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NATASHA DEVON



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FROM THE EDITOR

“Welcome...”



So, farewell then Gavin Williamson, now former Secretary of State for Education. A champion of higher technical education and an outspoken advocate for free speech, he will probably be best remembered for repeated U-turns, inconsistent messaging and losing the battle for public hearts and minds to a popular Premier League footballer during the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The fact that long-serving former Schools Minister Nick Gibb has also followed him out the door seems significant. Under normal circumstances – whatever they might be, these days – this would likely herald a significant changing of the guard, and perhaps even a whole new direction for the government’s education policy.

The DfE now overseen by Nadhim Zahawi might yet deliver that, in time – but for now, the continuing repercussions of the pandemic appear to leave little room for anything else, beyond trying to bring students back up to speed with lost learning, vaccinating 12- to 15-year-olds, finding reasons not to address the rather pressing issue of ventilation within school buildings and making sure that next year’s GCSEs go without a hitch.

On the latter point, we now know that Ofqual will be trying to steer a path between this year’s record results and those of 2019, treating 2022 as a ‘transition’ year, with further specifics to follow in due course. In the event that nothing else happens before then to knock the exams calendar off course again, we’ve pulled together some advice starting on p31 for students and teachers alike on how revision sessions can be made more effective and perhaps even a touch more fun.

Elsewhere, we have suggestions for school leaders on how to make those assembly speeches leave a lasting impression (p62), reasons why taking a pessimistic view of your students’ abilities could actually be doing them a great favour (p23) and a bumper showcase of the teaching and learning resources that came out on top in this year’s Teach Secondary Awards (p43).

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser
callum.fauser@theteachco.com

On board this issue:



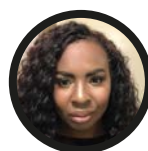
Alan Newland is a former teacher, lecturer, headteacher and advisor to the DfE and General Teaching Council



Michael Chiles is a teacher of geography, head of department and author



Claire Gadsby is an educational trainer and author



Nikki Cunningham-Smith is an assistant headteacher



James Handscombe is principal at Harris Westminster Sixth Form



Lynn Gibson is headteacher at Castlemilk High School

KEEP IN TOUCH!

Sign up for the weekly TS newsletter at teachwire.net/newsletter

Essential reading:



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Past paper fatigue

Inject a little creativity into your revision classes



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Rhetorical flourish

How to craft a powerful assembly



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People power

How UK Census data can lift your geography lessons

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As the far-reaching social and emotional impacts of the pandemic become increasingly clear, let's concern ourselves less with academic 'catch up' and more with enabling pupils to 'rise up'

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Teaching as a vocation is far more professionalised and accountable than it used to be – but does it follow that teachers now have to be ethical champions and moral exemplars?

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"Remember that the classroom is your domain"

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The devotion of certain schools and educators to social justice causes risks undermining the critically important principle of teacher impartiality, argues Alka Sehgal Cuthbert

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Headteacher Lynn Gibson reflects on the difference edtech made in enabling Castlemilk High School to support its student population over a difficult 18-month stretch

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Having high expectations can be good, but making it easy for students to be honest with you about their progress is even better

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Teachers appreciate being able to teach in classrooms again, but are less enamoured with the loosening of health restrictions...

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They're not the high-fliers in the class, nor are they the defiant rebels – they're the easily overlooked 'quiet middle' who need just as much attention as everyone else

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Having now concluded our latest search for the teaching and learning resources most worthy of schools' time and attention, here are companies and organisations that impressed our expert judges the most...

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The fallout of lockdown has left schools confronting a series of difficult, but not insurmountable behaviour challenges, writes Amy Sayer

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Why the disruptions of COVID should prompt all schools to re-examine what they want from their management information systems

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D&T is currently in a tight spot, concedes Andy Mitchell – so let's give the subject the direction it needs to thrive once again

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Two ICT experts share their advice on keeping children out of trouble when socialising online

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Effective exam preparation can consist of far more than simply going over past papers, suggests Claire Gadsby

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Encourage your students to approach their revision tasks in more imaginative ways with Natasha Devon's engaging tips for home study

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Explanation is so integral to what teachers do, the process is rarely interrogated – but it should be, says Michael Chiles



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Why you shouldn't assume that your history students are already au fait with matters of chronology and historical narratives

82 'OUR SURVEY SAID...'

