range of digital, creative and technology industries. For example, the British Esports Association (the UK's not-for-profit national body for esports) has partnered with Pearson to create BTECs in esports – the first such qualifications of their kind anywhere in the world. The L2 and L3 versions are fully funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, and began to be taught from September 2020.



Within higher education, the universities of Chichester, Staffordshire, Nottingham Trent and Birmingham City all offer undergraduate programmes based around esports. There are also a number of other institutions with courses currently in development that will become available in January or September 2021, while in the US, over 200 colleges offer esports scholarships to students, as has previously been the case for traditional sports such as American football and basketball.

### Competitive spirit

The global esports industry is growing exponentially,

with top professional esports teams and their players earning six- and seven-figure salaries through competitive leagues and tournaments modelled on traditional sports. For instance, the team of five that won a tournament called 'The International' for the game *DOTA 2* in 2019 pocketed \$15 million in prize money.

Closer to home, some readers may be familiar with Jaden 'Wolfiez' Ashman, who won over \$1 million in the *Fortnite* World Cup last year whilst studying for his GCSEs. He's now signed to one of the UK's top professional esports organisations, Excel Esports, who are based at Twickenham Stadium – the home of England Rugby.

At a school and college level, the British Esports Association

runs the British Esports Championships. Over the course of the 2019/2020 academic year, almost 300 teams from around 75 different schools and colleges entered the Championships, playing online fixtures against each other during weekly afterschool sessions.

Over the last two years, British Esports has also held tournaments in alternative provision schools that have had a significant positive impact on the young people taking part. Schools have reported student attendance rising by 15%, and there have been examples of students who have a history of violent behaviour becoming proactive members of a team for the first time alongside staff. Reuters produced a video report on the impact esports have had in AP settings that can be viewed at [bit.ly/ts97-esports](https://bit.ly/ts97-esports).

### Harness the positives

With all that mind, plus the growing importance of online technologies in the post-coronavirus 'new normal', isn't it about time we meet our students where they are, and start to harness the positives of video gaming and esports in classrooms?

Video game characters and settings, such as those found in the multiplayer game *League of Legends* and the historically-themed *Assassin's Creed* series, lend themselves well to being a

### EXTRA LIFE

- A range of teaching resources and activities aimed at supporting literacy through video games can be downloaded from [literacytrust.org.uk/videogames](https://literacytrust.org.uk/videogames)
- A good example of how video games can be linked to education can be seen in the 'esports curriculum' for US high schools produced by The North America Scholastic Esports Federation - visit [nasef.org/learning/curriculum](https://nasef.org/learning/curriculum) for more details
- Further information on Pearson's L2 and L3 BTECs in Esports (entry level and L1 versions are currently in development) can be found at [bit.ly/ts97-esport-btec](https://bit.ly/ts97-esport-btec)

stimulus for creative writing assignments. This can be expanded out to other subjects, too – every *Fortnite* match begins with players skydiving out of a flying 'Battle Bus', presenting a rich scenario with which to explore gravity and aerodynamics in science lessons.

Your school could also enter one or more teams into the 2020/21 British Esports Championships – the next round of registrations are due to open in December, further details of which can be found at [britishesportschamps.org](https://britishesportschamps.org).

And finally – why not try playing some video games yourself...?



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Dore is a part-time secondary teacher and head of education for the British Esports Association; for more information, visit [britishesports.org](https://britishesports.org) or follow @british\_esports

**"There are examples of students who have a history of violent behaviour becoming proactive members of a team for the first time"**

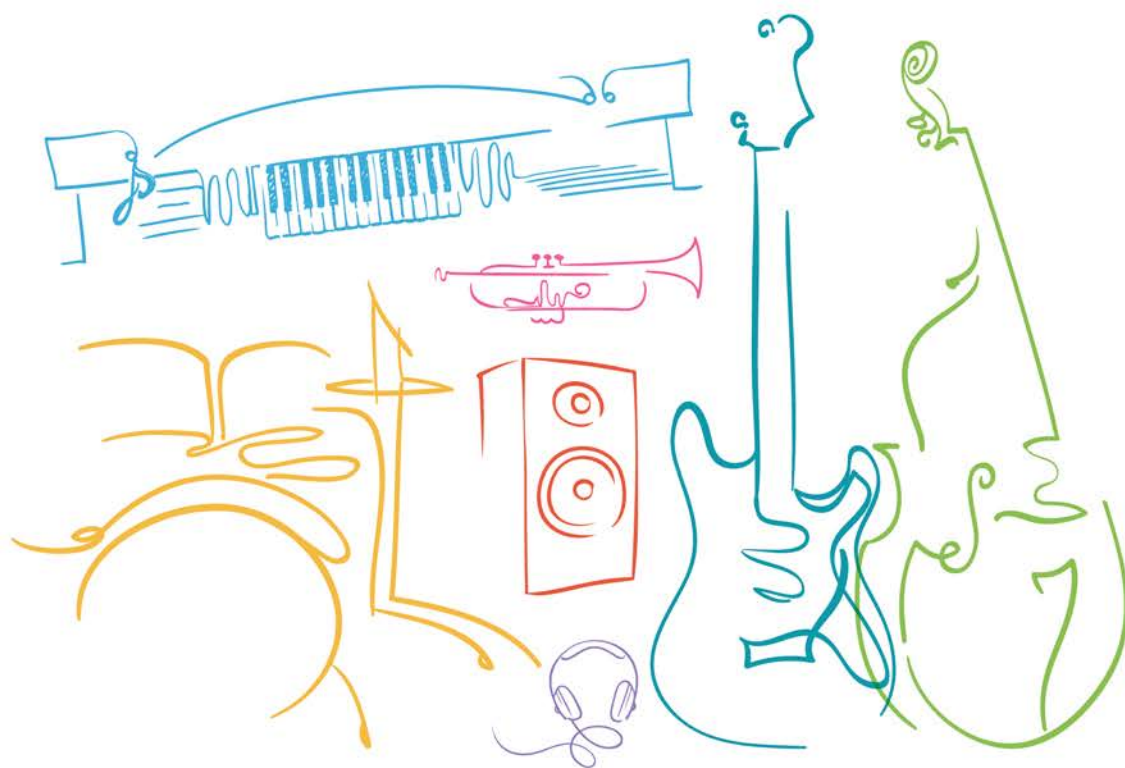
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# “A positive force in turbulent times”

**Laura Wood** reflects on how engaging with theatre at the prompting of her teachers helped make her the writer she is today...

**T**here was a moment at the start of lockdown when my husband and I sat down, along with many, many others, to watch the National Theatre’s streaming of *One Man, Two Guvnors* from the comfort of our sofa. Before the performance began, an onscreen message appeared: *‘Theatre and the arts are a positive force for our community in turbulent times.’* I took a photo of the message and posted it to social media.

I felt many things when reading those words. Pride at being part of an industry which is indeed a positive force, but also hope. For that brief moment, I thought that perhaps this was the finally the time when questions over the ‘value’ of the arts could be indisputably laid to rest.

After all, where did we turn to during those difficult first weeks of lockdown? To film, music, television, books. Streamed theatre productions became both enjoyable things to watch and shared viewing experiences during a time of enforced solitude. I saw people posting online about how they’d turned their front rooms into mock theatre auditoriums, complete with seat numbers and tiny ice creams. In these scary and overwhelming times, it made me feel that I was less alone; that art really could bring people together.

Months later, I now know this moment didn’t herald such a change – at



least not one that reached those governing us. Artists across the country continue to contend with anxiety and uncertainty over the future of their livelihoods, and nowhere is this more obvious than in the theatre.

It has been, to say the least, an extremely poignant time to be working on a book that is, at its heart, a celebration of British theatre, and regional theatre in particular. My own interest in the stage began early. I remember the grown-up magic of visiting the theatre at Christmas to see *The Nutcracker* or whatever that year’s local panto production might be. Early on, the theatre and Christmas became wrapped up in one another for me – a visit to see a performance on stage was a gift, an occasion. One where we put on fancy clothes and stayed out until it was dark, the Christmas lights gleaming.

## Taken seriously

I joined my local youth theatre as soon as I could, and what I lacked in natural talent I made up for with enthusiasm and volume. I performed in a local am-dram production of *The Darling Buds of May* as one of the Larkin children, but don’t remember much about being onstage. I do remember the rehearsals, though – how noisy and fun they were, full of people doing something for the sheer love of it.

But it was my teachers at school who really changed things. Ours held house drama competitions, put on school plays and organised talent shows, and I loved them all. Fortunately for me, I had a fantastic drama teacher and an English teacher who thought I could be a writer. The latter pulled me aside one day and asked if I’d consider applying for a special program being run at the

Birmingham Rep.

That’s how, as a young teen almost 20 years ago, I became part of the Transmissions Festival, where young writers attended workshops and wrote plays that were subsequently performed on stage. Workshops were held at the theatre every other Saturday, and I can clearly recall the feeling of being taken seriously by these artists; how they treated my script and suggestions as not simply the work of a child, but as something that had worth and value; as something I could be proud of.

It’s thanks to my teachers encouraging me to engage with the arts, both within and beyond the school gates, that I was able to become what I am today – a full-time writer living her dream. That’s because I got to see grown-ups doing precisely that and learn from them, watching them practice with joy and integrity. I may not have gone on to work in the theatre, but this fight to save it still feels personal to me. I wouldn’t be the writer or person I am today without it.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laura Wood is a professional writer of children’s fiction; her latest YA novel is *A Snowfall of Silver* (Scholastic, £7.99), which explores the theatre world of the 1930s through the eyes of a young, aspiring actress; follow her at @lauraclarewood

# Are the arts making a comeback?

**Caroline Aldous-Goodge** weighs up whether creative subjects might have now turned a corner, after years of neglect...

**A**s an art teacher, I've witnessed firsthand the impact that government changes have had on creative subjects. When I trained to be an art teacher in 2004, I easily found 25 different art teacher job vacancies I could have applied for. I thought carefully about the school I wanted to start teaching in and was excited to apply to work at a Good art specialist school. I loved teaching art, and was able to work and learn my trade from other equally enthusiastic art practitioners.

That school is now part of an academy chain. It no longer boasts of its creative arts in the way it once did when I joined. Instead, as noted on its website, it looks to 'academically stretch' students.

What has helped create this new landscape in education? What role have government reforms over the past 15 years played in marginalising not only art but other subjects such as PE, D&T, RE and drama? And will the Ofsted framework introduced last year succeed in repairing some of the damage?

## Lost value

If you've scanned the education jobs listings over the last several years – and believe me, I have – you'll have noticed how much the demand for posts varies according to subject. If you teach maths, you could get a job in virtually every state secondary school in the country. On the other hand, if you teach PE, art, drama or music, your options seem to be getting narrower and narrower.

If you want to move up the ladder to head of

department – good luck!

Departments have gradually become faculties that incorporate multiple disciplines, and there are some schools that barely teach art, drama and music at all. I'd argue that the biggest government change responsible for causing this is the introduction of the EBacc in 2010 and Progress 8 accountability measures in 2016.

After these years of decline came the publication of a new Ofsted framework in May 2019, and the hope that Amanda Spielman was going to restore some of the value lost from arts subjects. Reading through the document (see [bit.ly/ts-eif](https://bit.ly/ts-eif)), there certainly appeared to be some cause for optimism. Schools were told they needed to offer a 'balanced curriculum' – surely that meant a broader range of subjects, and less emphasis on maths and English?

## Cultural capital

The framework's key quality of education criteria are grouped together under the 3 Ts – Intent, Implementation and Impact. It also asks school leaders to look at the curriculum as a whole, and how

this is delivered in schools. The framework's overall 'intent' is that leaders take on, or construct a curriculum that's ambitious and designed to give all learners – particularly those who are disadvantaged and have SEND or high needs – the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.

This notion of 'cultural capital' is one that's been tied to social mobility, and is seen as something that can be acquired through participation in arts-based subjects such as art, drama, dance, D&T and music. Could this perhaps provide school leaders with a greater incentive to run arts courses and provide a broader curriculum, with less intensive focus on the EBacc subjects?

Perhaps, though the fact remains that the introduction and subsequent prioritising of the EBacc has already created a new education landscape – one in which we've seen the marginalisation of not only art, but also other subjects such as PE, D&T, RE and drama. It seems safe to say at this stage that between them, the EBacc and Progress 8 measures have had a hugely adverse impact on the very subjects



that could help with giving students that all-important 'cultural capital'. It's almost as if these measures intended to improve pupil outcomes are directly contradicting each other...

2015 saw the publication of a report by the Warwick Commission, the purpose of which was to create a national plan for enabling culture and creativity to further enrich Britain. It found that British fashion, architecture, publishing, craft and design, film and TV, software and games development, museums, theatre, dance, popular and classical music and visual arts between them contributed almost £77bn in added value to the UK economy. It also found that cultural and creative activities were overwhelmingly accessed by wealthiest in society.

### Mental freedom

Statistically speaking, the introduction of the EBacc and the government's focus on core subjects via the progress 8 measures has clearly had a huge impact. Multiple studies and the DfE's own figures have shown a dramatic decline in teaching hours across a range of subjects, with the biggest drop being seen

in D&T. In a significant number of schools it's a subject that now effectively doesn't exist, which isn't exactly good news for the designers of the future.

As a teacher, I've watched departments being stripped down to the bone, teachers leaving and not being replaced and teaching hours for arts subjects minimised as far as possible. I recently spoke to an art teacher at a school where students only had one year in KS3 when they received any art lessons at all.

Changes like these work to remove creativity and mental freedom from state schools. Secondary students need to use all areas of their brain as far as they can, and should get to experience a rich variety of learning throughout their time at school. I've seen students glow with pride after producing an artwork that they're proud of, and have seen kids' confidence levels increase in leaps and bounds through singing in the school choir or performing in a play. These great opportunities for development

and building important character traits are being whittled down, leaving schools with just the bare minimum in terms of creative outlets.

When the new Ofsted framework was finally released last year, I, like many other creative teachers, was initially hopeful. Perhaps at last, those frequently expressed concerns from teachers, students and parents over arts education were going to be heard – but sorry to say, I ended up being somewhat disappointed.

It now calls for a 'well-constructed, well-taught curriculum', in which there 'need be no conflict between teaching a broad, rich curriculum and achieving success in examinations and tests'. Does this mean that arts subjects have meaning again?

That tests and results mean nothing? That children's experience of school and education should be a positive one? Only time will tell...



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Caroline Aldous-Goodge is an art and design teacher, head of year and education researcher

# LET THE MUSIC PLAY

**Dr Jodie Underhill** examines the impact of COVID-19 on schools' music provision, and the practical considerations that now need to be observed...

**T**he DfE updated its specific guidance for music teaching in schools in August this year, as a result of scientific research into singing, wind and brass playing. These had previously been considered potentially higher risk activities, and thus restricted under the initial guidance for the full reopening of schools in England.

The latest guidance outlines a number of mitigating measures that schools should observe when planning and delivering their music provision. At the time of writing, Scottish guidance for schools states that singing, wind and brass playing should be avoided 'initially', and that movement between schools by peripatetic staff should be kept to a minimum 'until further notice'. There are no music-specific restrictions or guidance for Wales and Northern Ireland.

The guidance has meanwhile provided English schools with a range of mitigating measures to allow music education to continue as safely as possible, and allow pupils to receive the full curriculum to which they are entitled.

## Classroom music

Initial DfE guidance circa July 2020 expressed the department's desire for a broad and balanced curriculum, but placed restrictions on music teaching and the number of pupils able to participate in activities such as singing, brass and wind playing. It also raised concerns around specialist rooms, and put in place the requirement for equipment to either be cleaned between uses by different pupil 'bubbles', or

rotated and left unused for up to 72 hours.

While these particular restrictions have since been lifted, the way in which classroom music is taught will continue to vary between schools depending on a number of factors, such as how bubbles are organised and school building layouts. Some music teachers will be able to return to their specialist classrooms and equipment, albeit while taking care to observe additional measures such as social distancing, increased ventilation and

tighter hygiene practices. Others may have to move between non-specialist classrooms and adapt their usual teaching methods and schemes of work. The late publication of music teaching guidance has meant that for some schools, there simply hasn't been time to change their existing plans.





## “Larger groups shouldn’t sing or play together unless there are mitigating measures in place”



day whilst the instrumental teacher teaches the lesson from home.

It’s clear that that while there may be challenges in resuming face-to-face instrumental lessons, with appropriate flexibility, planning and a willingness to meet those challenges head on, pupils can continue to develop their instrumental skills within school settings. This is vitally important for those pupils unable to access instrumental lessons outside of school, and for those pupils taking GCSEs, A Levels, Scottish Nationals and Highers in music.

### Visiting teachers

The guidance is clear that peripatetic music teachers can presently continue to work in schools. They’re also allowed to move between schools, but must be careful to observe social distancing between pupils and other adults, and shouldn’t provide physical correction during lessons.

For their part, schools will have to consider the teaching spaces they have available for instrumental lessons. Existing practice rooms may not allow for sufficient social distancing (currently 2m for face-to-face activities without mitigations) and may not meet revised ventilation requirements. Some schools might be able to offer alternative classrooms during the school day, but at others, availability of such spaces may be limited to before or after school hours. Some schools have reportedly set up laptops in practice rooms, so that pupils can attend online lessons during the school

### Orchestras, Ensembles and Choirs

Scientific research into singing and the playing of wind and brass instruments thus far doesn’t suggest that these activities present a higher risk than speaking and breathing at the same volume, but there is still some concern regarding associated risks of aerosol transmission, increased volume and larger numbers of people in a limited space.

As a result, larger groups shouldn’t sing or play together unless there are mitigating measures in place. These include using larger rooms (preferably with as much space as possible), ensuring adequate ventilation for the numbers present, limiting those numbers where appropriate and strict social distancing.

Where large spaces, such as gyms and halls, are shared between departments, there may need to be some compromise as to who can use the space and when, to allow pupils to access all forms of

extracurricular activity. Where larger spaces aren’t available, group sizes will have to be reduced based on the size of the room and potential to socially distance.

The current guidance of 2m will apply to each singer and player, and between singers, players and other individuals such as conductors and accompanists. Choir and ensemble rehearsals may also have to take into consideration their school’s organisation of bubbles, which may, for example, restrict rehearsals to one particular year group.

Beyond these considerations are other mitigating measures that will perhaps be easier and more practical for schools to implement. The preferred positioning for pupils playing and singing is now back-to-back or side-by-side, since face-to-face contact is considered to carry the highest risk. Wind and brass players should be positioned in a way that ensures air from their instruments doesn’t blow into another player. Singers should be encouraged to sing quietly or use microphones wherever possible.

For other instruments and musical equipment, increased hand-washing before and after handling should be required, especially if they’re being used by more than one person. The handling of scores and parts should be limited to those using them. Shared items, including chairs and music stands, should be regularly disinfected and pupils should clean their own instruments where possible. That said, the sharing of instruments and equipment should generally be avoided as much as possible.

### Other considerations

Face coverings have been introduced in schools in

England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but the guidance has generally been that these only be used in corridors and in communal areas. The Welsh Government has asked schools and LAs to undertake risk assessments to determine if face coverings are necessary for staff and pupils in communal spaces. As such, there is no guidance suggesting that pupils and staff should wear face coverings in music lessons or musical rehearsals, at least for now.

There’s a wealth of guidance from organisations around the world, based on scientific studies, which has advised taking various mitigating measures, including the wearing of masks during rehearsals when not actually singing or playing, and the use of screens between instrumental teachers and pupils. This guidance often also includes suggestions for alternative curriculum models, alongside information on instrument hygiene and general teacher wellbeing.

Teachers may well find these supplementary suggestions useful, and can read more about them in a comprehensive and periodically updated Global Literature Review published by the ISM (see [bit.ly/ts97-ism-global](https://bit.ly/ts97-ism-global)).

The ISM is continuing to conduct research into the impact of COVID-19 on music education across the UK and publish its findings, the latest of which can be found at [ism.org/surveys](https://ism.org/surveys).



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Jodie Underhill is a research associate at the Incorporated Society of Musicians; for more information, visit [ism.org](https://ism.org) or follow @ism\_music



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## CLASSROOM VOICES

# “Being a teacher isn’t all about the glow”

**Neil D’Arcy-Jones** explains why his entry into the teaching profession might be a well-trodden path, but one he’s determined to complete with eyes fully open...

**T**he slow death of the local newspaper industry seems to have been a net positive for the teaching profession. Over the past 10 years, while working for my local newspaper group as its arts editor, I saw a pattern start to emerge – announcements of redundancies, reporters sad at having to leave their newspapers, reporters getting jobs as teachers, ex-reporters becoming infinitely happier.

So when the Sword of Damocles finally fell on me in December 2019, it was kind of obvious what I was going to do next, though I had more reasons than most for choosing to enter teaching.

## Being the bad guy

For several years prior to my redundancy I’d been running a youth theatre group at a local secondary school, while also moonlighting as an exams invigilator. Now, you might think that pacing round a sports hall, watching young people sit their exams and occasionally handing out the odd ruler and pen wouldn’t provide much incentive for becoming a teacher. I was the bad guy, ensuring everyone was adhering to the rules, without any of the goodwill that would have come from actually teaching them the stuff they needed to pass the exam in the first place.

Yet it was doing this that made me think I might make a half-decent teacher. Last summer I was placed in a separate room with students who, for various reasons, couldn’t sit their exams in the main hall. Before the start and after the end of each exam I was able to work up a bit of a rapport with this eclectic group – making sure they were ready, that phones were turned off and that they had all the equipment they needed, as well as handing out tissues for

sniffy noses and the occasional teary eye. At the end of exams season, several of them came up and thanked me for making what was a daunting and uncomfortable experience a little more bearable. It was an odd feeling.

As a journalist, you rarely get emails from grateful readers. Instead, they’re usually complaints about missing apostrophes or how you’ve spelt ‘Aldeborough’ (Yes, *I know* – it’s ‘Aldeburgh’). I can still remember the vicious letter I received many moons ago about my review of Harold Pinter’s *The Lover*, from a reader who accused me of ruining the play by giving away its ending. I replied that *The Lover* was very different to films such as *The Usual Suspects* or *The Sixth Sense*, and explained why by detailing the iconic endings of both. Unfortunately I never discovered whether I ruined those for him as well...

## A ‘terrible decision’

The point is, within the short time I’d spent as an exam invigilator, I’d already

experienced the glorious glow that comes from being *actually appreciated*.

Of course, I’m well aware that being a teacher isn’t all about the glow. After securing a place on a training course to teach English at secondary, I spoke to my many teacher friends – some of them ex-journalists like me – and every one of them told me it was going to be hard. One told me, “At some point during your training, you’re going to think you’ve made a terrible decision becoming a teacher – but then something will happen in the classroom, and you’ll know you haven’t.”

I’m ready for all the hard work, trials, tribulations, ups and downs, because I know the rewards are going to be more than worth it. I’ve always had a fascination with the English language and how it can be used to communicate an idea, or an ideal, for that matter. How it can be subversive, smart, even sexy.

I’ve therefore spent the last few weeks studying an online subject enhancement course, re-connecting with those old friends Shakespeare, Dickens, Browning and Orwell, which has further ignited my enthusiasm for the subject. I literally – literally? – can’t wait to get in that classroom and start waxing lyrical about why *Animal Farm* and *1984* should be essential reading for everyone, particularly in these bizarre times. I’m especially interested in how non-fiction can help those students who don’t usually engage well with English, but hopefully more on that later.

Yes, I’m well aware that at some point this puppy dog bravado will collapse in a heap – but I know already that I’ve made one of the best decisions of my life.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Neil D’Arcy-Jones is a former local newspaper journalist currently undergoing teacher training



# teach SECONDARY AWARDS 2020

## AND THE WINNERS ARE...

Find out which books, course materials, online services and other resources impressed our judges enough to earn a coveted star rating in this year's Teach Secondary Awards...

**W**elcome to our coverage of this year's Teach Secondary Awards – an annual endeavour in which we attempt to find out which resources for KS3 and KS4 are most worthy of educators' time and budgets. The end result is a showcase of the best resources schools can use to improve their student outcomes, staff development and whole school practice.

The process of organising an Awards project in 2020 hasn't been without its challenges, of course, but we were pleased to see that standard of this year's entries was impressively

high. We're also grateful to the individuals who sat on this year's judging panel and offered their time and expertise at a difficult period for everyone.

Following on from the Awards' inaugural outing last year, we've increased the number of categories to seven and are now looking to recognise those companies and organisations doing great work in the areas of STEM and school business management.

We hereby offer our hearty congratulations to all of our winners, and trust that readers from across the profession will find plenty to intrigue and inspire them over the following pages.

## How it worked



Having settled on our seven Awards categories – curriculum impact, assessment, SEND, CPD, school business, STEM and health and wellbeing – we invited entries from resource providers working across all areas of the education sector.

We then whittled these entries down into a series of shortlists that were passed on to our expert judges for analysis. Each judge was asked to base their assessment on the following criteria:

- Does the resource meet a genuine need?
- What impact will it have?
- How easy is it to use and/or deliver?
- Can the resource be adapted for use in different settings?
- Does it represent good value for money?

After assigning numerical scores to each, the judges returned to us their three highest-scoring entries, which were then assigned ratings of five, four or three stars.

## MEET THE JUDGES

### SCHOOL BUSINESS



**HILARY GOLDSMITH**

is a school business leader, consultant on school business matters and a mentor for the NAHT  
[sbl365.co.uk](http://sbl365.co.uk)

### ASSESSMENT



**CLAIRE GADSBY**

is an educational consultant and author, providing school development, training and revision services across a range of settings  
[clairegadsby.com](http://clairegadsby.com)

### CPD



**JILL BERRY**

is a former headteacher turned author and educational consultant, specialising in leadership  
[jillberry102.blog](http://jillberry102.blog)

### SEND



**JOHN GALLOWAY**

is a freelance writer, consultant and trainer specialising in the use of technology to improve educational opportunities for children and young people with special educational needs  
[johngallowayltd.com](http://johngallowayltd.com)

### STEM



**ANDY MITCHELL**

is an independent educational consultant and former deputy chief executive of The Design and Technology Association

### CURRICULUM IMPACT



**JULIE KETTLEWELL**

is the assistant director of Huntington Research School, specialising in memory and metacognition, a teacher of psychology and an experienced sixth-form pastoral leader  
[huntingtonschool.co.uk](http://huntingtonschool.co.uk)

### HEALTH AND WELLBEING



**ANN MARIE CHRISTIAN**

is a safeguarding and child protection consultant, trainer, author and troubleshooter, who has independently supported hundreds of organisations in strengthening their safeguarding agenda.  
[annmariechristian.com](http://annmariechristian.com)





# WINNERS

## School business

### WHAT WERE WE LOOKING FOR?

Data management systems and communication tools (both internal and for contacting parents) that enable schools to stay organised and responsive



### PS CONNECT

(IRIS Education)

[iris.co.uk](http://iris.co.uk)



"PS Connect is a powerful multi-tasking tool of the high standard you would expect from the PS camp. It's a sleek and intuitive system that provides a complete comms package for schools, and its creators really do seem to have thought of everything. The integration of an online parent payment platform is an exciting new step forward, linking the admin and finance processes together in a way that hasn't been seen before. Exciting stuff. I want it!" **H Goldsmith**

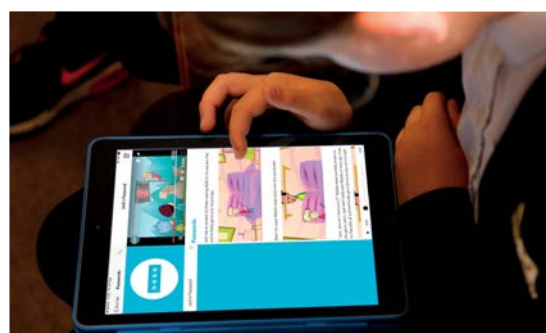


### SATCHEL ONE

(Satchel)

[teamsatchel.com](http://teamsatchel.com)

"Satchel One is a hugely useful set of teaching tools wrapped up in a very nice package. Teachers will love its ease of use and ability to help them manage the vast majority of their admin tasks in one easy-to-navigate app." **H Goldsmith**

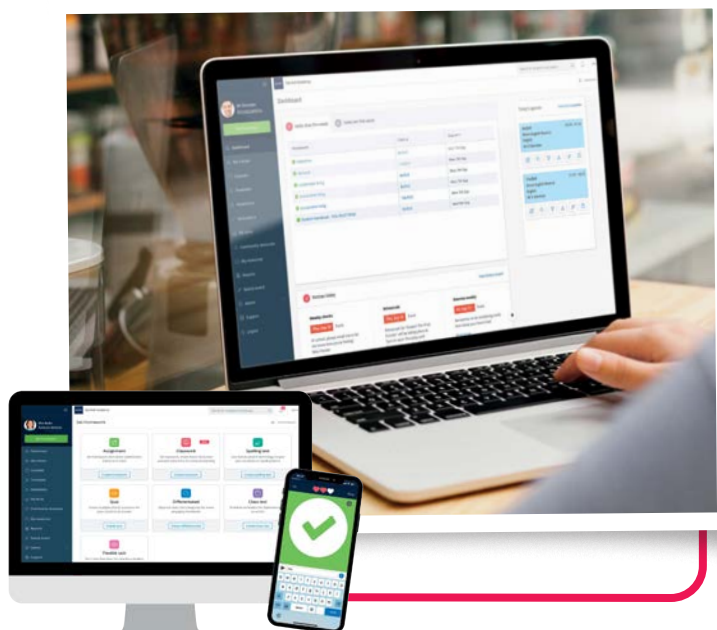
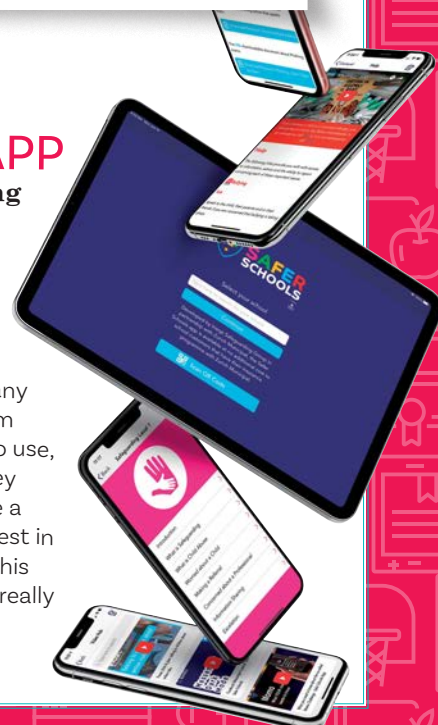


### SAFER SCHOOLS APP

(Ineqe Safeguarding Group)

[oursaferschools.co.uk](http://oursaferschools.co.uk)

"The Safer Schools App is a knowledge base of safeguarding and online safety information that any school would benefit from having. The app is easy to use, with clear signposts to key areas of interest. If you're a teacher with a keen interest in digital safety, you'll find this growing knowledge base really useful." **H Goldsmith**



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## WINNERS Assessment

### WHAT WERE WE LOOKING FOR?

Resources and services aimed at helping teachers check students' understanding, improve feedback, track progress and drive school improvement



### GCSEPOD

(Soundbitelearning UK Ltd)

[gcsepod.com](http://gcsepod.com)



"This highly innovative and effective resource is a worthy winner. The 'Check and Challenge' element is attractively designed to engage pupils and incentivises their efforts using the 'diamond' reward system. The sample answers are cleverly designed around common misconceptions, which in turn leads to formative feedback that is highly specific and useful.

Equally impressive is the diagnostic data produced for teachers, particularly the 'misconception identified' summary and suggestions."

**C Gadsby**



### AI READING ASSESSMENT

(Lexplore Analytics)

[lexplore-analytics.co.uk](http://lexplore-analytics.co.uk)

"A groundbreaking way of assessing reading and identifying specific difficulties that pupils may be experiencing. The striking visual representation of how pupils' eyes move – and fixate – during reading is particularly compelling. Pupils can be assessed quickly and easily, without the need for teachers to manually upload data. The tracking feature also deserves commendation, particularly the 'suggested interventions' and supporting resources that are clearly signposted."

**C Gadsby**



### SAM LEARNING

(SAM Learning)

[samlearning.com](http://samlearning.com)

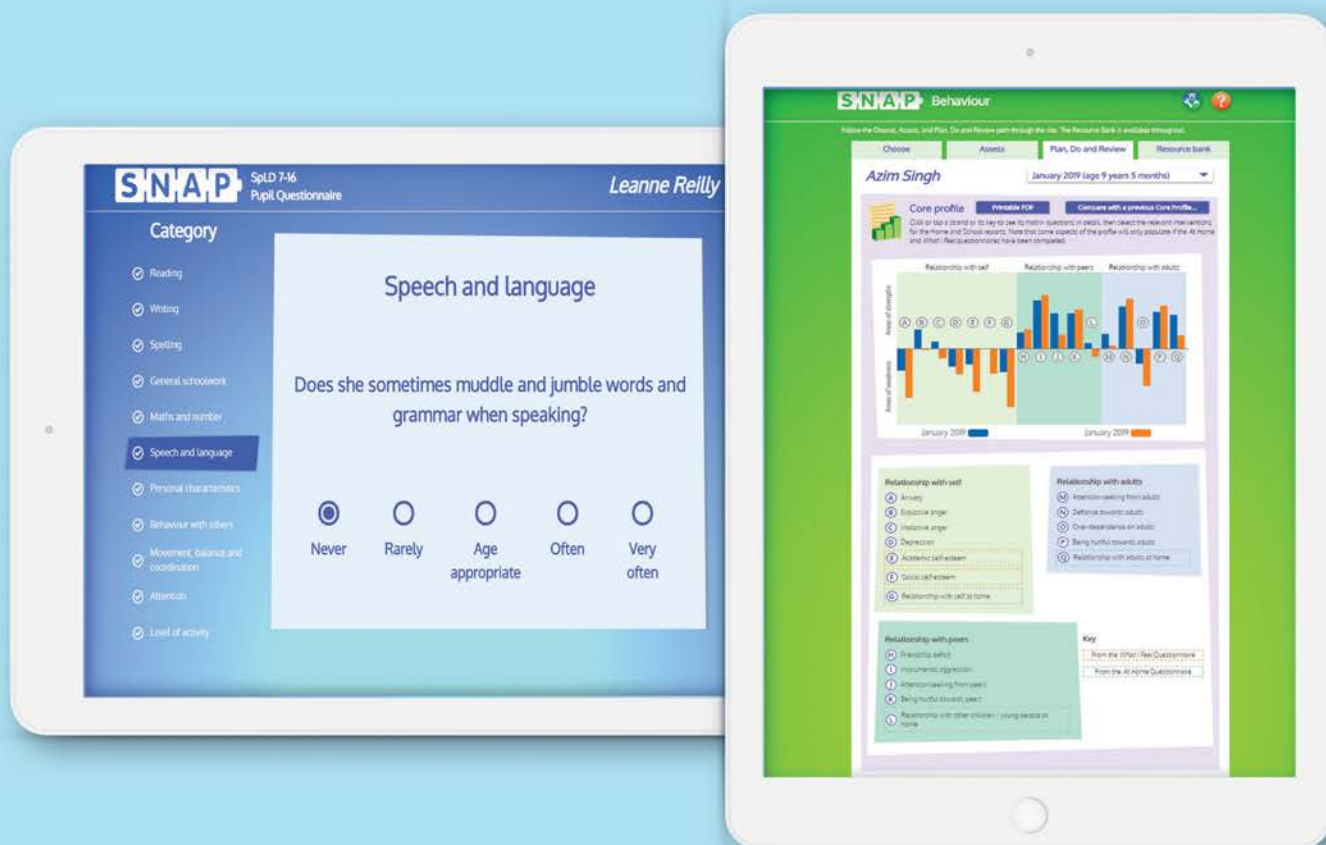
"An effective online assessment and review tool that promotes independent learning and which covers all key subject areas for KS3 and KS4. Teachers can easily track the tasks that pupils have completed and intervene effectively by drawing on its flexible 'three-wave intervention strategy' framework."





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**RS** ASSESSMENT  
FROM HODDER EDUCATION





## WHAT WERE WE LOOKING FOR?

Physical and electronic resources designed to support students with additional needs and make schools more inclusive

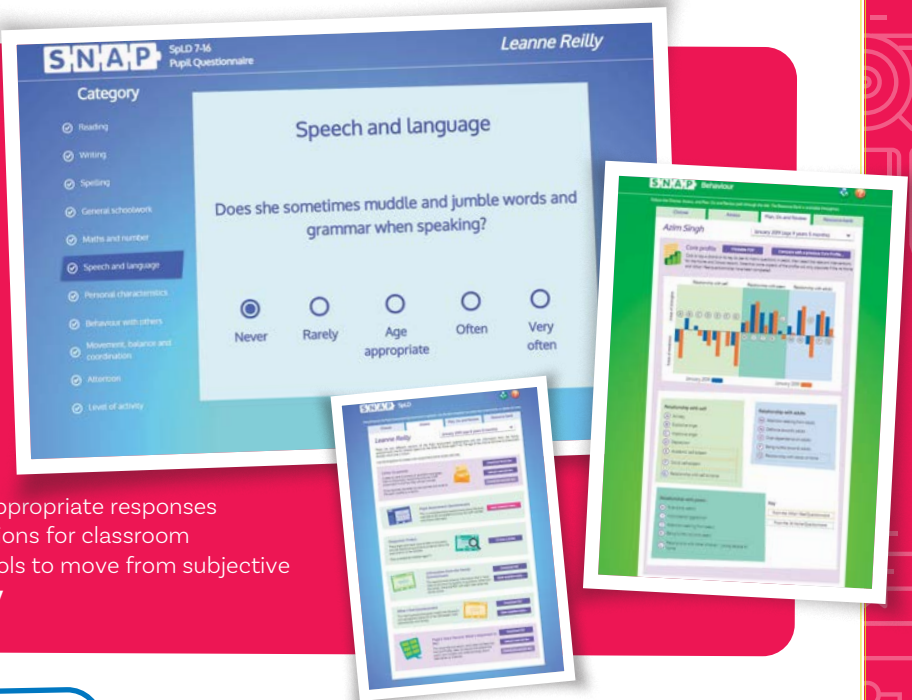


### SPECIAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROFILE

(RS Assessment from Hodder Education)

[hoddereducation.co.uk/snap](http://hoddereducation.co.uk/snap)

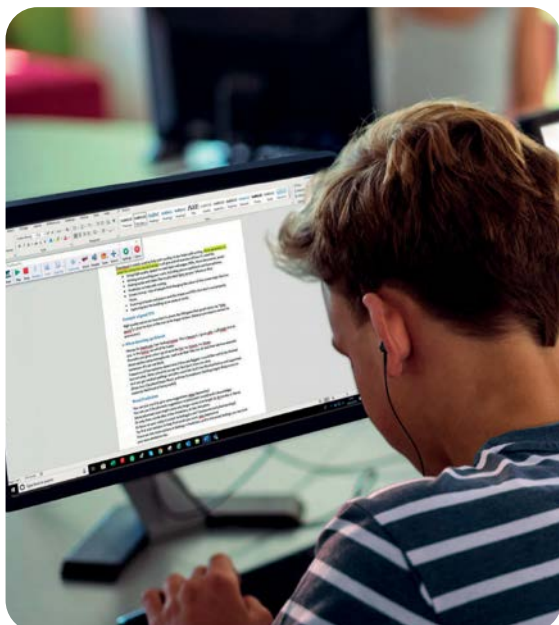
"SNAP Is designed to fit with the systems of identification and assessment that all schools have. Its support for detailed information gathering will help to provide appropriate responses to learners' needs, alongside useful suggestions for classroom interventions. Its assessment will help schools to move from subjective concerns to purposeful actions." **J Galloway**



### CLAROREAD PLUS

(Claro Software)  
[clarosoftware.com](http://clarosoftware.com)

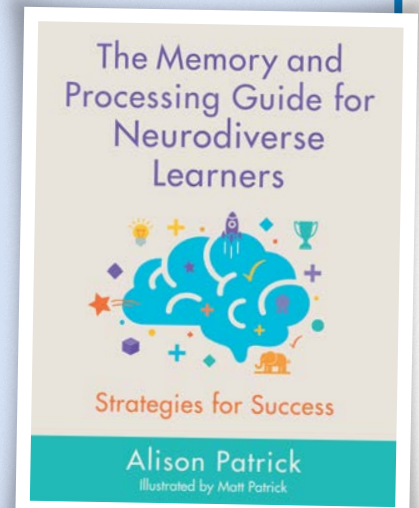
"This resource provides a selection of tools that will support students with diverse learning needs in a variety of ways." **J Galloway**



### THE MEMORY AND PROCESSING GUIDE FOR NEURODIVERSE LEARNERS

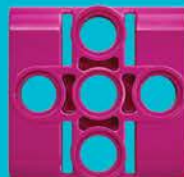
(Alison Patrick, Jessica Kingsley Publishers)  
[jkp.com](http://jkp.com)

"This book sets out to provide learners with a range of learning needs (brought together under the umbrella of neurodiversity) with an understanding of what their particular label might mean in terms of learning challenges and provide strategies for meeting them. Much of the content is clearly written and appropriate for the audience." **J Galloway**





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## WINNERS STEM

### WHAT WERE WE LOOKING FOR?

Hardware, software, activity kits and online services that seek to support students' learning of science, technology, engineering and maths



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"Okay, it's LEGO®, so it ought to be good – and it really is! Its unquestionable quality and robustness, underpinned by extensive development trialling, can't help but instil confidence. Its accessibility is a major feature, as is the linking of individual STEM subjects through an extensive online component.