UK Census data can be an invaluable tool when teaching lessons on human geography, says Steve Brace

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Benjamin Wood makes the case for why the teaching of RE has to evolve

Learning Lab

89 BE INSPIRED

How teachers have built on the skills they acquired during lockdown; why behaviour is a subject that can be taught; the benefits to be had from developing your school's student voice, and a beginner's guide to cognitive load theory



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teach
SECONDARY
AWARDS
2021
★★★★★

Coding that just fits

Transition your students from block-based coding to Python with guided lessons, open-ended activities, split screen view, plus clear progression for teacher and student.

With the ability to easily translate from block-code to Python, in BOTH directions, students will quickly become empowered to progress from the expectations of KS2 through to KS3.



"I really love this software, the innovative concept of having the blocks on one side of the window and the related Python code on the other is a fab idea, both in view at the same time, really allows students (and teachers who are new to Python) to see how the blocks relate to the code and work on which ever one they are more comfortable with."

Kay Sawbridge
Faculty leader IT
and Computing
Caroline
Chisholm School



The newsletter

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

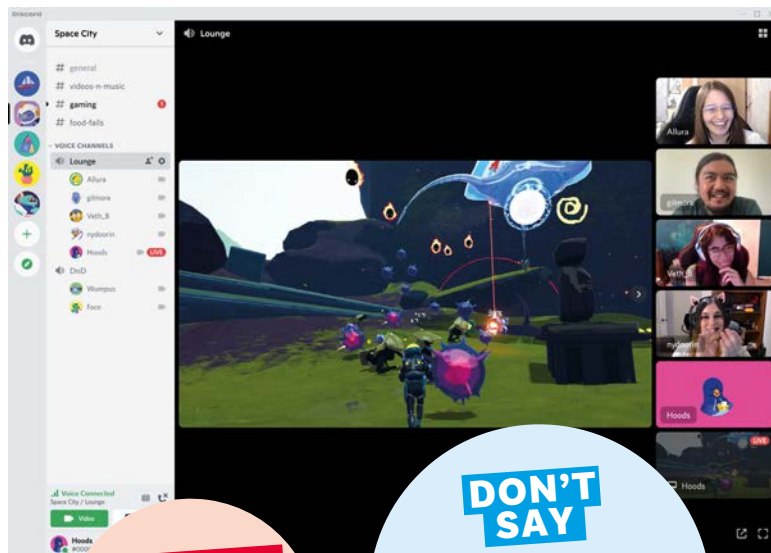
The UNINFORMED teacher's guide to...

DISCORD

If your students aren't gaming on consoles, they're probably gaming on PCs. And when they're on their PCs but not gaming, they're probably using Discord.

It's like Microsoft Teams, except designed for the purpose of facilitating fun, rather than personifying Gradgrind in software form. Discord users set up their own distinct 'servers', or join someone else's, in which they can hang out, chat with mates via voice or text, collectively listen to a song or two and stream the contents of their screens to each other – the latter of which has unsurprisingly caused it to catch on big time among avid players of *Call of Duty*, *Destiny 2*, *Dota 2* and the like.

Perhaps the most notable thing about Discord is how slick everything is. The audio coms perform really well. The video streaming is usually solid, and there are advanced options available for private servers, moderator functions and numerous other bells and whistles. To be honest, it might actually be a better tool for staff meetings than what you're using currently...



DO SAY

"up 4 D2 raid?
got sweet AR +
ADS"

DON'T SAY

"Polite request – could
people punctuate their
typed contributions,
please?"

BEAT THE BUDGET



What are we talking about?
Teaching Remembrance by the Royal British Legion

What's the targeted age range?
KS1 to KS5



What's on offer?
Assembly plans, whole school projects, fiction extracts and class presentations, accompanied by notes for parents and educators

How might teachers use the resource?
To teach students about the past, present and

possible future of Britain's national Remembrance traditions

Where are they available?
bit.ly/ts107-remembrance

DON'T QUOTE ME...

"We can't pretend we are sorry that Gavin Williamson has gone"

Kevin Courtney,
NEU co-leader

Think of a number...

37%

of parents with 12- to 15-year-old children say they would not approve of their child receiving a COVID-19 vaccine

Source: Parentkind survey

62%

of children in the UK wish to receive a COVID-19 vaccine
Source: The Children's Society

81%

of the UK public believe schools are as responsible for teaching social issues as academic topics
Source: Pearson

ONE FOR THE WALL

"Normality is a paved road: it's comfortable to walk, but no flowers grow on it"

Vincent Van Gogh



“Fair and measured”

Exams regular Ofqual has announced details of the approach it plans to take to grading exams and assessments in summer 2022.