It's expensive, possibly, but in terms of longevity, flexibility, serviceability, extension and ability to span the KS2 to KS3 curriculum, it's a very good value investment. Another notable plus is its ease of assembly/disassembly, allowing for multiple concurrent uses." **A Mitchell**

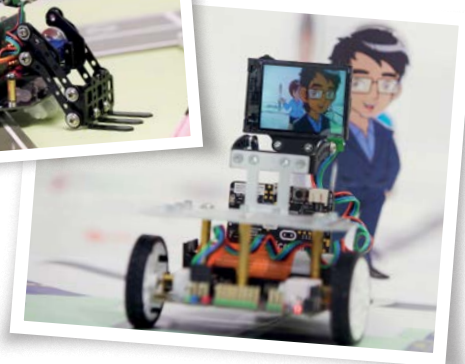
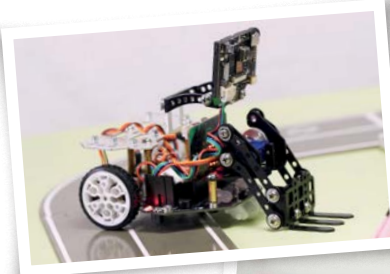
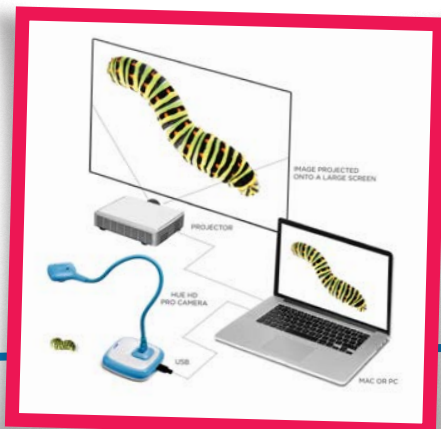


### HUE HD PRO

(Ascent Information Technology)  
[huehd.com](https://huehd.com)

"A superb classroom camera/visualiser. Designed for plug and play, it's dead easy to set up and happy to work with Windows, Macs and Chromebooks. Priced at £44.95 plus VAT, it represents fantastic value for money – every teacher should have one as part of their essential kit.

Tiny, robust and flexible in use, it's an even better value proposition when considered alongside the accompanying management software and mobile app (currently in beta). There's clearly much more planned for this great tool, but its potential to engage students in STEM activities, such as creating animations, already make it a stand-out offering." **A Mitchell**



### MAQUEEN PLUS AI KIT

(DFRobot)  
[dfrobot.com](https://dfrobot.com)

"This AI-themed STEM kit is incredibly sophisticated, remarkably inexpensive and well thought through. As with many such resources, it's attracted a healthy online support community that's willing to share and collaborate and is already busy developing a range of different build activities.

To be able to introduce the practical teaching and learning of AI at minimal expense is a game-changer, which DFRobot has achieved by using low cost add-ons and – sensibly – including support for popular platforms such as BBC micro:bit. We're unlikely to find AI teaching of the kind it facilitates on most UK school curriculums just yet, but in time, hopefully we will." **A Mitchell**

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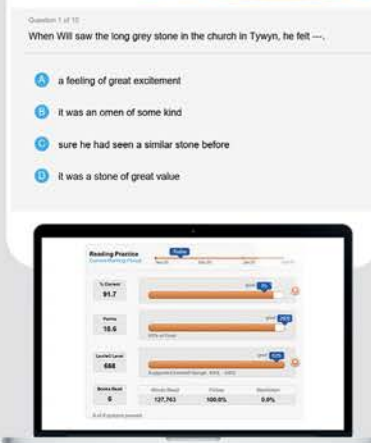
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WINNERS

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renlearn.co.uk

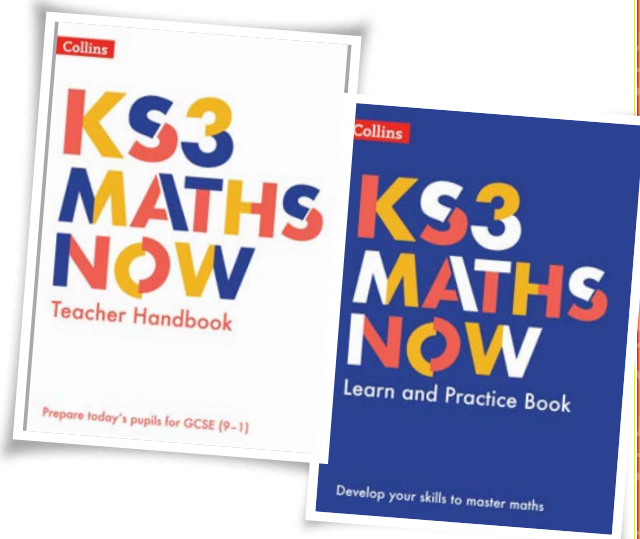
"This addresses a definite need among teachers for support with struggling readers and the transition from primary to secondary school, as well helping teachers reduce their workload."

Research has found that it leads to three additional months of progress, and is therefore likely to have a positive impact on teaching and learning. It's also flexible, in that teachers can choose when to use it – for example, only during library lessons, for homework or every day."

J Kettlewell

## WHAT WERE WE LOOKING FOR?

Resources that will change the way a particular subject is taught and/or boost students' progress in that subject



## KS3 MATHS NOW

(Collins Education)

collins.co.uk

"As GCSEs become increasingly demanding, a growing number of students now require support with maths at KS3. This resource provides lots of practice questions, it's easy to navigate and the teacher handbook is particularly good. The content is also easy to adapt and edit, making it useful for teachers working across a range of cohorts and ability levels." J Kettlewell



## VISO TEACHERVIEW

(Radix Technologies)

radix-int.com

"Many schools are now placing a much greater focus on their remote and blended learning provision in case of further school closures, and are considering how to deliver it effectively. There are multiple such services available, but VISO TeacherView has some distinct features, such as granting teachers the ability to both monitor and control a student's screen."

J Kettlewell

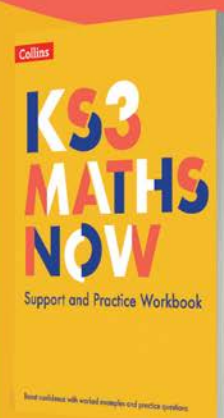
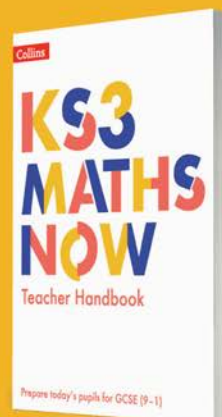
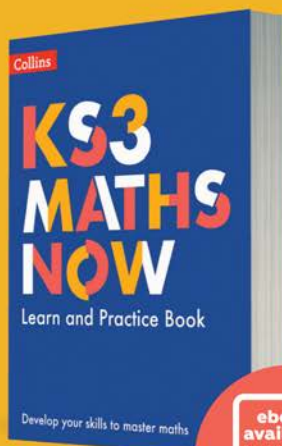


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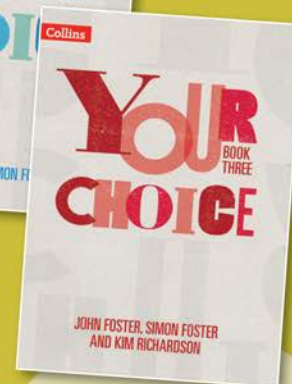
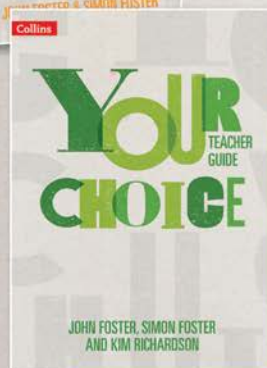
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WINNERS

# Health and wellbeing

## WHAT WERE WE LOOKING FOR?

RSE teaching materials, safeguarding solutions, guidebooks and other resources that can supplement a school's provision of mental health and wellbeing support



## AMAZING PEOPLE SCHOOLS

(Amazing People Schools)  
[amazingpeopleschools.com](http://amazingpeopleschools.com)

"A fantastic online resource that's designed to present good, positive stories of people from different backgrounds and cultures who have made a difference to the world. Child-friendly and easy to access and read, the colourful, inclusive materials combine to make for an amazing resource that can be used to teach resilience and empower children to believe they can achieve anything."

**A M Christian**

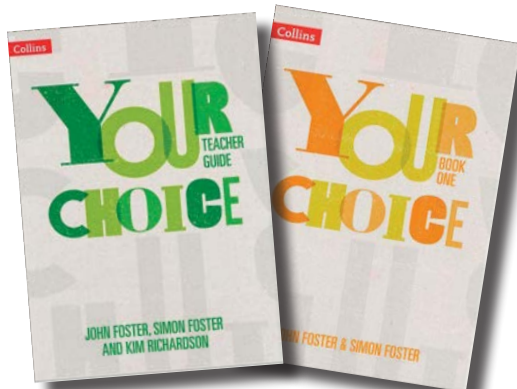


## YOUR CHOICE

(Collins Education)  
[collins.co.uk](http://collins.co.uk)

"A very child-centered multicultural resource designed to provoke children's minds. User friendly in practice and highly inclusive, it's also topical in a way that will ensure that children and teenagers are able to relate its content to their own development and life experiences.

Overall, it's an intensive and comprehensive resource that can be used at all stages of puberty and across different ability groups. Its use of simple language, factual approach and positive tone will enable children to develop confidence in learning a very important life skill." **A M Christian**

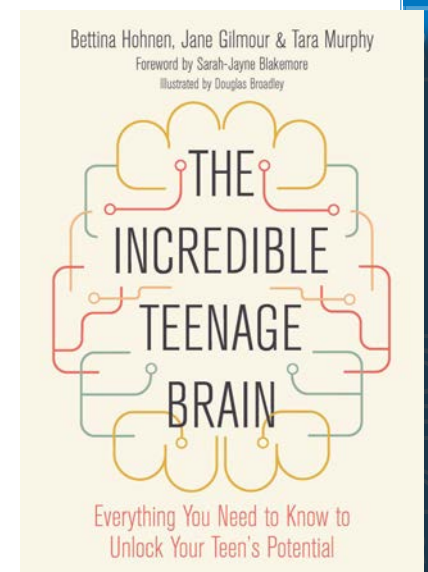


## THE INCREDIBLE TEENAGE BRAIN

(Bettina Hohnen, Jane Gilmour and Tara Murphy, Jessica Kingsley Publishers)  
[jkp.com](http://jkp.com)

"A thick, but easy to read book for adults working with teenagers, it contains useful advice on how to support teenagers experiencing challenges with their emotions and decision-making in a very informative and straightforward way. It also does a good job of explaining the facts behind the chemistry and hormones responsible for the sudden changes in mood and behaviours that teenagers will typically experience."

**A M Christian**



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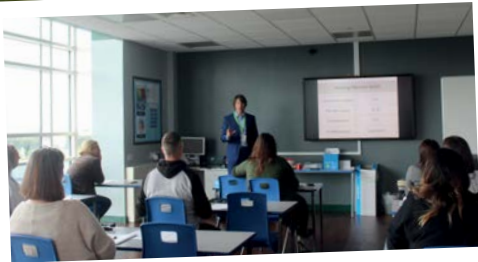
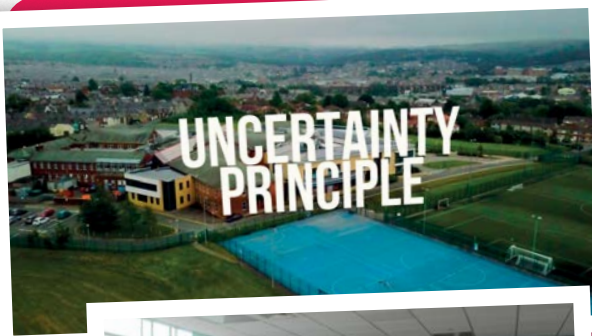
\*Discounts vary depending on membership level.





## WHAT WERE WE LOOKING FOR?

Training materials, software, books and other resources intended to enhance teachers' professional development



## THE UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE CPD COURSE

(Accrington Academy)

[accrington-academy.org](http://accrington-academy.org)

"At a time when many schools have inevitably been reactive, focusing on survival in the current context, it is impressive that Accrington Academy has invested in a CPD programme that aims to build the resilience of all staff, leaders and students across the school.

This is highly relevant and timely, reflecting the school's commitment to supporting staff in order to support students, and to sharing with other schools to spread the benefits." **J Berry**



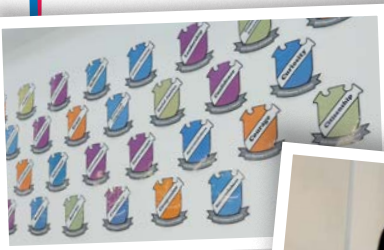
## LEADING CHARACTER EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

(Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, University of Birmingham)

[jubileecentre.ac.uk](http://jubileecentre.ac.uk)

"This free resource has an impressive scope, and the participant evaluations reflect the impact the programme has had so far across a wide range of contexts. The building of character has been much discussed in recent years, and this is a flexible, research-informed programme that schools and practitioners can adapt to their specific needs. The way it draws on good practice across eight

schools provides a valuable window into what success in this area looks like." **J Berry**



## DYSLEXIA AND LITERACY CPD PROGRAMME

(Dyslexia Action Training)

[dyslexiaaction.org.uk](http://dyslexiaaction.org.uk)

"This specialist online training is comprehensive, flexible, and suited to educators across all settings. Although focused on dyslexia support and building literacy, the theory and practical skills encourage good pedagogical practice which should benefit all learners.

The use of one-to-one guidance from tutors, and the inclusion of collective contributions so that participants are able to learn from peers, provide opportunities to meet individual needs targeted to specific educational contexts." **J Berry**



# Off the Shelves

Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore

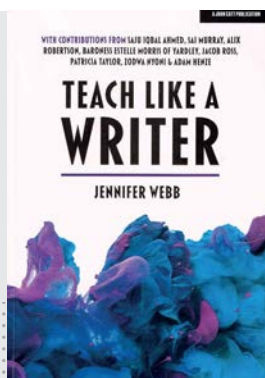


## **Frostheart 2: Escape from Aurora** (Jamie Littler, Puffin, £7.99)

**Introducing our latest student reviewer...**

*Escape from Aurora* is a worthy successor to the original *Frostheart*. In this book, the Frostheart crew arrives at Aurora, where Ash hopes to find more clues about the Solstice stronghold where he believes his parents are living. After Captain Stormbreaker calls a meeting with the captains of all Pathfinder sleighs, in which she reveals a dark, dangerous plans to capture all songweavers and use them to kill the Leviathans, Captain Nuk is desperate to leave, not wanting to join Stormbreaker's schemes. When Ash finds the last verse of the lullaby, they do just that – but with a pack of demons from the underworld chasing them through the Snow Sea, will they ever make it to Solstice? Jamie Littler has again created a moving and page-turning tale. I was reading it non-stop from page one to the very end. It made me laugh, cry and got me excited from start to finish.

**Reviewed by Elijah Summers, Y7**



## **Teach Like a Writer** (Jennifer Webb, John Catt, £15)

The underlying premise of this book is very good, and can be summed up in the following sentence: 'Writing a newspaper article in 30 minutes, on a completely alien topic with no preparation, research or moral imperative is... ridiculous.' In other words, the typical school writing assignment involves working in a way that no real writer does. This book aims to change that by providing insights into the writing process across several, very different genres – fiction, journalism, politics, poetry, academia and theatre. As well as an excellent series of diagrams, templates and guides (some downloadable from a supporting website), there's a panoply of resources and an implicit insistence on high standards. The emphasis throughout is on the experience of writing from the perspective of various professionals, which could have resulted in something far removed from the classroom, but the activities included render the book extremely relevant for teaching purposes.

**Reviewed by Terry Freedman**



## **Black and British – A Short, Essential History** (David Olusoga, Pan Macmillan, £6.99)

In 2016, the historian and broadcaster David Olusoga published *Black and British: A Forgotten History* – a wide-ranging survey of Black people's experiences in Britain, from the days of the Roman Empire up to the present day. After receiving numerous requests for a version of the book suitable for younger readers, Olusoga has now produced just that – a compellingly told historical narrative of similar scope which, in his own words, amounts to "The book I wish I had been given to read when I was at school." Readers are taken through nine distinct periods, spanning 27BC to the 20th century, alighting on a host of fascinating and illuminating historical figures along the way, making it a great primer for further learning about Black British history that's sure to capture students' attention. **See page 25 for our exclusive interview with David Olusoga**

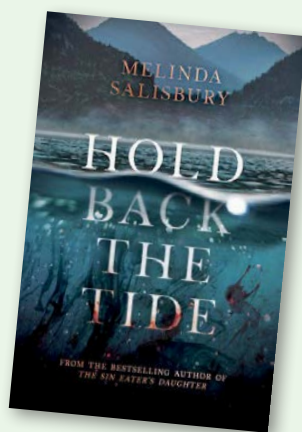


## THE WORD

Find out what our regular student reviewer, Oliver Minter-King (Y11) has been reading this month...

### **Hold Back the Tide**

(Melinda Salisbury, Scholastic, £7.99)



Ormscaula is an unassuming Scottish village with a harrowing history that's at risk from being monopolised by an influential industrialist. It's also the place Alva Douglas calls home – though if her plan succeeds, she won't have to ever again.

Seven years after her father, the keeper of the loch, killed her mother, Alva intends to finally escape both the village that views her as an outsider and the monster living under her roof. However, she's soon forced to reckon with a frightening series of disappearances and murders, and finds herself having to protect the village she's desperate to leave, while facing up to the past and eventually discovering the real reason behind her mother's death...

Salisbury's greatest achievements in this novel are how she's able to effectively build suspense, forge diabolical antagonists and subvert the reader's expectations with both a shocking twist and a climatic, yet melancholy finale. An excellent slice of horror/thriller literature.

## Meet the author



### **KATY GRANVILLE-CHAPMAN**

#### **Who is your book Leader for?**

Emmie [Bidston, co-writer] and I have both been reading pretty obsessively around leadership for the last 20 or so years, so we were keen to include some rigorous research. However, we also wanted it to be very accessible, so that it could be read by the CEO of a multinational corporation, but also perhaps a teenager wanting lead their sports team more effectively, or a parent wanting to lead their family. We went for the full spectrum.

#### **Does anything in the book upend people's expectations of what a good leader is?**

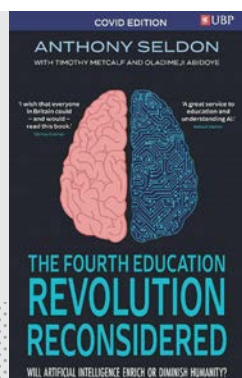
There's still an assumption that 'strong' leadership amounts to effective leadership, but we blow that idea out of the water. Very assertive, dominant, alpha-type personalities are regularly shown to be far less effective leaders across many different industries and environments. There's some great research from Dacher Keltner and his team at Berkeley, which showed that empathetic US senators passed many more bills than senators with those narcissistic traits.

#### **Dominant personalities can also make staff reluctant to be the bearers of bad news...**

Yes, and that's a particularly relevant question for schools. Part of my PhD research involved studying qualitative data from nearly 200 teachers, and one of the questions I asked was what their barriers to flourishing were. 'Fear of the leader' and 'Leaders not listening' came up often. Leaders sometimes lack the time to properly listen to their people, but it's critical that they do if they're to keep their school safe and secure the best possible outcomes.

#### **How should leaders aim to be perceived?**

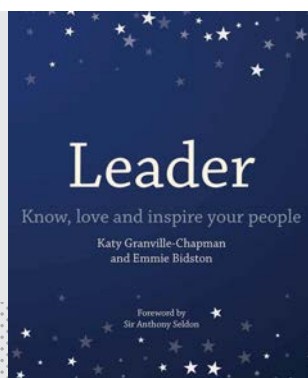
The more open a leader is, the better. It can be really helpful for leaders to show some vulnerability themselves, so that any colleagues who might be struggling feel able to approach them. If staff get punished for doing that, maybe via a performance improvement plan, it sends the message that it's not safe to speak up, and that you should hide the fact you're finding things difficult. That's a huge issue in schools, and if we don't get it right, we're not going to provide the best possible education for those pupils we're lucky enough to teach.



### **The Fourth Education Revolution Reconsidered**

(Sir Anthony Seldon, University of Buckingham Press, £14.99)

Back in the now distant-seeming year of 2018, Sir Anthony Seldon's book *The Fourth Education Revolution* discussed how the increasing sophistication of AI technologies was heralding a move away from the traditional 'factory model' of education to one that would be much more personalised – a model Seldon dubbed 'Education 4.0' – with profound implications for the role of teachers. As indicated by the 'COVID Edition' strip on its cover, *The Fourth Education Revolution Reconsidered* places that discussion within the context of 2020's global pandemic, and examines how the coming of COVID has transformed the discourse around AI-powered Education 4.0 technologies. Once seen as mere futuristic speculation with few real-world applications, argues Seldon, there's now a pressing need for educators and policymakers at all levels to engage with such innovations as a matter of urgency.



### **Leader**

(Katy Granville-Chapman and Emmie Bidston, Crown House Publishing, £18.99)

Reverberating throughout this book are what co-authors Granville-Chapman and Bidston describe as the three key lessons mastered by great leaders – 'know your people', 'love your people' and 'inspire your people'. Readers are taken on an inspiring tour of existing research into organisational leadership, interspersed with numerous INSET-friendly challenges and exercises, plus a series of concise case studies. The latter include an inspiring mix of leadership lessons from the likes of the England Cricket Team, Michelle Obama, Pep Guardiola and Melinda Gates, describing how they and other high profile figures from the worlds of sport, business and politics have succeeded in getting the very best out of people. The book presents a convincing case that organisations of all kinds – especially schools – stand to benefit hugely from being led by individuals with a more responsive, considered and kind approach to leadership.

# “I’m an education radical”

**Katharine Birbalsingh** tells Callum Fauser what makes the ‘Michaela way’ effective at addressing the disadvantages some students face as a result of their background

**I**t’s long been the case that a young person’s background can have a disproportionate impact on his or her educational outcomes and later life chances. Yet despite numerous promises of action among policymakers and the concerted efforts of the teaching profession, that largely remains the case at a national level.

However, we’ve also seen individual schools pursue distinct approaches to teaching, learning and behaviour which, going by the traditional metrics of Ofsted and GCSE results, at least, seem have made a real difference. Often these will be schools that have hit upon an approach that works and will pursue said approach doggedly, allowing little to no room for compromise.

## Boot Camp

One school that certainly fits that description is Michaela Community School in Wembley. Originally opened in 2014 as a free secondary school, it’s gone on to generate headlines, win

over admirers and attract fierce critics in the years since. Much of that is down to its well-known reputation – a carefully, perhaps even gleefully cultivated one – as the ‘strictest school in Britain’. Talking to headmistress (note, not headteacher) Katharine Birbalsingh in September 2020, she notes that while some of the finer details of life at MCS might have changed, “The values of the school have always remained the same. We maintain a real belief in personal responsibility, duty and community. We see knowledge as being central in terms of our lessons, and hold extremely high standards of behaviour and expectations of our children.”

That much is clear in Birbalsingh’s references to the ‘Boot Camp’ sessions being attended by the

school’s Y7s at the time of our conversation. “It’s six to seven days of teaching them how to behave in a Michaela way,” she explains. “We teach lessons on ethos and buying into the culture we’re giving them, explaining why we give detentions for misbehaviour, why we have a merit system and why we believe in personal responsibility.”

Expanding on this, Birbalsingh reasons that, “It’s unfair to punish children for not behaving when you haven’t taught them *how* to behave. We believe very much that a child has agency; that they can decide whether to do the right or wrong thing.

But they won’t actually know what the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ things are unless that’s been taught to them.”

## Peace and order

Explicit teaching around behaviour in Y7 is one thing, but what about the school’s returning Y9s? Is there any ‘topping up’ of teaching around behaviour to ensure standards don’t slip? “When students come back after a half term or holiday we’ll do a couple of lessons of Boot Camp to remind them,” Birbalsingh confirms. “When they’ve been away they’ll often forget how to be polite, because they’ve been out of this environment that





## “There’s this myth that says we love being horrible to children. What teacher wants to be horrible to a child?”

expects that of them. But once reminded, they manage to do it all again quite easily.”

Warming to her theme, Birbalsingh contends that “Our view is that if you just put children in an environment and hope they manage to swim, some will and some won’t. That doesn’t support the weakest. But if you teach children explicitly how to do something, you’ll catch everybody. That’s why we teach our children to always walk in corridors quietly, looking to the front and in single file.”

Given the upset and mass absences that schools worldwide have had to contend with in 2020, I have to ask – how have the students and teachers at MCS found the experience of returning to school after lockdown? “It’s all going very well,” asserts Birbalsingh. “We were very COVID-safe to begin with. Our silent corridors mean that children aren’t talking, and the single file lines see to it that social distancing is observed. At other schools it’s a lot more loose, isn’t it? Children are allowed to go wherever they want and chat to whomever, which isn’t the case with us. If anything, we were ideally placed for this situation.”

It’s that sense of freedom being denied to MCS students that feeds in to the almost cartoonish Gradgrind-esque picture that critics like to paint of the school. To hear Birbalsingh tell it, though, “The wild freedom that exists elsewhere doesn’t help the most vulnerable. The child who comes to us from a chaotic home is able to find order here at the school.

That’s what our detractors don’t understand – if you allow certain children to find chaos at school, then their *entire lives* are chaotic and they’ll never get to experience peace and order.”

### Children are children

This commitment to instruction, order and consistency naturally extends to the classroom, where a traditional approach of explicit, knowledge-based teaching in front of the class holds firm. According to Birbalsingh, “Our detractors don’t believe in the authority of the teacher to stand at the front and lead the learning. They’d rather the children led the learning in groups and taught themselves, while the teacher moves around as a facilitator of learning and keeps them on task.

“What we’d say is that children are children, and that they can’t make those decisions. It’s the teacher who should be leading that learning, and leading that discipline. If you don’t believe in adults being the authority, then you’ll disagree with everything we are.”

This, it seems to me, cuts through to how ‘freedom’ is ultimately understood at MCS. Rather than emphasising ‘freedom to’, the school seeks instead to provide ‘freedom from’. As Birbalsingh herself puts it, “In some schools, you might arrive at your next lesson 10 or 15 minutes late – time that could have been used teaching you how to read. When 20% of children in Britain leave school functionally illiterate and innumerate, I don’t see how

that’s setting them free. I’d argue that kind of freedom at school will confine them for the rest of their lives and keep them in that cage of illiteracy and innumeracy.”

### Founded in knowledge

Whether one agrees with the rigorously enforced policies of MCS or not, it’s hard not to be impressed by the strength of Birbalsingh’s conviction and the extent to which the school has been able to project its philosophy out into the wider world. As well as receiving frequent (albeit pre-COVID) visits by educators from around the country and abroad, the school has published two books, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Teachers* in 2016 and *The Power of Culture* earlier this year. “No other school has ever produced two books written by its teachers,” Birbalsingh notes. “Individual teachers write books; you don’t typically have a *whole school* writing a book.”

This too seems like an extension of the importance the school places on imparting knowledge over student-led enquiry and exploration. To the charge that such approaches may work to stifle students’ creativity, Birbalsingh offers the following: “Creativity is founded in knowledge. You can’t be creative or independently-minded about something you know nothing about.

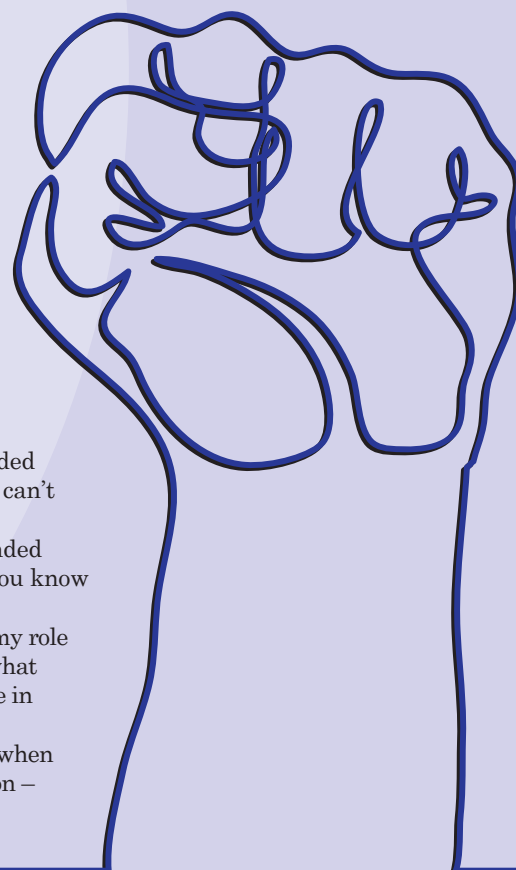
“I’ve always felt my role is to demonstrate what excellence looks like in education, and I’m extremely creative when it comes to education –

I’m an education radical, but only because I know the area really well. It’s only possible to do that when you’re very knowledgeable about something and succeed.”

Above all, though, Birbalsingh is keen to clear up one particular misconception: “There’s this myth that says *we love being horrible to children*. What teacher wants to be horrible to a child? Some teachers might think they’re being nice for letting a student off, but in the end, when that child doesn’t learn how to read, you’re the one who’s failed them and denied him or her the opportunity of receiving a free education and doing something with it.”



Michaela: *The Power of Culture* is available now (John Catt, £16); for more information, visit [mcsbrent.co.uk](http://mcsbrent.co.uk) or follow Katharine Birbalsingh at @Miss\_Snuffy





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## CLASSROOM VOICES

# “We can find positives in the pandemic”

COVID-19 has saddled the international teaching community with considerable disruption and uncertainty, but also an opening to improve things for the better, says **Julia Knight**

I don't think anyone has been immune to the impact of coronavirus. It's placed enormous pressures on every sector, as governments and authorities react to the social and economic impact of lockdown on countries around the world. And yet, I also wonder if there might actually be some benefits in the way coronavirus has reshaped and reframed global education.

Here in Bahrain, we went into lockdown early. The government has been highly praised for its handling of the pandemic, but there's always the risk that one or more of the plates they're spinning will drop. Those of us based at international schools remain nervous of news regarding mandated closures and overnight advice that has to be implemented with immediate effect. Senior management teams are locked in a continuous cycle of reviewing and reacting to guidance sent their way, leaving them with little time to assess the wider impact of coronavirus on learning in all its forms, be that blended, synchronous or asynchronous.

## Best laid plans

School leaders here and elsewhere have planned meticulously for the full reopening of their settings, six months after they were closed, as best as they can. Given the transient nature of international school communities, they rely heavily on stability within sectors such as aviation and finance.

We've seen much of the expatriate workforce placed on unpaid leave or furloughed, and benefits such as school places removed from contracts. Many families have felt the squeeze of redundancy and financial constraints and taken the decision to relocate

to homelands where healthcare and education services are freely provided. International schools have therefore begun to scramble for new students amid lowering rolls, wary of the rise in private school closures around the world.

However, we've also fielded lots of interest from families looking for a smaller form of education provision that affords children time to learn through play, and to enjoy the outside as much as is possible in the closing days of the desert summer heat.

## Shifting priorities

Many parents' priorities have shifted from obsessing over academics to deep concerns regarding their children's wellbeing, especially the friendships and social experiences that school enables.

It's my belief that we can find positives in the pandemic; that children globally will have learned new skills in lockdown. For instance, reception and Y1 teachers have reported an uptick in speech and socialising skills. A growing number

of children are now learning how to bake, draw, paint and ride bicycles, among myriad of other forms of development that aren't tested, tracked or traced by traditional curricula and assessments. Never underestimate the power of a sibling argument for developing conflict management, self confidence and debating skills...

There will, of course, be many children without access to the opportunities described above, which is why returning to school is vitally important for them.

## Managing expectations

The cancellation of exams for older students and relaxing of formal assessments has afforded educators time to rethink the necessity of assessments that can take a toll on children's wellbeing and constrict opportunities for learning.

In fact, it could be that this pandemic is presaging the type of curriculum and skills we'll need for a future in which resilience, critical thinking, leadership, courage and bold decision-making will be needed more than ever.

Over the past few weeks we've observed something of a harmonious merging between the academic and pastoral aspects of school life, as parents have come

to recognise both as being equally important. Looking ahead from here, we may well see a much more positive educational experience for future generations start to take shape.

And if some of those plates get dropped in the process, chances are they're the ones we never really needed anyway...

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julia Knight has been an international teacher since 2012, and is currently vice principal at a school in Bahrain; follow her at @KnightWilliams



# What do your heads of year actually do?

Most secondary schools have them, but it's not always clear what a head of year's pastoral responsibilities should involve, says **Stephen Lane**...

**I** love being a head of year (HoY), fraught though it is with the emotional carnage of childhood or, in my Key Stage 3 context, that vicious twilight zone of the emergent teenager.

It's difficult to list all the things that we actually do in pastoral leadership roles – to precisely articulate the nuance of the situations that might arise, to catalogue the multitudinous decisions we have to make on a daily basis, to index the infinite complexities of the endless variations in social, emotional and mental wellbeing that our students experience.

And then there's the school context. Whilst there are, no doubt, a hundred commonalities across diverse school communities, there are surely thousands of context-dependent needs and demands that form tutors, heads of year and pastoral leaders must try to understand and negotiate in order to best serve those in our care.

Nevertheless, there's obviously a need to define the role of HoY (or pastoral leader), if only in order that such posts can be advertised and qualified in job descriptions. So how would you do it? If you were to write the job description for a HoY role, what would you include? And, perhaps

more interestingly, what would you omit?

## Sloganised managerialism

Perusing the job adverts and accompanying descriptions on the *Tes* website is revealing. Many reflect a desire to find someone who can 'motivate' people; who shows 'enthusiasm, sensitivity, resilience and strong interpersonal skills'; who is 'inspirational'. Of course, they must also be 'an outstanding and talented practitioner' because everyone must be 'outstanding'. It's a word which has probably done more harm to the teaching profession than any other.

The problem with this kind of language – or jargon – as it appears in many of these adverts is that it's a form of sloganised managerialism full of clichés so cold they've been rendered ultimately meaningless. Search for the term 'passion' in teaching job adverts and behold the banality. This kind of wording says nothing about the job. Sure, it presents a kind of idealised set of aims, including the desire to improve 'Young people's life chances', but there's nothing much there in terms of specifics.

Job descriptions will further often include a lot of 'coordination', ensuring

'student progress' and reviewing attendance data. Whilst these tasks are perfectly reasonable and important, it strikes me that they're somewhat ... administrative, managerial, dry. There's also nothing there about commitment to professional growth or learning, and nothing at all about developing research, or evidence-informed policy or practice.

## 'Wiping noses and kicking butts'

It could be argued that such job descriptions perpetuate what Caroline Lodge described in 2008 as "dysfunctional interpretations" of the role of HoY, "using the system for administration, as a watered-down welfare service, or for behaviour management."

Lodge goes on to present a phrase used by a group of headteachers with whom she was working which she claims "poignantly captures two of these distortions – 'wiping noses and kicking butts'." Lodge articulates frustration at the notion of the HoY role being about behaviour management, and the notion that we perhaps ought to be moving beyond a view of the pastoral as simply 'wiping noses and kicking butts' is one I can support.

Despite the vastness of all that 'the pastoral'

encompasses, it's nonetheless valuable to draw out some of these strands in an attempt to define what a pastoral leadership role might involve. I'd recommend periodically writing a list of what your role entails – this is a useful grounding exercise that can help to refocus your priorities during hectic periods and identify any areas where you might legitimately ask for support or delegate to others, such as form tutors.

Better still, producing such a list in conjunction with colleagues might help foster a collegial approach to pastoral work that would likely benefit the team and, most importantly, the children in your care. (See 'My pastoral list' for mine.)

Helpfully, the National Association for Pastoral Care in Education (NAPCE) has composed its own guidance for pastoral support in the form of a long list (see [bit.ly/ts97-napce](http://bit.ly/ts97-napce)). The NAPCE does a decent job of encapsulating the plethora of particulars involved. It also succeeds, I think, in traversing the potential false dichotomy between the pastoral and the academic. It should be fairly obvious to most teachers that there's a symbiotic relationship between the two.

There's also a strong emphasis in the NAPCE guidelines on personal development. It's worth noting, of course, that Ofsted's Education

**"Everyone who works with children should have safeguarding as their first and last thought"**



Inspection Framework includes very specific references to learners' personal development. Indeed, personal development is one of the four key areas against which inspectors will make judgements.

### Navigating the ocean

The pastoral is a vast ocean of sometimes perilous waters, and having a set of guidelines such as those offered by the NAPCE can help us navigate them. However, it's also useful to have a macro view – an overriding sense of the purpose of any pastoral role. In his 2019 book *Leading on Pastoral Care*, Daniel Sobel writes, "Whether you are a middle leader, working as a head of year or head of key stage or are a senior leader responsible for pastoral care across your school, the main focus of your role is to provide effective care for the welfare, wellbeing and overall success of the students in your school."

Sobel goes on to provide this rather neat key takeaway: "The most important aspect of the pastoral leadership role is to enable students to participate. No matter what your job description says, this is your fundamental purpose and your key to success, and can only be achieved through understanding".

Like 'form tutor', the term 'head of year' yields little in searches of the academic literature. I think this probably reflects the varied nature of the role, but it's interesting to note that there hasn't been much work done to explore the nature, purpose and impact of this ubiquitous role. Every secondary school has heads of year, even allowing for variations in nomenclature, such as 'year team leader'.

Some schools use 'vertical' tutoring, with form groups made up of students from different year groups. This structure is intended to encourage social cohesion across age groups, enable older students to act as mentors and role models for younger students, and reduce workload for teachers when it comes to report cycles. Schools have reported that vertical tutoring has reduced instances of bullying, amongst other positive effects.

In my own experience, however, this system creates mini-cliques or enclaves within form groups, with Y7 students all sitting together and so on. And far from reducing workload, it meant I had far more mental plates to spin with regard to the differing demands of the year groups, such as options for Year 9 and GCSE revision sessions for Year 11.

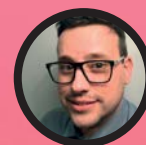
In my current setting year groups are relatively

## MY PASTORAL LIST

- Safeguarding
- Academic performance
- Behaviour
- Wellbeing
- PSHE education
- Assemblies
- Counselling
- Mentoring
- Safeguarding

No, that's not an error. I spent some time mithering over whether 'safeguarding' should be the first thing on my list or the last, and decided it should probably be both. Everyone who works with children should have safeguarding as their first and last thought.

small, so the HoY role in fact covers multiple year groups. We have a head of Y5–6, a head of Y7–9, a head of Y10–11 and a head of sixth form. These are middle leadership roles, the nomenclature for which is 'operational leadership'. Whatever this role is called in your school, it's important to develop a clear idea about what pastoral leadership entails within your context. Once you've established this, you can begin to think about how you might develop an informed approach to each of the aspects involved.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen Lane has worked in education for over two decades in both subject leadership and pastoral leadership roles. Follow him at @sputniksteve

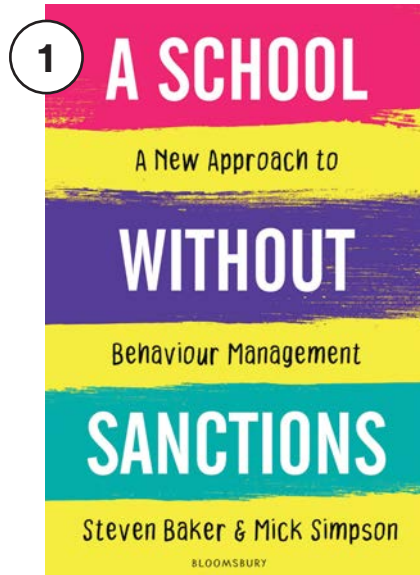
This article is based on an edited extract from his book *Beyond Wiping Noses: Building an informed approach to pastoral leadership in schools* (Crown House Publishing, £16.99)

# What's New?

Our pick of the latest solutions and innovations for secondary education

## Behaviour rethought

*A School Without Sanctions* offers an innovative approach to behaviour management in schools, prioritising compassion and behaviour modification over punishment. Drawing on their award-winning methods, Steven Baker and Mick Simpson explain why challenging behaviour occurs and provide a toolbox of non-confrontational approaches that will benefit the whole school community. Rooted in neuroscience and evolutionary psychology, this book will revolutionise the way you think about behaviour management, help boost student mental health and academic achievement, and protect teacher wellbeing. Visit [bloomsbury.com/uk/education](https://bloomsbury.com/uk/education) to find out more.



## In the know

The InDependent Diabetes Trust offers support and information to people with diabetes, their families and health professionals, lending a friendly, understanding ear in tough times. IDDT supplies Information Packs to parents and teachers so that they can understand the needs of children with diabetes in school, and provides much-needed aid to children with diabetes in developing countries. Diabetes can cause serious long-term complications and a cure remains elusive. IDDT funds essential research and relies entirely on voluntary donations.

For more details, contact **01604 622 837** or visit [iddtinternational.org](https://iddtinternational.org)



## Reconnecting communities

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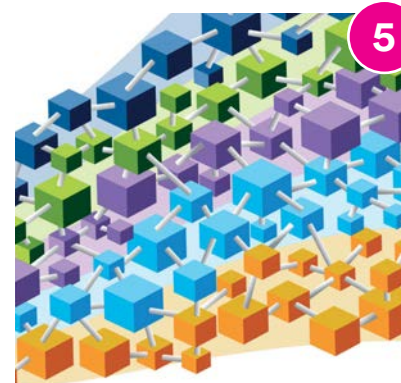
## Jumpers for joy

Listen up – Coach Christmas here! It's my job to get YOU fired up for Save the Children's Christmas Jumper Day on Friday 11th December.

This year's been not so good for loads of kids and grown-ups. When it comes to having fun, we've got some catching up to do. And seeing as it's the end of the whole year, I know you'll give it 100%.

Wanna know the bit I love most? Every sweater can help children change the future. For good! That's pretty cool.

So jumpers on, people! Let's do this! Visit [savethechildren.org.uk/christmas-jumper-day](https://savethechildren.org.uk/christmas-jumper-day) to find out more.



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# BANQUO

**Helen Mears** examines the role played in *Hamlet* by the loyal, steadfast and doomed Banquo...

*"Good sir, why do you start;  
and seem to fear*

*Things that do sound so fair?"*

(Act 1, Scene 3, lines 52-3)

Immediately after the Weird Sisters speak their prophecies Banquo notices the strength of Macbeth's reaction. He seems to react nervously to the suggestion he could become King. This reaction may be the root of Banquo's suspicions after the murder of Duncan.

*"Were such things here as we do  
speak about?*

*Or have we eaten on the  
insane root*

*That takes the reason prisoner?"*

(Act 1, Scene 3, lines 81-83)

Banquo's own reaction to the Weird Sisters is to question his sanity and wonder whether the witches existed at all. The 'insane root' was hemlock, which was believed to cause madness in those who consumed it.

*"What, can the devil  
speak true?"*

(Act 1, Scene 3, line 105)

On hearing that Macbeth is to be named Thane of Cawdor, Banquo's immediate and natural reaction is to link the witches to the devil. To the Jacobean, a witch was someone who had sworn an allegiance to Satan, so his response would resonate with the contemporary audience.

*"And oftentimes,  
to win us to our harm  
The instruments of  
darkness tell us truths,  
Win us with honest trifles,  
to betray's*

*In deepest consequence."*

(Act 1, Scene 3, lines 123-125)

In the brief, closeted conversation that Macbeth and Banquo have after the revelation that he is to be Thane of Cawdor, Banquo warns Macbeth about listening to the Weird Sisters. He explains that those in league with the devil may tell a small truth to lure a listener in, before leading them to graver consequences. His warning proves prescient.

*"This guest of summer,  
The temple-haunting  
martlet, does approve,  
By his loved mansionry,  
that the heaven's breath  
Smells wooingly here"*

(Act 1, Scene 6, lines 3-5)

Shakespeare uses dramatic irony at the beginning of Act 1, Scene 6, as both Banquo and Duncan comment on the pleasant aspect of Macbeth's castle at Dunsinane. They are both soon to become Macbeth's victims.

## Who is he?

Banquo is Macbeth's friend and a fellow captain in the Scottish Army, which has been fighting a rebellion against King Duncan. He is with Macbeth when they encounter the Weird Sisters after a battle, and hears them prophesise that Macbeth will be King. Intended as a foil or contrast to Macbeth, he remains loyal to Duncan and becomes a victim of his friend's campaign to take the Crown

*"A heavy summons lies  
like lead upon me,  
And yet I would not sleep:"*

(Act 2, Scene 1, lines 6-7)

Banquo's observation that he's unable to sleep because of the dark thoughts he's having is interesting, because it foreshadows the trouble that Macbeth and his wife will have sleeping following the murders they're responsible for. The implication is that Banquo is already fearful of what Macbeth might do to become King.

*"Thou hast it now: king,  
Cawdor, Glamis, all,  
As the weird women  
promised, and, I fear,  
Thou play'st most foully for't"*

(Act 3, Scene 1, lines 1-3)

Fittingly, Banquo's final thoughts are of saving his son, Fleance. In the early 1600s it was believed that Fleance was an ancestor of James I, and so in creating the decent, loyal, Banquo, Shakespeare is flattering the new King of England as well as providing a good foil to Macbeth's evil.



**OUR EXPERT:** Helen Mears is an English teacher who sits on the education committee of the British Shakespeare Association.



# WORDS OF REASSURANCE

**Jonathan Charlesworth** explores the importance of language when it comes to supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pupils in secondary schools

**I**n September this year, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that “From next summer, secondary schools in which children do not learn about same-sex, transgender and bisexual couples are likely to have their leadership judged as ‘requires improvement’ by inspectors.”

That being the case, many will be eager to revisit how best to support lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils in their school and determined to challenge homophobic and biphobic bullying. Any such plans will involve revising policies and practices, but where’s the best place to start?

## Getting the words right

If you haven’t already, I’d urge readers to convene a few student engagement sessions. While it’s tempting to seek the counsel of your more articulate Y11s, I’d suggest you make your first port of call your Y7s – you’ll find them to be a surprisingly enlightened source of invaluable information. After that, move through the year groups, gathering a mix of contemporaneous experience as you go, concluding with input from your sixth formers where applicable.

You’ll also want to speak and write using language that’s readily understood and accepted around your school, employing a lexicon used by numerous bodies and agencies such as the NHS, social services,

CAMHS and teaching unions. Words to describe sexuality include ‘heterosexual’, ‘lesbian’, ‘gay’ and ‘bisexual’. ‘Transgender’ (‘trans’ is widely used and accepted) describes matters relating to gender identity, and it’s important to speak with your pupils about this topic too. I’d recommend undertaking this work separately, however, as there are discrete issues concerning gender identity that warrant their own conversations and focus.

Once you’re confident that you understand the literal and historic background of the aforementioned words, organise your pupil engagement sessions. If you decide that your school needs to amend its vocabulary, now is your opportunity to explore this.

It’s important that we ‘get the words right’ for a number of reasons. For a start, if we’re using such words subjectively, confusion will reign and potentially result in pupils and staff

alike getting upset upon hearing words they consider to be offensive. Don’t say ‘straight’ when you mean ‘heterosexual’, because what’s the opposite of straight? Bent, right? Not good. Avoid ‘dyke’ as a synonym for lesbian, and at all costs avoid using ‘queer’ to mean lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people collectively.

## Emotional potency

Let’s pause for a moment to consider the emotional potency that certain words can have. How often have you heard the term ‘the ‘N’ word’ used by people anxious to avoid offence by saying the word in full? The potency of that particular word was recently illustrated when the BBC’s regional news programme *Points West* generated national headlines, after one of its (white) reporters repeated verbatim verbal abuse used during a racially-aggravated attack.

A term that’s used much more ambiguously in wider society is ‘queer’. It’s a word that’s politically charged, prompting visceral reactions and outrage from many, but one that’s also fulsomely embraced by others, particularly the young and sections of the media. Some users maintain they’ve reclaimed it. Others believe that by deploying it they’re being inclusive and respectful of diversity.

Now, in this former English teacher’s understanding, words beginning with ‘re’ describe something occurring again – *reissue*, *revise*, *rewrite*. It follows that to reclaim something, it has to have been yours in the first place. Gay and transgender people didn’t originally coin the term ‘queer’ to define or describe themselves. Certain heterosexual people did that to denote their loathing of, and disrespect for, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.





If someone wishes to now *adopt* or *appropriate* 'queer' for their own purposes, that's their choice. But I'd implore you to never include it in your school's policy, or use it the belief that you're being in any way 'inclusive' or worse, 'woke'.

By the same token, if a woman – or, indeed, a teenage girl – chooses to call herself a 'dyke' that's entirely her prerogative, but again, don't include it in your school policy, as doing so amounts to granting licence to all and sundry to call any lesbian girl or woman a dyke. And there will be many gay girls and women left thoroughly unimpressed by that happening to them.

### Defence and justification

Surrounding all this is the fact that language is, literally, policed. Should someone maliciously call an individual or a group any combination of 'queer', 'dyke', 'faggot', 'batty boy', 'lezzer', 'poof' or 'trannie', that will amount to a hate incident or, depending on the circumstances,

potentially a hate crime. Stick to the far less emotive adjectives and nouns of 'heterosexual', 'lesbian', 'gay', 'bisexual' and 'transgender'.

While we're on the topic of 'words best avoided', using 'heterosexual' is preferable to using 'straight'. Straight's antonyms include *bent*, *crooked*, *warped* – hardly helpful to any lesbian, gay or bisexual young people wanting to maintain their self-respect whilst navigating their emerging sexuality, however outwardly self-confident many might appear to be. Often, that's because they feel they need to be.

Interestingly, of the hundreds of children and young people in urban, suburban and rural settings that I interviewed for my book *How To Stop Homophobic and Biphobic Bullying*, the vast majority who agreed to talk to me were white. And if a student was Asian they would invariably be a girl. Time after time I heard pupils say that being out as lesbian, gay or bisexual meant having to constantly

explain, defend and justify themselves in response to questions like 'How do you know you're gay?'

"It's like you've got to be a world expert on all things LGBT+, and if you don't know all the answers to the questions you're being bombarded with, then you're faking it for attention. It's exhausting," sighed one Y10 girl to whom I spoke. That sentiment was reflected in many of the schools I visited.

### "Kids aren't stupid"

There was also the recurring sense that what SLT *thought* was happening in their school or college didn't match pupils' lived experience. "Kids aren't stupid," I heard one Y11 boy fume. "They know to keep schtum when there are teachers about. It's when we're on our own that they lay into you with their snide insults and personal remarks. If you report it, things escalate quickly and go to places you never wanted them to, with parents getting involved and control being removed from your hands. Sometimes it's just easier to avoid all that aggro."

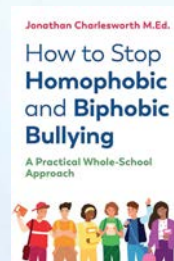
Challenging homophobic bullying effectively will help pave the way for other forms of school bullying to fall away and eventually be rejected by your pupils. For

## CLARITY OF LANGUAGE

Across the areas of criminal justice, child protection and education, you'll find an array of bodies, organisations and agencies that make their use of LGBT terminology very clear in both their policies and practice.

It's helpful for schools to maintain consistency and continuity with wraparound services in order to promote shared understanding and mutual respect. Simple, universal terms are vital, especially for pupils with ESL. To assist with this, a page-length glossary produced by EACH containing clear definitions for 13 gender identity and sexuality terms can be downloaded from [teachwire.net/each-glossary](http://teachwire.net/each-glossary).

those based in schools which remain operational amid the COVID-19 pandemic, talk to colleagues about what Ofsted's stipulations will mean for you. Do you feel that your school is fully prepared to be appraised and assessed without any changes to its existing practices or policies?



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jonathan Charlesworth is the executive director of the charity Educational Action Challenging Homophobia (EACH), delivering training, consultancy and resources on LGBT+ matters to the corporate, statutory and charity sectors, and author of the book *How To Stop Homophobic and Biphobic Bullying: A practical whole-school approach* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers £19.99); for more information, visit [each.education](http://each.education) or follow @EACH\_UK



# “They see teenage girls as part of a ‘gynocracy’”

Writer and activist **Laura Bates** tells Callum Fauser why schools need to be cognisant of the risks posed to students by online groups promoting an extreme form of misogyny

**I**n Laura Bates’ recently published book, *Men Who Hate Women*, there’s a passage that ought to make the blood of school staff run cold:

“When I visit schools, extraordinary though it sounds, I frequently hear young people say that ‘rape is a compliment really’ or ‘crying is part of foreplay.’”

Subtitled *‘From Incels to Pickup Artists, The Truth About Extreme Misogyny and How It Affects Us All’*, the book looks at how groupings of men and male adolescents in the murkier quarters of the internet have, over the last decade or so, fostered a strain of modern misogyny – one characterised by deliberate provocation, violent language and a domineering attitude towards sexual relations – that’s increasingly shaping the views of men and boys in their everyday offline lives.

## Specific preconceptions

It’s a worldview which Bates, a journalist, feminist writer and campaigner, has explored for some time. In 2012 she began the ‘Everyday Sexism’ project – a website (everydaysexism.com) at which women and girls could submit written accounts of their first-hand experiences with sexism and read accounts left by others.

The large volume of Everyday Sexism responses left by teenage girls subsequently prompted Bates to become a regular speaker at schools nationwide. Those

experiences form the basis of a chapter in the book headed ‘Men who don’t know that they hate women,’ in which Bates recounts her gradual realisation that the sexism she was attempting to discuss with students was evolving into something more insidious and more organised.

At some point within the last several years, Bates recalls, “I noticed a shift in the in the responses I was seeing in schools, particularly from teenage boys who seemed to have these specific preconceptions around feminism. They would cite false rape accusations, and claim that men were the real

online, from whom she would often receive a regular stream of offensive messages and threats stemming from her work on Everyday Sexism. This misogynist messaging wasn’t necessarily reaching the boys in question via direct contact, but through a range of intermediary spaces, such as bodybuilding forums, gaming websites, viral memes and YouTube videos.

The term Bates uses throughout the book to describe the wellspring of this misogynist mindset is ‘the manosphere’. She concedes that, “It’s quite an inexact,

philosophy is shared, down to the language they use.”

## Under the radar

In the book, Bates describes a form of online radicalisation that puts teenage boys under intense pressure to dehumanise their female peers and see them not as human beings with their own agency and desires, but as a homogenous group posing a dangerous threat.

“These communities are so effective at radicalisation that it becomes difficult to refute the arguments once boys have taken them on board,” she explains. “Implicit in the process is a warning that *the rest of the world doesn’t know these truths*. Attempts to counter what they’ve heard online with real world facts are often unsuccessful, because they see teenage girls as part of this ‘gynocracy’ that’s somehow stacked against them.”

As Bates sees it, extreme misogyny is taking hold in a growing number of schools and causing enormous harm to students’ interpersonal relationships, but in a way that frequently flies under the radar of teachers, leaders and policymakers: “The Prevent Strategy calls on teachers to be vigilant for signs of radicalisation and extremism in relation to other ideologies, but extreme misogyny barely registers,” she says. “Schools can’t pick up on it if they don’t even know it’s there. Organisations like the Good Lad Initiative (goodladinitiative.com) provide training and

**“Young women have been told by teachers ‘Boys will be boys’; ‘Take it as a compliment’ or ‘What were you wearing?’”**

victims of society, but I started to become really concerned when I’d hear the same arguments repeated almost verbatim by students at different schools around the country – often with the same false statistics used to back up their claims.”

## Defining the ‘manosphere’

Upon closer examination, Bates saw some distinct similarities between what she was hearing in schools and the arguments propounded by a number of extremist groups she had come into contact with

frustrating term that underplays the severity of what we’re talking about, but it’s typically used to describe a collection of universally male-dominated online and offline communities characterised by extreme misogynistic sentiment.

The examples she gives include incels [‘involuntary celibate’], pickup artists, and men’s rights activists. “These groups are distinct,” she notes, “but their relationships with one another are complex. There will often be resistance and conflict between them, but a lot of the underlying



support aimed at making teachers more aware of these groups and how they operate, which is a hugely important first step in tackling the problem.”

### ‘Boys will be boys’

I ask Bates if, in the course of her own efforts at drawing attention to the issue, she’s ever encountered pushback from teachers or leaders. Many might argue that the hyperconnected online manosphere might be a modern phenomenon, but that the pubescent suspicion, frustration, bafflement and attraction boys and girls can feel for

each other is as old as human biology itself.

“The ‘boys will be boys’ issue is something I’ve regularly heard reported by girls at some schools,” Bates says. “I often hear from young women who, when reporting sexual harassment at school to a teacher, will be variously told ‘Boys will be boys’; ‘He just likes you’; ‘Take it as a compliment’; or ‘What were you wearing?’ Variations on those attitudes definitely exist among teachers – as they do in any profession – and that’s problematic.”

## STREET SMART

A team at Nottingham Trent University has produced a set of teaching resources to accompany a research project examining the impact of street harassment on women and girls. Titled ‘Changing Minds: The Real Impact of Street Harassment’ the resources include discussion topics and activities linked to the KS3-KS5 PSHE programme of study, plus a short comic based on genuine incidents of street harassment experienced by men and women in the Nottingham area.

For more details, visit [bit.ly/ts97-misogyny](http://bit.ly/ts97-misogyny)

Beyond that, Bates’ experiences of resistance from school staff have tended to concern the perceived radicalism of her message: “It’s seen as ‘feminism gone too far’, to the point of being

controversial. Some schools are reluctant to risk upsetting parents by being seen as attacking boys.”

If she were to thus envisage a world in which extreme misogyny and its attendant issues had been eradicated, what would that look like in practice? What would be her idealised picture of relations between girls and boys at school?

“We’d see relationships between individuals and behaviours that weren’t dictated by gender, because at the moment, boys’ and girls’ experiences of school are radically different. I’d like to see that change,” Bates concludes. “It would be extraordinarily freeing, for both girls and boys, to be released from those gender stereotypes that are so suffocating. It would enable them to explore a huge, much wider range of possibilities in terms of self-determination and self-expression, and girls would feel freer to behave in schools without feeling that they’re constantly at risk of judgement.”



*Men Who Hate Women: From Incels to Pickup Artists, The Truth About Extreme Misogyny and How It Affects Us All* is available now, published by Simon & Schuster

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# THE TS GUIDE TO... REVISION

With the road ahead to next year's GCSEs looking distinctly uncertain, our experts consider what schools should be paying attention to in the months ahead

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## IN FIGURES: 2020 GCSE OUTCOMES

78%

of non-disadvantaged pupils achieved a grade 4 or above in English and maths at GCSE, compared to 56% of disadvantaged pupils

70%

of boys achieved English and maths GCSEs at grade 4 or above, compared to 76% of girls

51%

of all pupils achieved grade 5s and above in English and maths GCSEs

Source: Survey of 1,216 schools by FFT Education Datalab

**3** FREE LESSON PLANS  
FOR YOUR SCHOOL

### 1. LET STUDENTS WRITE IN A GENRE THEY LOVE (KS4 ENGLISH)

Creative writing accounts for a large proportion of marks in all English Language GCSEs, and it can sometimes feel as though we have to put technical accuracy before student enjoyment. This lesson will give students autonomy over their creative writing, because young people are more likely to write beautifully when emulating authors and writing styles they enjoy reading.

**DOWNLOAD AT:** [bit.ly/97special1](https://bit.ly/97special1)

### 2. COINING QUERIES (KS4 MATHS)

Mathematics teachers often say that 'maths is all around us', but how often does the stimulus for a mathematics lesson come from something in the real world? In this lesson, learners are invited to ask mathematical questions about a photograph taken in a car park.

**DOWNLOAD AT:** [bit.ly/97special2](https://bit.ly/97special2)

### 3. NATURE BY NUMBERS (KS4 SCIENCE)

Bring biology and maths together with some truly absorbing activities involving Fibonacci, fractals, and more besides. In this lesson, ideas about nature and numbers are presented with strong cross-curricular links between biology and mathematics at KS4. Then show your students how science relates to the wider world, bringing in themes such as fraud prevention, data encryption, art and architecture...

**DOWNLOAD AT:** [bit.ly/97special3](https://bit.ly/97special3)

# MAXIMISING LESSON TIME

As COVID-19 upends the usual Y11 preparations and milestones, **Adam Riches** looks at how teachers can make the best of use of every minute in the classroom

**T**ime pressures are now an issue like never before. For those of us in classrooms, the learning we've lost has added considerably more weight to the already heavy burden of curriculum pressure most of us are under. It's a situation that contrives to add ever more stress and anxiety to the process of preparing and delivering learning – but all need not be lost.

Effective and efficient practice can maximise lesson time. Getting the 'what' and 'how' right is vital to succeeding, and by dropping some more time-hungry pedagogical approaches, it's possible to rapidly streamline your teaching. Let's look at some surefire ways of ensuring you get the most out of every precious minute you spend with your classes...

## Start where you left off

Good routine is paramount here. If students know your expectations from the outset, the tone of the lesson will be set. Keep your lesson starts short, sweet and relevant.

Briefly revisiting learning from the previous session, previous week and previous month will help students to build schema. As a rule, I like to aim for five minutes of thinking and doing and two minutes of feeding back and discussing, so that new learning commences around seven minutes into the lesson. The number of minutes is somewhat

arbitrary, but the general idea is that lesson starts should be short and focused.

As well as settling students into the learning environment, a structured start to the lesson will do much to set the tone for what follows. Ensure the lesson's main objective is displayed on the board when students enter, and set the expectation that they need to be getting on with the tasks set from the moment they sit down. The beginning and end of lessons are when most time is lost.

## Summerise phases with hinge questions

Once new learning is happening, you need to make sure that students get what's going on. Moving forwards too fast can create gaps which in turn lead to greater difficulty and confusion further down the road.

Summarising each phase of the lesson with some kind of check will allow you to quickly ascertain, understand and stem any arising misconceptions. It's less about students getting things exactly right and more about you mopping up where needed.

My preference is to use quick, two-minute tasks

such as composing a well-formulated sentence to explain X or Y, either in writing or expressed verbally. When planning, make sure you know what this vital hinge question should be, because it will be your temperature check. Think, 'What's the key take away?'

## Model, model, model

I can't emphasise enough how important it is to model if you want to teach effectively and efficiently. The idea that 'students need to discover for themselves' will only produce a time drain, given the quality

of responses you're likely to receive. That approach arguably has its place, but direct instruction rules here. You're the expert, and giving your students a blueprint to follow will help with both their cognitive load and your time limitations.

Live modelling is especially effective. Providing a commentary adds to the metacognitive potential and will allow students to feel the processes they need to follow to succeed. Yes,

**“You'll want to ensure that their learning journey reaches the destination on time, as planned”**





you'll need both good subject knowledge and confidence in what the exam content will consist of, but if you're looking for ways to improve your practice, this is a good place to start.

Premise models are okay too, but they can sometimes feel manufactured and students won't get the same level of instruction from them. They can also take time to create, without producing tangible time savings in lessons, which is something to think about.

### Embed useful scaffolds

Similar to modelling, scaffolds allow for extra task-specific support. The difference is that scaffolds allow you to build towards independent practice.

Well-paced scaffolds can help save time by supporting students through more challenging tasks.

When you're trying to keep the difficulty desirable in the face of time restrictions, scaffolding will let you do both at once. The scaffolded resource can support the learning, leaving you to focus on those for whom the resource isn't helpful.

Scaffolds needn't be complicated. Try breaking your scaffolds into two categories: those that support on a detailed level – say, a word bank or sentence starter – and those that can be used to support on an overview level, such as a paragraph structure framework. Whether you decide to prepare these ahead of time and hand them out or display them in front of the class, you'll eventually need to remove them as time progresses.

My advice is to keep your scaffold format and wording consistent. This allows students to signpost and learn the scaffolds more easily, make better use of them during independent work and ultimately develop a

better understanding of the relevant process. Calling a scaffold 'key words' one day and 'vocabulary bank' the next will soon become confusing.

### Check for understanding

Take every opportunity to ensure students' learning stays on track. You'll ultimately want to ensure that their learning journey reaches the destination on time, as planned. You don't want to take any massive detours – small adjustments throughout are a much better way to go.

Depending on the situation in your local area, given the present climate, this may be much harder than it normally would be. That said, questioning, talk and discussion are great ways of checking understanding from afar.

Use what time you have to build a picture of any misconceptions and decide whether to address these during the lesson itself or afterwards using some form of feedback. I like to address anything that's important for the present lesson immediately, and note down misconceptions that might cause wider issues before addressing these in dedicated feedback time. This helps keep the learning focused.

### Plan for talk

Planning in talk time will give your lesson phases value and direction. More often than not, talk tasks are only partially planned. You'll want to consider the specific instructions, outcomes and value, and make sure that students are spending this time in the lesson wisely.

Allowing a 15-minute pair discussion would be a travesty. Peak talk time is 2 minutes, and students need to be doing something focused with their talking.

Planning your talk time around specific windows will enable you to build a culture around silence – which is much easier to achieve when you're clearly in control of the learning talk.

### Allow for independent application

You delivering and students retaining knowledge is one thing, but we all know that the proof is in the pudding. Don't assume that what's been learnt can always be applied.

That's why you should give students time to independently apply what you've taught them. Not only does this complete the circle of learning, it also heightens the challenge and ensures that what's been learnt can be used in context. Knowing something doesn't necessarily mean you can translate it into the format required by an exam.

Take this opportunity to perform your final check for understanding. You may choose to take this work in or, if you're like me, trawl during the task for signs of misconceptions.

Time is a luxury we don't have when we're in the classroom, now more than ever. An effective teacher will ensure that learning happens as efficiently as possible. It's not about spending hours preparing and making resources; it's about working as smartly as possible, and keeping your pedagogy and planning sharp.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Riches is a senior leader for teaching and learning and author of the book *Teach Smarter: Efficient and Effective Strategies for Early Career Teachers* (£16.99, Routledge); follow him at @teachmrriches



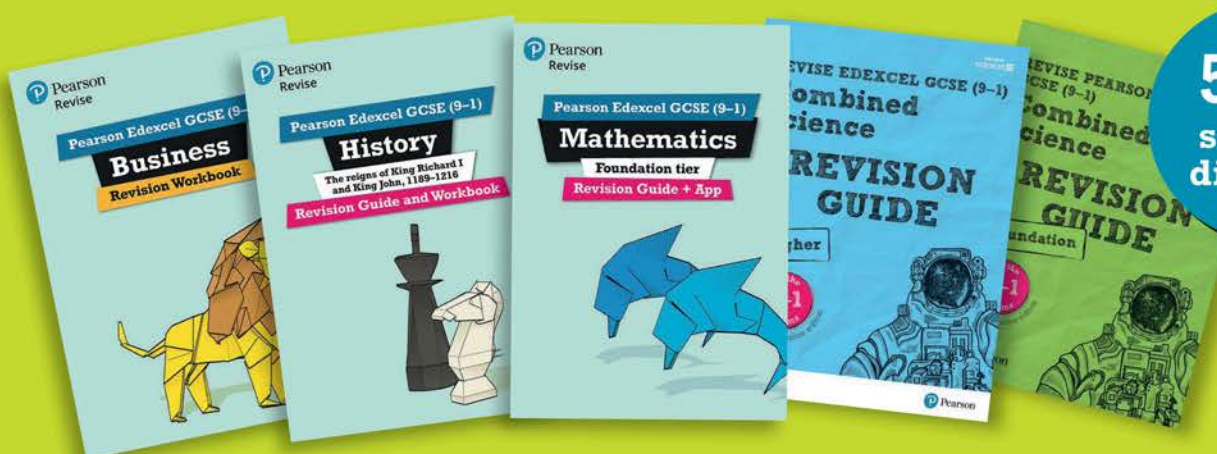
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# “Teachers can only do so much”

**Dr Mary Richardson** outlines five strategies for navigating the learning gaps and uncertainty schools can expect to encounter over the coming academic year

## 1 Go back to basics

*In the short term, there should be a record of some kind for every child that clearly outlines what they have or haven't missed at this point in time. It's then a case of mapping that to your expectations as a professional – what you know of each student, how they work, what drives them and the things they find challenging.*

*Doing that will involve a huge amount of work, but it's the only practical way to make a good evaluation of where someone is. The key thing is to look at how your students learn – what will drive their learning forward from this point onwards?*

## 2 Don't focus on the things you can't predict

The tricky thing is that we're not currently sure what's going to happen with next year's GCSE assessments. I work with a number of assessment providers and they're all waiting on a steer as to what the arrangements will be as much as everyone else. Will we even have exams, or can we expect a combination of different assessments?

Were I a teacher trying to plan for the year ahead, right now I'd be identifying any areas that can be taught as a whole and which won't be reliant on future developments in the spring and summer terms. In some respects, it simply won't be possible for students to properly 'catch up'. A line may need to be drawn under certain areas where it's evident that students have simply missed too much in the summer term for that to be feasible. Concentrate instead on what you can do, and focus on delivering that.

## 3 Remember that this isn't normal

The government seem to be trying to normalise a situation that's highly abnormal, just as we saw with the grading of exams last summer. What particularly concerns me is next year's student cohort, who I believe will be the ones hit hardest by the wider impact of COVID.

We ought to consider the kind of evidence we'll need to support strong evaluations of student learning. Personally, I'd look at employing some kind of continuous assessment process, because I fail to see any benefit in forcing this year's KS4 cohort through a system from which a big chunk has been missed. Teachers should be allowed to focus on what they're great at, which is appraising their pupils in a range of different ways. This would make for a much fairer system of assessment.

## 4 Give your students breathing space

There's a risk in emphasising that the year ahead will be all about trying to catch up and prepare for GCSEs. We shouldn't lose sight of the good to be had from pausing, taking a breather and perhaps asking ourselves what school is actually for – just passing GCSEs, or for encouraging young people to be invested in their learning and getting them excited about the role different subjects might play throughout the rest of their lives?

Some might dismiss that as a liberal, 'soft' position, but I don't believe it is. Exams are important, of course, but this year has vividly demonstrated that we can't carry on seeing exams as everything. We've had a warning – now there's a great opportunity to try something else.

## 5 Sometimes good enough is good enough

*We don't have to aim for outstanding all the time. That's something of a loaded term in schools, but the reality is that the profession as a whole can't perform at that level continually. Managers should look to communicate with their teams as frequently and clearly as possible. How do colleagues feel about what's happening? Does anyone feel isolated or concerned? Those considerations are crucial in situations like this, and can help you make better collective decisions over your future direction going forward.*

*Being more open with parents will relieve pressure on teachers and improve their working lives considerably – since they can only do so much.*



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Mary Richardson is an associate professor of educational assessment, and academic head of learning and teaching for the Department of Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment at UCL Institute of Education

# “THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS”

Who says students can't revise for English? **Zoe Enser** sets out the practices and strategies that will see them triumph in their assessments...

One of the most pernicious misconceptions that circulates around the English classroom is that there's no way to revise for the subject. This is closely followed by another pernicious myth that says 'There's no best way to revise'. Both claims are categorically false, but then what *is* the best way of getting students to know what they need to do once those English mocks start looming?

My first port of call is to hit them with science – if we understand why we're doing something, we're much more likely to invest in doing it. I tell students that when we revise, we're aiming to build schemas in the long-term memory. The act of revising brings information you've already learnt into your working memory, so that it can be used in a flexible way to answer new questions. That's why we need to ensure that said information has been covered in the first place, and that it's been stored properly.

## Start early

In practice, this means that revision in English needs to begin as early as possible – preferably right at the start of the course. Failing that (as is likely to be the case), we must ensure that certain knowledge is well and truly embedded, and that you know what your gaps are in order to fill them. There's little point in

missing key lessons on a topic and doing nothing about it; teachers are good at circling back round to information in a course, but if you keep missing every lesson on Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, your priority should be to read it and learn about it.

I model a few different techniques with students to ensure they're able to efficiently retrieve, reorganise and fill gaps, reflecting on the advice suggested by John Dunlosky's article 'Strengthening the Student Toolbox' (see [bit.ly/ts97-toolkit](https://bit.ly/ts97-toolkit)). I'm quick to move them away from busy and inefficient practices, like reading over the text, or using heavy streaks of highlighting without consideration of what said highlighting is for. Instead, I use regular, short sessions to complete the below activities:

## Revision clocks

This involves giving students an outline of a clock, divided into 12 blank segments (A3 size works well). They then add information to the segments, taking 5 minutes to complete each one (out of the 60 minutes represented by the clock), thus breaking their revision down into manageable chunks. This

activity can work well in any subject, though for English I'll get the students to complete revision clocks based on key themes, concepts and characters. It's important to not cover too wide a topic, or else the completed segments can end up being rather superficial.

I'll get them to practise doing this in class after modelling the process, so that they can see how it works. I'll insist that they spend their full allocation of time really thinking hard about the concept, rather than moving on to another topic too quickly. This is done 'closed book', so that they're encouraged to retrieve as much as possible. Since they're the ones selecting the information they want to include, they're drawing on a generative learning process.

Having spent time focusing on the concept, we'll then look at an exemplar, perhaps developed as part of the learning process, and

note where the gaps are. This demands willpower and hard work, but if the students understand the science involved, they'll be much more likely to work on it without giving up.





### Flash cards

Similarly useful across a range of different subjects, these are especially handy for internalising bodies of knowledge and key English terminology. Writing flashcards for specific texts that contain key quotes relating to, say, certain themes and ideas can be a powerful revision process in itself. You can then couple this with the principles of spaced or distributed practice, getting students to organise the cards into different piles they can return to on different days. If you can ensure that the information on the cards is indeed stored, you'll have the makings of something really powerful.

Remember that it's important for students to see where they're struggling and where their knowledge gaps are – allow *them* to decide which chapters in a text to return to, or what vocabulary they may need to revisit.

### Cornell notes

This note-taking system can be a really useful way of helping students organise their revision notes, while also providing them with opportunities to self-test. It can work particularly well when reading through chapters of a text, watching

**“If we understand why we’re doing something, then we’re much more likely to invest in doing it.”**

a Shakespeare play or listening to a lecture. Students simply divide a page into three sections – notes in a larger main section, key questions or revision topics down one side and an optional space at the bottom for summing up.

The main notes might comprise bullet points, sentences, diagrams and maps or some other generative activity that's reliant on selecting, organising and integrating information into their schema. The space at the bottom is there to provide a quick summary that students can use to review key topic information. If, for example, students were to produce a page of Cornell notes for each poem in a series, chapter of a book or character in a play, they would eventually have their very own home-grown

revision booklet, complete with quiz questions at the side of every page for 'check and answer' purposes. Doing this will also let teachers quickly check if there are any misconceptions.

### What about language?

The above revision techniques are easy to apply to literature topics, where there's a clear body of knowledge to accompany each text, but they can seem less practical for the largely unseen texts and tasks of English language study.

However, language still involves learning specific vocabulary – the structural or rhetorical devices specific to non-fiction texts, for example. There are also processes when approaching language questions that are quite distinct from essay-style literature responses, which students need to be familiar with. Self-testing techniques are still very much relevant when it comes to achieving the fluency and agility demanded by language papers in the exam room.

Students should get used to completing deliberate practise tasks for both language and literature topics. They should take the opportunity to read and annotate, plan their responses and answer longer questions as part of their revision. It can be useful to turn these into distinct homework tasks and encourage the systematic approaches above, so that they're able to focus on knowledge and retrieval – something which will help them considerably when they come to attempt

those longer exam responses that are designed bring their knowledge together.

Whatever they end up doing, your students need to be making sure that information is being retrieved, reconsidered and then stored all over again. The more they do this, the more they'll ultimately retain. The more intricate their schema, the more the new information will adhere to the old.

More importantly, good revision relies on elements of metacognition. Students need to be aware of what they have available to them in relation to a text and the knowledge they possess. They then need to be clear where they may have gaps, and ensure they have the materials they need to restudy, be it lesson notes or revision materials you've provided.

Above all, they must be clear that they'll need to test themselves repeatedly to ensure this information remains available to them when they need it – not just tomorrow, or next week, but during the mock, the actual exam in summer and any time after that. This calls for a careful and systematic approach, and will involve hard work. There are no shortcuts.

It doesn't matter if their revision materials look pretty (unless that makes it more likely that they'll actually use them). But they will need to be focused, designed for regular practice and able to get the relevant information stored in their heads for life.

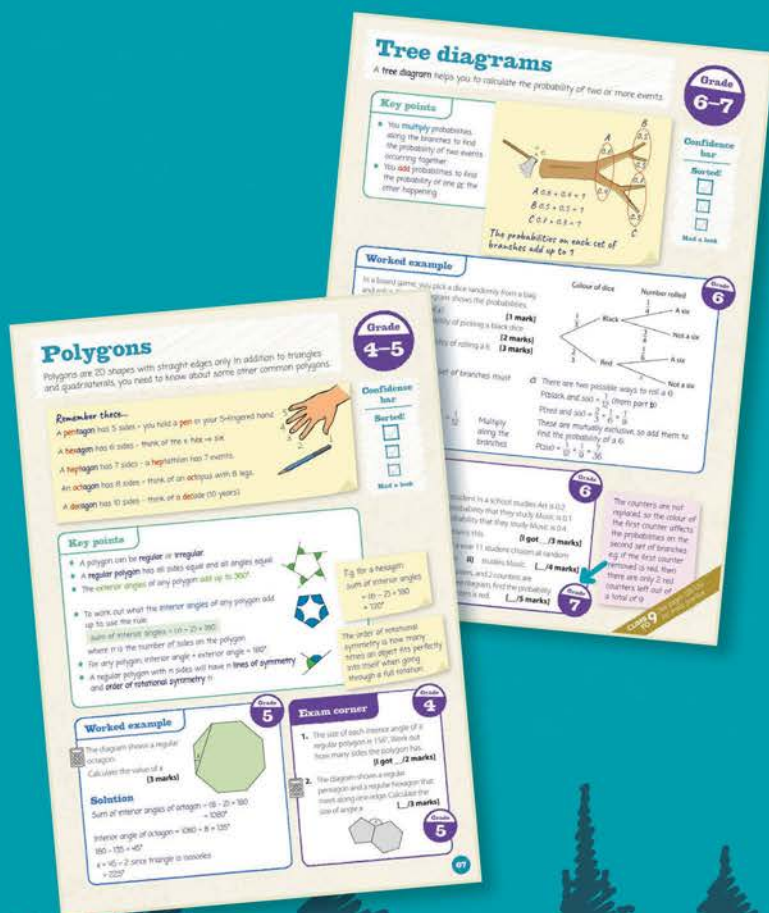
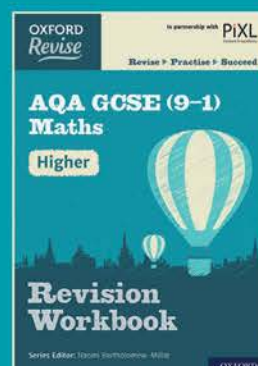
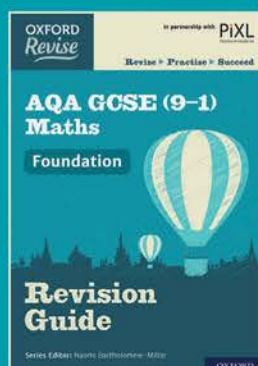
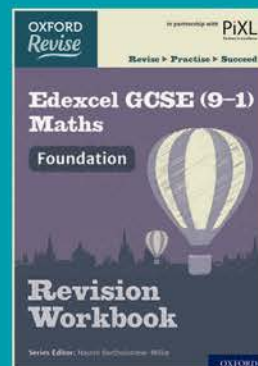
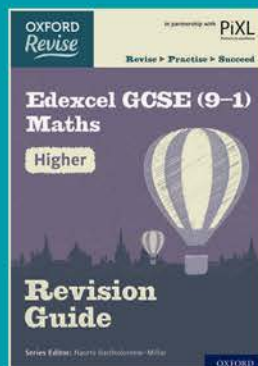


### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zoe Enser is a specialist advisor for English at The Education People; for more information, visit [theeducationpeople.org](http://theeducationpeople.org) or follow @greeborunner

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## Q&amp;A

# “They learn as they go, so no time is wasted”

Emma Slater explains how GCSEPod's Check & Challenge system can foster independent learning



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

An assessment system that promotes learning, not just testing. Check & Challenge is a valuable tool for teachers and students alike, combining challenge, motivation, support and competition features into one reliable and easy to use system.

### What is Check & Challenge?

**ES:** Check & Challenge is a unique assessment system that not only evaluates students' knowledge and understanding, but also provides scaffolded support via hints, multiple choice options and feedback statements to aid actual learning and retention. With a range of question difficulties, including questions designed to challenge even the most able students, automated marking and student feedback, it provides teachers with valuable insights into student strengths and weaknesses.

### How does it promote learning for the student?

After watching a 'Pod' on a topic, students can complete a Check & Challenge task. Based on common misconceptions, students are supported with feedback on every wrong or right answer. The student is invested in their learning thanks to this scaffolded support and a diamond reward system. Students get two diamonds for a correct answer and one diamond if they use a hint, creating a drive to beat their previous score.

### From a teacher's perspective, what would you say is its main benefit?

The accurate knowledge gap identification. The teacher reports show not only the students' scores, but how many attempts and hints they used to reach their answers. This is essential for planning interventions or prescribing the right topics to boost individuals' knowledge. Teachers can set Check & Challenge as homework and



it's perfect for distance learning, since students get instant feedback on how well they did, feeding into that all-important intrinsic motivation.

### You mentioned 'Pods' – what are they?

Central to our content are our unique 'Pods' – award-winning, 3- to 5-minute audiovisual videos. It takes nine months for a single Pod to be created by a team of up to 15 people, including subject specialists, editors, graphic designers, sound engineers and quality checkers.



**ABOUT EMMA:**  
Emma Slater is Publishing Director at GCSEPod



**Contact:**  
0191 338 7830  
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Once uploaded onto the site, Pods are arranged in targeted playlists according to subject, topic and upcoming examinations by date, helping students stay organised and focused on precisely what they need to learn. Our content is mapped to all exam boards and can be filtered by the school to show only what's relevant to their chosen specifications and whatever combination of IGCSEs and GCSEs they choose to teach.

### Has Check & Challenge proved popular with students?

It's exceptionally popular with students; they see it as their own tool, and it's a key confidence driver. They can share their scores for some healthy competition, or that data can stay between teachers and students. Because they're learning as they go, no time is wasted. The scaffolded approach really improves and cements students' belief in their own abilities.

## What's the difference?

- + Promotes learning – not just testing – and drives intrinsic motivation
- + Encourages self-belief and confidence in students via rich feedback
- + Replicates the type of support students might receive from a personal coach

# THINK LIKE A MATHEMATICIAN

Past papers will only get students so far with their GCSE preparation, says **Craig Barton** – if they can ‘think mathematically,’ the content’s far more likely to stick

**T**he maths community has seen some big debates over the best ways of getting students to ‘think mathematically,’ so that they can answer those tricky GCSE questions that might cause them to come unstuck.

A mistake I made for many years was thinking that the best way to get students good at answering such questions was to keep giving them loads of past GCSE papers. But what I gradually realised was that the students tended to just answer only the questions they were good at and leave the ones they struggled

with. I would then guide them through the trickier areas of those exams, but little of what I taught ever seemed to stick.

It was only during my twelfth year as a teacher that I concluded – it seems so obvious now – that if the foundations, fluency and basics of an idea, concept or method aren’t there, you can’t do anything complex with it. I came to see that practice was the key to unlocking all the more complex skills we want our kids to possess, such as the abilities to conjecture, hypothesise and problem solve.

## Careful sequencing

The question then becomes, ‘What does that practice look like?’ Every teacher has to contend with the issue that some students will always require more practice than others, that some students grasp ideas quicker than their peers and that some are a little slower. Giving a class of 25 students a random set of questions is therefore inevitably going to involve some degree of compromise. So how can we engineer a form of practice for *all* of my kids?

After attempting to read everything I could on

variation theory, I came across the idea of carefully sequencing the examples we give to students, while crucially *keeping key aspects constant*, and changing just one or two elements between one set question and the next.

Previously, everything in my practice would be constantly changing. Q1 might task them with adding a couple of fractions together. Q2 would then typically involve them being asked to add a completely different pair of fractions. With such disconnected questions, once my students worked out the answers that would be the end of it. No further thinking would be done.

## REFLECT, EXPECT, CHECK EXPLAIN

However, we can address this by drawing on a key aspect of variation theory and carefully change the numbers involved. Take





those fractions – in Q1, students add them and work out the answer. Then in Q2, *we change one element* – maybe the numerator or denominator of one of the fractions. The aim is get students thinking, *‘Hang on, these two questions aren’t completely unrelated – there’s something going on here.’*

This led me to developing a framework I call ‘reflect, expect, check explain’. What’s the same and what’s different about this question? (Reflect.) What do I think will happen to the answer? (Expect.) Am I right? (Check.) If not, can I figure out why? If yes, can I explain why to someone else? (Explain).

Some will spot the relationships between the practice questions before they work out the answers. Others will be able to explain the relationships, whether they’ve worked out the answer or not. Some students won’t understand those relationships at that time. But every student will benefit from doing the practice; every student will have this opportunity to think that bit deeper about what they’re doing.

### Intelligent practice

A key point I often emphasise when working on these sequences with other teachers is how it contrasts with the kind of practice I used to give. The questions I previously set would start off being fairly easy before getting progressively harder, but also more interesting. The interesting maths would tend to appear from Q12 onwards, which does make some sense, since you’ve got to have mastered

the basics before you getting on to more complex tasks.

The problem with that, of course, is that it places all the boring, routine maths at the start. Some kids will never even reach the interesting bit. Maths then becomes simply a case of learning different methods for answering certain sets of questions, prompting some kids to feel disconnected and turned off from maths.

My question sequences can sometimes also get gradually harder and keep the most interesting material for the end, but I’m also challenging my students to ‘reflect, expect, check, explain’ from the very beginning. Before they answer a question, I’m getting them to think, *‘What’s the same and what’s different from the previous question compared to this one? Can you expect to see anything specific in the answer once you work it out?’*

Once students have their answer, it’s important that they again pause. Can they explain the answer they’ve reached? If it’s not what they expected to happen, can they break down the reasons for their surprise? Conversely, if the answer is exactly what they expected to happen, how would they explain that to somebody who doesn’t yet understand it?

This last point is important. With disconnected practice, once children get a question right their thinking stops. Using intelligent practice, even correct answers that line up perfectly with students’ expectations will still give them something to think about. The ‘reflect, expect, check, explain’

**“Even correct answers that line up perfectly with students’ expectations will still give them something to think about”**

## GROWING PAINS

Here are some things I used to waste valuable maths lesson time on doing in the build-up to GCSEs...

### 1. Teach past papers every lesson

What tended to happen was that the kids would frequently get the same questions right and the same questions wrong. I’m not convinced they learnt very much from answering these five- or six-mark questions when their actual knowledge of the relevant mathematical foundations wasn’t secure.

### 2. Let students choose

I’d allow students to focus on whichever topic they wished, based on what they thought they needed to work on. I’d then walk round like a tutor, but this approach assumes kids are the best judges of their strengths and weaknesses. I once asked a child why they were practicing working out the mean. “Because I’m good at this,” they said.

### 3. Let kids work together when revising

This would involve handing out a past paper and

getting kids to work in pairs on answering as much of it as they could. It produced an illusion of collective wisdom, where two kids would be working together on a problem, leaving both them and myself without any clue as to whether they could have reached the correct answer on their own, working independently.

### 4. Let kids teach the lesson

I’d assign a topic to each child and they’d do a 10- to 15-minute presentation on it to the rest of the class. However, you’ve got to consider who’s in the best place to teach those topics. Is it the teacher, who will have planned their teaching in advance and perhaps taught those topics 15 or 20 times before? Or is it the kids, who will be relative novices, perhaps giving more thought to the fonts and animations in their PowerPoint presentations and feeling nervous?

framework gives all students a rich experience, even after they’ve worked out the answers, which is quite powerful.

### Opportunities for all

If you were to adopt this approach with a typical class, something interesting will happen if you hand out the questions and don’t do anything. Some kids will really thrive, spotting the connections between questions and querying them. Yet they’re in a minority, and tend to already be fairly high achieving. They may even have been thinking mathematically for years.

The majority of kids will be minded to work out the question they’ve been set, get the answer and move on. With this framework, I want

as many students as possible to have opportunities to think mathematically – by spotting relationships, hypothesising, discussing and explaining concepts to each other.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Craig Barton is a maths teacher and the creator of several online maths resources, including [diagnosticquestions.com](http://diagnosticquestions.com), [variationtheory.com](http://variationtheory.com) and [ssddproblems.com](http://ssddproblems.com); his latest book, *Reflect, Expect, Check, Explain*, is available now (John Catt, £19). For more details, visit [mrbartonmaths.com](http://mrbartonmaths.com) or follow @mrbartonmaths

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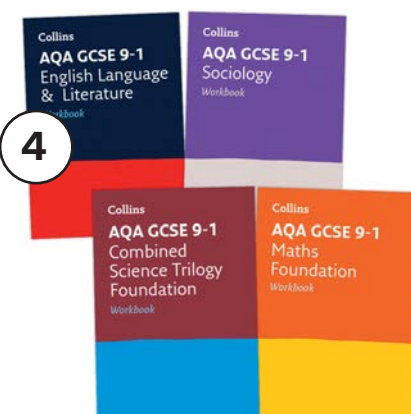
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# The Inside Story

**DAN BELCHER**

[ssatuk.co.uk](http://ssatuk.co.uk)

Dan Belcher gives us an overview of how SSAT can help you unlock your school's latent leadership talent



**BIO:** Dan Belcher is Senior Education Lead at SSAT, overseeing the design and delivery of its leadership development programmes; prior to joining SSAT he was a senior leader and teacher of French and German

SSAT is a national organisation that helps schools stay informed and connected to each other – something that's especially important now. We recognise and celebrate the successes of schools, students and teachers, and share best practice across the SSAT network. Our professional development programmes help teachers and leaders at all levels reach the goals they've set for

themselves, their students and staff.

Most recently, we've revised our national 'SSAT Stepping Up to Senior Leadership' programme, having previously delivered a version where individual participants would attend national events. Much of the core content remains familiar, but we've placed greater emphasis on certain areas, such as leading complex change, in response to the increasing need for leaders to be adaptable and able to manage a range of difficult challenges.

The scope of leadership responsibility has also grown in recent years, particularly in finance and HR, with leaders now expected to possess an understanding of those areas earlier in their leadership journeys than might have been the case previously.

The main change is that 'Stepping Up to Senior Leadership' has now adopted the same delivery partner model used for our 'Leaders for the Future' and 'Middle Leadership' programmes. Under this system, all programme modules are designed as independent, two-hour blocks that can be delivered by schools themselves after hours, or as a combined half- or full-day session. The school receives all the material and content they need to 'train their trainer'. This trained individual can

then contextualise and personalise the programme content to suit the needs of their colleagues. It's an approach that gives schools some welcome flexibility, and can be incorporated into online CPD arrangements with relative ease.

Like many, we've recently made some significant moves towards online delivery of our services. Many programmes have transferred over quite easily, particularly those employing our aforementioned 'train the trainer' model. We've also been able to substitute a large proportion of our face-to-face training by blending pre-recorded activities, resources and questions with live sessions that allow for follow-up queries and Q&A sessions. Even within their own schools, many members of staff currently aren't able to meet in groups, and may therefore need their training to be delivered virtually across their setting, MAT or local network. The materials we're able to provide can make that process straightforward.

COVID-19 has created a great deal of uncertainty for everyone and had a huge impact on teaching, staffing and wellbeing. Many leaders will be having to manage various forms of blended learning, whilst simultaneously providing reassurance and support for their colleagues. On the plus side, however, these difficult times present opportunities for leaders to demonstrate their leadership qualities – their adaptability, resourcefulness and emotional intelligence – and for those efforts to be appreciated.

## CONTACT:

To find out more about SSAT's development programmes, visit [ssatuk.co.uk/deliver](http://ssatuk.co.uk/deliver)

## Our Journey

**1987**

City Technology Colleges (CTC) Trust established, with Sir Cyril Taylor as chairman and adviser to secretary of state, Kenneth Baker

**2004-5**

Launch of the Personalising Learning campaign; trust changes its name to Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT)

**2012**

SSAT (The Schools Network) formed as a limited company, independent of government; 'Redesigning Schooling' campaign launched to ensure the profession's future is shaped by high quality professional practice and research

**2019**

'Fighting for Deep Social Justice' campaign launched with the patronage of David Lammy MP, framed around the original 'four deeps' – learning, support, experience and leadership

## COMPANY PROGRAMME



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[www.young-enterprise.org.uk/CP](http://www.young-enterprise.org.uk/CP)



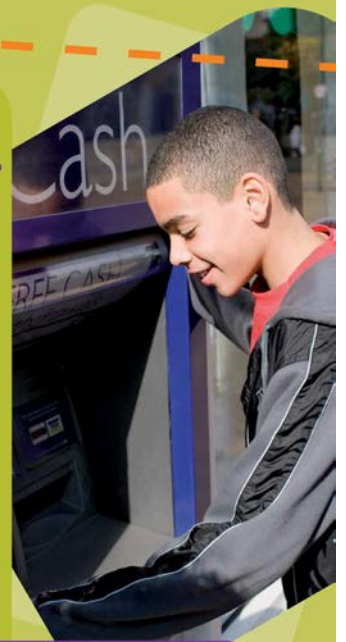
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# LEARNING LAB

## IN THIS ISSUE

- + Take ownership of your CPD
- + Why teachers should coach their colleagues
- + The benefits of online teacher training
- + Learning myths you should avoid
- + DfE issues RSE planning guidelines
- + How to make physics more engaging for students
- + Walk your students through the process of how we learn
- + Fieldwork goes digital

## CONTRIBUTORS

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### ZEPH BENNETT

PE teacher and school achievement leader



## Ideas for...

# HOMEWORK



Making homework a highly effective learning experience is a constant challenge for all teachers. The very best teachers will set challenging work that extends learning beyond the lesson, not just as a bolt-on to please parents. Motivating pupils to enjoy 'home learning' by applying their schoolwork to extended projects or 'flipping classrooms' – so that they learn at home, then use that learning in lessons – may offer great opportunities to challenge your class.

In his book *Why Don't Children Like School?*, Daniel T. Willingham says that, 'Whatever students think about, is what they will remember.' The challenge, then, is to make homework a problem to solve, or a challenge to undertake, that will make pupils think about what they need to remember for lessons.

This could be anything from learning a passage of Shakespeare by heart to creating a mind map of the 'what, why, how, where and when' details of the lesson taught today to deepen the learning.

+ Make 'High challenge, maximum peer support' one of your classroom mantras. A classroom culture of allies is the ultimate climate for good progress for all. When we all support each other, we don't mind taking risks for learning.

+ Believe that all pupils innately have the resources to make good progress – we just need to find the right strategy.

+ Take risks. If learning doesn't go well, don't blame yourself or the kids – just adapt what you are doing until it works better.

+ Encourage the pupils to have high expectations of themselves by establishing a culture that understands that learning requires hard work. Ensure they know that if they aren't feeling challenged, then they aren't growing their brains.

+ Set homework that is motivating, extends learning and makes it connect with the lives of your pupils.

+ Approach every lesson expecting the pupils to surprise you with what they can do. When they struggle, tell them how good it is that they are growing new neural pathways. This will make them more intelligent if they keep trying.

**TIPS TAKEN FROM INDEPENDENT THINKING ON TEACHING AND LEARNING BY JACKIE BEERE (CROWN HOUSE PUBLISHING, £9.99)**

## TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR CPD



I've taught for 17 years, but always struggled to find time for developing my subject and pedagogical knowledge beyond statutory INSETS. That all changed six months ago, when I opted to take charge of my own CPD during lockdown...

### 1. Getting creative

I first created a YouTube Channel called The Price Academy and started producing bite-sized history videos for remote learning and classroom use. I initially focused on topics I'd recently taught, basing one series on the Miranda Kaufmann's book *The Black Tudors* and another on the civil rights movement.

After reading *The Five* by Hallie Rubenhold, which highlights the stories of

Jack the Ripper's victims, I diversified and began researching and producing daily videos that followed a theme – 'Medieval Mondays', 'Tudor Tuesdays' and so on.

### 2. Spreading the word

There are many fabulous teaching groups on social media, but few that let teachers advertise their creations. That inspired me to set up the History Teachers UK Share Space on Facebook, to help history teachers share good practice while promoting their own work, should they wish. The member count rapidly rose to over 1,700 in just five weeks, prompting our admin team to set up themed CPD days – my own being 'NQT Support Sunday'.

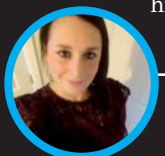
### 3. Finding a partner

Alongside fellow history

teacher Andrew Hassan, we began the #NQTSupportSunday Twitter hashtag to try and collate tips for NQTs (me having previously been an NQT mentor, and Andy having just finished his NQT year). The response was overwhelming, and led to Andy and I leading regular Zoom CPD sessions for NQTs on a half-termly basis.

### 4. Forming a team

This led to the creation of The Teachers' Studio – a team comprising an EY practitioner, two primary teachers and three secondary teachers, including Andy and myself. We presented our first NQT support session via Zoom in September, and now have a dedicated Twitter account (@studio\_teachers) and YouTube channel.



**TANYA PRICE IS A HISTORY TEACHER BASED IN CHESHIRE; HER PRICE ACADEMY YOUTUBE CHANNEL CAN BE FOUND AT [BIT.LY/TS97-PRICE](https://bit.ly/ts97-price), AND YOU CAN FOLLOW HER AT @TANYAALEX38**

## Why not try...

### COACHING YOUR COLLEAGUES?



Former teacher, inspector and education adviser turned life coach, Peter Hogan, explains why teachers are

well-placed to provide each other with coaching

Just like athletes, teachers sometimes need their equivalent of a trackside or poolside coach – somebody making sure we keep up, stay focussed and don't quit.

Ask a life coach what they do and they'll say that they 1) Help people identify their primary goals, 2) Help them to look at where they are now and 3) Help them to get from here to there.

Now, which group is great at doing that? Teachers! Chances are, you already have the skills, understanding and compassion needed to coach colleagues in school. All you need to start productively coaching each other are mutual trust, time, and a willingness to make it happen.

You can help your colleagues by using the following methods practised by professional life coaches:

- Help them to identify their specific goals
- Assist in creating actionable plans that will guide them
- Develop their confidence
- Encourage high expectations and standards from them
- Ensure they don't feel alone
- Help them stay committed during hard times
- Ask questions and provide them with observations, feedback, encouragement and support
- Show them that you care and are there to help



# 34%

of UK pupils felt actively motivated during remote learning in lockdown

Source: 'Lockdown and beyond' report produced by ImpactEd; see [bit.ly/ts97-learning](https://bit.ly/ts97-learning)

A new study from the University of Birmingham has concluded that delivering teacher education via remote and blended learning can be as effective as face-to-face approaches. According to Dr Thomas Perry, from the university's School of Education, "The literature we have reviewed suggests that remote and blended teacher education approaches show considerable promise, and may have distinct advantages, as well as disadvantages, relative to solely face-to-face approaches.

"The overall reading of the literature is that there is no reason why remote and online teacher education cannot achieve principles of effective learning design in teacher education such as an orientation to pupil outcomes, differentiation for teacher starting points, support for high quality collaboration and reflective practice."

The researchers found that using video technology in teacher training could save schools expense and provide greater flexibility around professional commitments and school timetables. However, they also noted the difficulty of achieving the sense of 'presence' needed to avoid high participant attrition or passive engagement.

The review obtained and screened some 7,354 research papers spanning dozens of library collections; the full review can be downloaded via [bit.ly/ts97-blended](https://bit.ly/ts97-blended)

## YOUR GUIDE TO ...

### LEARNING MYTHS TO AVOID

#### 'Discovery learning rules'

The concept of students being the masters of their own destiny has been romantically associated with effective learning for years, but was always a theory, not a proven approach. Research suggests that teacher direction is, in fact, *three times more effective* than student discovery. That's a lot of wasted curriculum time.

#### 'Everyone learns differently'

Thankfully, Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic (VAK) learning styles are now a thing of the past. Learners have preferences, but cognitively, effective teaching is effective teaching. Leave the kinaesthetic tasks at the door – they're not engaging the boys. And don't get me started on 'student-centred learning'...

#### 'Silence means engagement'

The assumption that a quiet class is an engaged class is a fallacy. Students are master manipulators

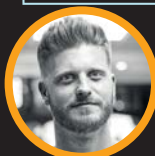
at times, and you must ensure that their silence isn't a mask for complacency. Check frequently for understanding and plan in talk.

#### 'Don't smile before Christmas'

A really damaging myth for relationships with students, I was perturbed when meeting a whole cohort of trainees last year who had been taught this. You need to build relationships with students, and you won't do that by acting like you hate them for a set period of time.

#### 'Good subject knowledge makes good teachers'

Or alternatively, 'All the gear and no idea'. Knowing your subject well is crucial for excellent lessons, but it's not the only required ingredient. Without an understanding of pedagogy, your delivery of said knowledge will likely be ineffective. Classroom audiences can be relenting, and if you can't transfer your knowledge to them, you'll be a sitting duck.



ADAM RICHES IS A SENIOR LEADER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING; FOLLOW HIM AT @TEACHMRRICHES

# 74%

of teachers feel their workload has increased compared to autumn 2019

Source: NASUWT survey carried out in September 2020 among 6,445 of its members

## Need to know

The DfE has published guidance intended to help school staff in England plan and prepare for the introduction of the new statutory requirements relating to RSE and health education. Titled 'Plan your relationships, sex and health curriculum', the document states that all secondary schools should include LGBT content in their teaching, and stresses the importance of consulting with parents and carers before finalising their RSE curriculum.

However, a section of the guidance headed 'Choosing resources' has caused controversy, with its recommendation that "Schools should not under any circumstances use resources produced by organisations that take extreme political stances on matters." The examples given include organisations that endorse racist or antisemitic views or encourage illegal activity, but also, more contentiously, those demonstrating 'opposition to freedom of speech' or 'a publicly stated desire to abolish or overthrow democracy, capitalism, or to end free and fair elections.'

Read the guidance in full at [bit.ly/ts97-rse](https://bit.ly/ts97-rse)



## ADVICE FOR... PHYSICS TEACHERS TIME TO ENGAGE

As physics teachers we know how exciting the subject can be, but sometimes pupils don't share our enthusiasm – often because they struggle to see how they can apply physics outside the classroom and in their futures.

Extracurricular activities, like STEM clubs, can showcase physics through exciting practical activities, and highlight aspects of physics that students might not normally get to experience.

Show young people how studying physics can open them up to a fantastic array of careers, and in parts of the working world they'd never expect. A recent survey commissioned by the Institute of Physics found that 78% of UK employers said they had a positive impression of candidates who chose to study physics to A level and above.

Students may think that studying physics will narrow their future options to working in the space industry or in a lab. Both industries offer great careers, but physics qualifications can

offer much more. Whether it's battling the climate crisis, curing cancer or working in the arts, the possibilities are endless. Why not invite former physics students who work different industries to speak in your lessons or remotely? Maybe speak to some old university friends and see if they can help.

Alternatively, you could share some materials with your students that demonstrate the true breadth of opportunities available. The Institute of Physics' 'Your Future with Physics' online careers centre can be helpful here – see [bit.ly/ts97-physics](https://bit.ly/ts97-physics) for more details.

Finally, providing children with positive role models who look and sound like them can be crucial in inspiring them to study physics. There are plenty of inspiring physicists from diverse backgrounds, both real and fictional, that you could cite. Where appropriate, you could show episodes of the brilliant Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock on *The Sky at Night*, or clips of American astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson.



CHARLOTTE GRACE IS A TEACHER AT OUTWOOD GRANGE ACADEMY AND SUPPORTER OF THE INSTITUTE OF PHYSICS' YOUR FUTURE WITH PHYSICS CAMPAIGN



## A new approach to... *fieldwork*

As COVID-19 continues to cause massive disruptions around travel and overnight stays, many KS4/5 students have had to put on hold the fieldwork that typically plays a large role in geography and biology courses at GCSE and A Level.

Stepping in to try and offer an alternative solution is The Field Studies Council, which this month launched a new programme of paid-for 'digital fieldwork' courses that can be delivered by teachers across the UK to students without needing to leave the confines of their school. The programme as a

whole covers the core secondary geography and biology topics required by the main exam boards.

FSC education development officer, David Morgan, explains that, "Many of our centres are now welcoming school groups back for non-residential visits, but we recognise that travel won't be an option for all schools at this time, and current guidance means we still cannot host overnight residential courses.

"Our experienced team have worked extremely hard to create these fantastic digital courses

over the last few weeks. The packages give teachers access to digital resources to facilitate a virtual field trip to one of our spectacular field sites, as well as teacher guidance notes to support delivery and some follow-up sessions. We have applied everything we know about fieldwork to make them as useful as possible."

**TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE FIELD STUDIES COUNCIL, ITS DIGITAL FIELDWORK COURSES AND WIDER EDUCATIONAL WORK, VISIT [FIELD-STUDIES-COUNCIL.ORG](https://www.field-studies-council.org)**



## TRENDING

Our pick of the recent resources and learning projects teachers might find useful...

### MENTAL HEALTH

The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families has launched a new framework aimed at supporting education settings in developing a school- or college-wide approach to mental health and wellbeing. [annafreud.org](https://annafreud.org)

### TALKING SHOP

The Association for Citizenship Teaching is holding a series of Zoom-based 'virtual staffroom' forums for citizenship teachers; the next dates will be 4th November and 24th November. [teachingcitizenship.org.uk](https://teachingcitizenship.org.uk)

### KEEPING COUNT

Ahead of the 2021 census, the Office for National Statistics has produced a free accompanying programme of school and lesson content aimed at 11 to 18-year-olds. [censuseducation.org.uk](https://censuseducation.org.uk)

## STUDENT WALKTHROUGH

### UNDERSTANDING HOW WE LEARN

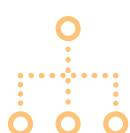
HELP YOUR STUDENTS BECOME BETTER LEARNERS WITH ZEPH BENNETT'S VISUAL EXPLAINERS...



#### RETRIEVAL

RECALLING INFORMATION AND KEY TERMS FROM TOPICS YOU HAVE COVERED. THIS CAN BE INDEPENDENT STUDY.

YOU MUST RECALL INFO WITHOUT USING NOTES. WHATEVER YOU CANNOT REMEMBER, LEARN AGAIN!



#### DUAL CODING

DUAL CODING REQUIRES YOU TO ORGANISE SOME OF YOUR THOUGHTS AS PICTURES, DIAGRAMS OR MIND MAPS.

THIS ALLOWS YOU TO MAKE THE LEARNING OF A TOPIC MORE DURABLE, AND LONG-LASTING.



#### CONCRETE EXAMPLES

UNDERSTANDING DIFFICULT FACTS AND CONCEPTS IS HELPED BY USING PRACTICAL EXAMPLES. IT COULD BE A RELEVANT SUBJECT, OR EXPERIMENT WHICH EXPLAINS THE CONCEPT.

TRY NOT TO USE EXAMPLES THAT ARE NOT RELATED TO THE TOPIC, YOU MIGHT REMEMBER THEM MORE!



#### ELABORATION

WHEN STUDYING DIFFICULT CONCEPTS GATHER AS MUCH INFORMATION ON THE TOPIC AS POSSIBLE. GO INTO DETAIL, LINKING KEY FACTS TOGETHER.

USE MIND MAPS TO HELP THE PROCESS OF ELABORATING ON THE CONCEPT YOU'RE STUDYING.



#### SPACING

SPACED LEARNING REQUIRES PLANNING AND BREAKING UP LEARNING INTO CHUNKS.

ONCE INFORMATION HAS BEEN PROCESSED YOU REVISIT BY MAKING NOTES, OR ASKING QUESTIONS, THEN REVISIT IT AGAIN TO QUIZ AND REVIEW HOW YOU DID.

ZEPH BENNETT IS PE TEACHER AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT LEADER WITH 25 YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE; YOU CAN FIND MORE OF HIS EDUCATIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY FOLLOWING @PEEGEEKSCORNER

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Lesson plan: MATHS KS4

# COMBINING SQUARE NUMBERS

Square numbers provide an interesting context for students to make conjectures and use algebra to prove them, says Colin Foster

In this lesson, students examine how square numbers, and sums and differences of square numbers, relate to multiples of 4. Modulus arithmetic is not used explicitly, but students are encouraged to make conjectures about what is possible and to prove these using simple algebra. There are many opportunities for surprise and for students to see the power of algebra in establishing with certainty what must always happen for all numbers, no matter how large.

## DOWNLOAD

a FREE task sheet containing empty number grids to accompany this lesson plan

[teachwire.net/square-numbers](https://teachwire.net/square-numbers)



## WHY TEACH THIS?

In this lesson, students try combining square numbers in various ways and examine and explain the patterns that they find.

## KEY CURRICULUM LINKS

- Make and test conjectures about the generalisations that underlie patterns and relationships; look for proofs or counter-examples; begin to use algebra to support and construct arguments
- Select appropriate concepts, methods and techniques to apply to unfamiliar and non-routine problems

**Q** How do the square numbers relate to multiples of 4?

## STARTER ACTIVITY

**Q** Colour in all the square numbers (perfect squares) in the grid (Fig 1). What do you notice?

The purpose of this activity is for pupils to remind themselves what square numbers are, and to begin to observe a pattern that will lead to some important thinking later on.

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32
33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44
45	46	47	48
49	50	51	52
53	54	55	56
57	58	59	60

Fig 1

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32
33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44
45	46	47	48
49	50	51	52
53	54	55	56
57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64

Fig 2

The coloured-in grid is shown on the right (Fig 2).

Pupils will notice that the only cells that are shaded are in the leftmost and the rightmost columns, never the middle two, and that they alternate left-right-left-right... They may also notice that the square numbers go odd-even-odd-even...

## MAIN ACTIVITY

**Q** *Why should this be? Do you think this will always happen forever?*

Students will need help in working out how to answer these questions. The odd-even-odd-even... alternating pattern in the square numbers is the easiest to make sense of. Since  $\text{odd} \times \text{odd} = \text{odd}$ , and  $\text{even} \times \text{even} = \text{even}$ , then, since the natural numbers (1, 2, 3, ...) alternate between odd and even, their squares will do the same.





To explain why all the squares are in only the first and the fourth columns, it helps to think in terms of multiples of 4. Then there are only four kinds of number:

- Multiples of 4
- 1 more than a multiple of 4
- 2 more than a multiple of 4 (the same as 2 less than a multiple of 4)
- 3 more than a multiple of 4 (the same as 1 less than a multiple of 4)

Students could use  $m$  to represent a multiple of 4, and so could write these four possibilities as  $m + r$ , where  $r$  is equal to:

- 0 for the multiples of 4
- 1 for the numbers which are 1 more than a multiple of 4
- 2 for the numbers which are 2 more than a multiple of 4
- 3 for the numbers which are 3 more than a multiple of 4

Now, if we square  $(m + r)$ , we get  $(m + r)^2 = m^2 + 2mr + r^2$ . In this expression,  $m$  is clearly a factor of both of the first two terms, so how the entire expression relates to the multiples of 4 depends entirely on the  $r^2$ .

The 'Conclusion' column shows that there are only two possibilities for the square numbers, and that these alternate as we go through the

Kind of number	$r$	$r^2$	Conclusion
multiple of 4	0	0	multiple of 4
1 more than a multiple of 4	1	1	1 more than a multiple of 4
2 more than a multiple of 4	2	4	multiple of 4
3 more than a multiple of 4	3	9	1 more than a multiple of 4

natural numbers, so that they appear with equal frequency. This means that we end up with half of the squares being of the form  $4n$  and the other half being of the form  $4n + 1$ . Students could try to explain this argument to their neighbours. They might find that drawing pictures helps.

**Q** Now, explore what happens, in terms of multiples of 4, when you have:

- The sum of two square numbers
- The difference between two square numbers
- The sum of three square numbers
- The cube numbers
- The powers of 4

There is lots here for students to make conjectures about, and then try to explore and explain algebraically.

## DISCUSSION

**Q** What did you find out? For example, can you make all the natural numbers by summing 2 square numbers? Or from the difference between 2 square numbers? If you can, can you do it more than 1 way? If not, why not?

A summary of what is possible is given in the table below. This table shows that, for example, a cube is never 2 more than a multiple of 4, or, looked at another way, never twice an odd number. The same is true for the difference of two squares.

	Relationship to multiples of 4			
Expression	$4n$	$4n + 1$	$4n + 2$	$4n + 3$
$p^2$	Y	Y	N	N
$p^2 + q^2$	Y	Y	Y	N
$p^2 + q^2 + r^2$	Y	Y	Y	Y
$p^2 - q^2$	Y	Y	N	Y
$p^3$	Y	Y	N	Y
$p^4$	Y	Y	N	N



### GET INFORMED

The Mathematical Association has made available a video webinar titled 'What is dyscalculia?' Presented by Pete Jarrett, it explores what is meant by a 'sense of number', and the impact this can have on people's ability to understand, learn and perform mathematical calculations. For more details, visit [m-a.org.uk/online-webinar](http://m-a.org.uk/online-webinar)



### ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

A very interesting related task produced by the NRich team can be found by visiting [nrich.maths.org/whatspossible](http://nrich.maths.org/whatspossible)



### GOING DEEPER

If you add up any two square numbers and double it, when do you get the sum of two squares? Lewis Carroll, the author of *Alice in Wonderland*, proved that this always happens. Suppose that  $a^2$  and  $b^2$  are the two square numbers. Then  $2(a^2 + b^2) \equiv (a + b)^2 + (a - b)^2$



### ABOUT OUR EXPERT

Colin Foster is a Reader in Mathematics Education at the Mathematics Education Centre at Loughborough University. He has written many books and articles for mathematics teachers.

His website is [foster77.co.uk](http://foster77.co.uk), and on Twitter he is @colinfoster77

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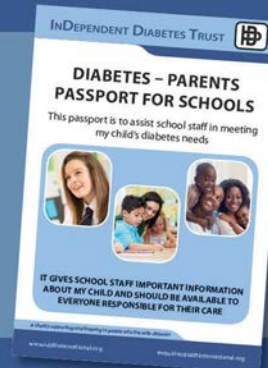
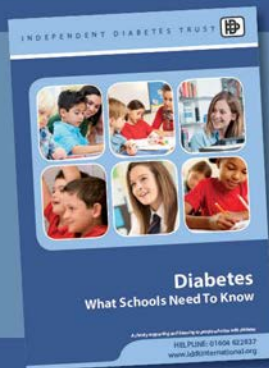
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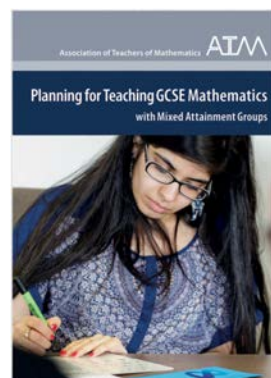
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Association of Teachers of Mathematics

## Planning for Teaching GCSE Mathematics with Mixed Attainment Groups

By Mike Ollerton and  
Sam Hoggard



A fantastic book that is suitable for use in all GCSE classroom group settings, but what is different about this book is it brings together tasks designed to support learning and planning for teaching GCSE mathematics with all attainment groups. Includes an accompanying set of PDF slides for use in the classroom.

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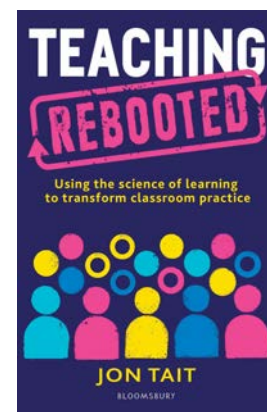
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# Teaching Rebooted

Does the latest education research leave you feeling lost? Adam Riches examines a book that can make your practice more research-informed almost instantly...



## AT A GLANCE

- A comprehensive guide to using the science of learning in your classroom
- Packed full of carefully curated research
- Neatly summarised approaches to applying different ideas in classroom practice
- Opportunities for reflection at various points on your own teaching
- A light, warm tone throughout makes for an approachable read

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES



One of the big difficulties when it comes to producing educational books is the need to strike a balance between examining the theories that underpin research and the reality of applying them in the classroom. Many books will tell you exactly what to do, but won't always deliver on the how, and vice versa. *Teaching Rebooted* by Jon Tait does both, providing details of interesting research alongside plenty of ideas for putting those findings into practice, which is why it works so well.

What Tait manages to do is succinctly boil down various areas of educational research, focusing on just the important bits, and extend that approach here to everything from retrieval practice to questioning, cognitive load and dual coding. Tait succeeds in showing that research doesn't need to be daunting.

Each section in the book highlights myths and misconceptions (accompanied by the description 'Teacher 1.0') and clarifies precisely what 'the research says'. This is followed by the helpful stuff, namely the ideas (flagged up as 'Teacher 2.0'), supplemented by suggestions for further reading and personal reflection. It might seem counter-intuitive – and perhaps assumptive at times – to begin with the myths and bad habits teachers may have picked up, but it's a format that lets readers clearly see the flaws in different approaches.

Visually, the book is clearly presented, with the key items of information in each section

summarised in a striking way, this ensuring that its main takeaways are easily digested by those pushed for time. It's the little touches like this that demonstrate how Tait is clearly aware of the constraints teachers are under. He knows what it's like to be in the classroom, and adopts a warm, yet businesslike tone throughout that's perfect for points he's trying to convey.

The book boasts 40 ready-to-use ideas for improving practice which teachers can start using straight away. These include some really strong suggestions, such as adding spacing to assessments, calling time on grading and thinking out loud, all of which can help teachers streamline their teaching and make it more effective. However, there are also some seemingly simple ideas that could be misinterpreted in a way that actually results in additional workload. "Use multiple assessments to make inferences about real learning," is one example; "[Try] re-testing again a week later" is another. I'm not disputing either of those suggestions, but they do need to be managed carefully.

Overall, however, the book is packed full of interesting and relevant research and ideas. It will be a really helpful guide for anyone looking to sharpen their practice, or further understand how they can start reading around certain theoretical approaches to teaching.

**teach  
SECONDARY**

## VERDICT

- ✓ Discusses an exceptional breadth of research
- ✓ Clearly explains numerous theories and learning as a science
- ✓ A series of ready to use ideas make its lessons easy to apply
- ✓ Helps to debunk myths, demystify research and make teaching more efficient

## UPGRADE IF...

You're looking for a book that can help you apply leading educational research in a classroom setting, or something to help disambiguate between some of the latest research fields

£14.99 RRP; find out more at [bloomsbury.com/uk](https://bloomsbury.com/uk), 020 7631 5600



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Morrish is the founder of Makana Leadership Ltd (@MakanaUK), a former headteacher and MAT CEO and author of the book *The Art of Standing Out* (John Catt, £15)

## THE LAST WORD

# 5 steps towards better appraisals

After the year we've had, schools would be unwise to adopt a 'business as usual' approach when it comes to their appraisals, observes **Andrew Morrish**...

The performance management silly season is in full swing. Teachers up and down the country are currently psyching themselves up for the one thing they really don't need at the moment – their annual appraisal meeting. Armed only with graphs, charts and folders stuffed with just about anything they can lay their hands on, the teaching workforce is about to go into battle.

You could be forgiven for thinking that there isn't an international pandemic going on, because nothing will stand in the way of the annual appraisal meeting. That includes Ofsted, who as we know, are coming to visit a school near you. They may even be signing in as you read this, keen to learn about your mental health while, of course, not wanting to add to your stress levels...

Right now, though, you've got far more important things to be worrying about. Like not catching a deadly virus.

### Meaningful and robust

Appraisals never motivated me. By the time the clocks had changed, I'd have pretty much forgotten all my objectives. I've yet to meet the teacher who wakes up excited at the prospect of meeting one of their targets. It's not why we went into teaching.

The appraisal process in its current form is underwhelming at the best of times, and even more so now in the wake of lockdown. Post-COVID, we're seeing lots of talk around not wanting to go back to 'the old ways of doing things'. The pressures on teacher wellbeing have never been so great, and in the absence of any meaningful assessment data, we need to try something different. If we do, we could ensure that deep-rooted professional learning and development is as meaningful and worthwhile as it is robust.

Here, then, are five things that I believe will improve the current appraisal format:

#### 1. Go long

Abandon the annual high stakes model of backward-looking rating and ranking, and instead opt for a more developmental approach. By focusing on longer-term coaching for growth with built-in milestones, teachers will be more likely to engage with the process and find it useful. This will also help schools build a culture of continual improvement, with wellbeing and trust at the core.

#### 2. Ditch the data

Avoid only going for things that are easily measurable, like assessment and attendance data. These are important, but not when used to measure teacher performance. It's sensible to have targets that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely, but try to also aim for ones that are PURE – Positively stated, Understood, Relevant and Ethical. The latter is particularly important for intrinsic motivation.

#### 3. Stay in the loop

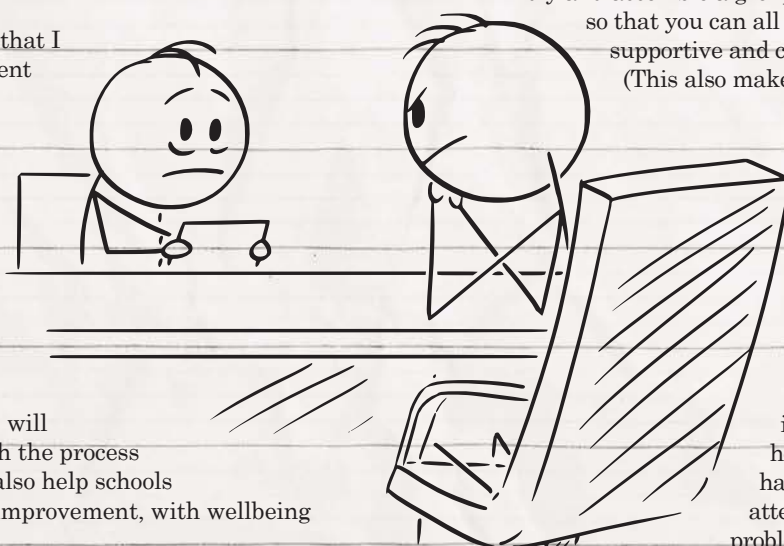
Insist on building in meaningful time to check in with a trusted colleague to reflect on how things are progressing. Checking in isn't checking-up, and it doesn't have to be with your appraiser. If you have a coach or mentor, even better. The focus should be on keeping the feedback loop alive so that you feel supported and know how to improve.

#### 4. Experiences are key

Meaningful growth occurs best when you have safe opportunities to take risks, try new things and get things wrong. Avoid the trap of 'going on a course' to fix the problem, which will seldom change what you do. Instead, aim for school-based CPD experiences that mobilise research based on evidence-informed practice.

#### 5. Be social

When two or more teachers work together on shared goals, the potential to scale up the resulting impact is profound. Interdependence is essential when improving performance, so try and assemble a group with similar objectives so that you can all work on your goals in a supportive and collaborative manner. (This also makes things a lot more fun.)



Schools can't transform their culture overnight, but what they can do in the short term is respond to the emotional needs of their staff. Remove all unnecessary reliance on data next year and instead choose to be more holistic. If that doesn't happen, then any long-term attempts at fixing the problem may well prove futile.



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