Ofqual intends to treat 2022 as a ‘transition year’, with senior examiners setting grade boundaries pitched midway between those of 2021 and the pre-pandemic days of 2019, after reviewing work produced by students. Ofqual predicts higher overall results in 2021 compared to 2019 – due in part to a more generous, albeit as fair as possible grade distribution – but emphasises that the grades in question will be based on students’ performance in exams.

Longer term, the regulator has stressed the importance of returning to traditional formal exam arrangements by 2023, with common assessments set, marked and graded by exam boards and widely recognised by universities, colleges and employers.

Commenting on the announcement, Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the NEU, remarked “The amendments to qualifications and assessment must give those who have been most severely impacted the best chance of a level playing field in order to ensure the best chance at fairness for as many students as possible.

“This announcement does not do that. Advanced information about exams will be announced in Spring. This is too late for teachers to prepare their pupils for the exams. Over 100,000 pupils are currently absent from school. These proposals take insufficient account of this absence and its effect on teachers’ ability to cover the syllabus and pupils’ ability to learn.”

▼ **SAVE THE DATE** ▼

KEYNOTES AND CORRESPONDENCE

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



THE HEADLINE:

HMCI discusses Ofsted’s research role

WHO? Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector

WHERE? researchED National Conference 2021

WHEN? 6th September 2021

“We know that inspectorates are meant to influence a system – but how do they do it? Is it really all about judgements, or is it more complicated? I think it’s a bit more complicated, and that an inspectorate influences a system in at least five ways.

First, all inspectorates have inspection frameworks. Like others, ours sets out how we assess schools. As I hope you know, ours is as grounded in evidence as we can make it. Then there is the inspection process itself. It has been redesigned not just to reach conclusions, but also to build in the professional dialogue that should help those at the receiving end of inspection.

Next, our judgements both reassure people and also help them make choices and decisions when necessary. Then our reports aim to give parents in particular the information and reassurance that they need.

All of these elements have been significantly modified or developed in recent years, I believe for the better. The fifth way that an inspectorate has influence ... is our insights, analysis and research. This element of our work allows us to present the big picture, highlight good practice and inform policy development. Our work is thorough. We’re impartial. We’re honest and we’re often a critical – and independent – friend to government.”



THE HEADLINE:

Unions issue joint response to School Teachers’ Review Body report

TO? Gavin Williamson, (now former) Secretary of State for Education

FROM? ASCL, NAHT, NEU and Voice Community

WHEN? 14th September 2021

“Our members are rightly angry at the unjustified and demoralising pay freeze. The Government is wrong on the key issues, seeks to restrict the STRB in its considerations and is damaging the profession.

In the face of the Government’s plans to freeze their pay, teachers and school leaders continue to support the country’s response to the pandemic. On their behalf, we urge you to drop the pay freeze and implement the pay increase needed to begin to repair the damage caused by the long period of real-terms cuts to the pay of teachers and school leaders.

We also urge you to recognise the consensus on the key issues and to work with us on the urgent solutions needed. They include restoring competitive pay within a fair pay structure, as well as providing the support teachers and school leaders need, including reduced workload.”

8-12 NOVEMBER National School Meals Week 2021 | 16 NOVEMBER Bringing the past to life
10 DECEMBER Save the Children Christmas Jumper Day 2021

8-12 NOVEMBER

National School Meals Week 2021
National
thegreatschoolslunch.co.uk

Schools catering body LACA will once again be overseeing the annual celebration of school-provided lunches. New on the menu this year will be the School Tucker Trial, in which students earn stars for every meal consumed throughout the week and five distinct theme days. Those interested in getting involved can download accompanying resources from the NSMW website.

16 NOVEMBER

Bringing the past to life: Using archives to enrich teaching
Online
bit.ly/bth-archives

Hosted by Behind the Headlines, this free, half-day CPD session will focus on the use of archive material in education. Archiving specialists from the likes of The Guardian Foundation, Marks & Spencer and publisher DC Thomson will discuss their education programmes, and a teacher panel will share their experience of archive initiatives across a range of settings.

10 DECEMBER

Save the Children Christmas Jumper Day 2021
National
savethechildren.org.uk/christmas-jumper-day

Christmas Jumper Day will have everyone up and down the country rocking up to schools and work in their silliest, swankiest jumpers. Sign up at the website above and get your free fundraising pack, containing a Fundraising Game Plan and everything else you need to make Christmas Jumper Day epic.



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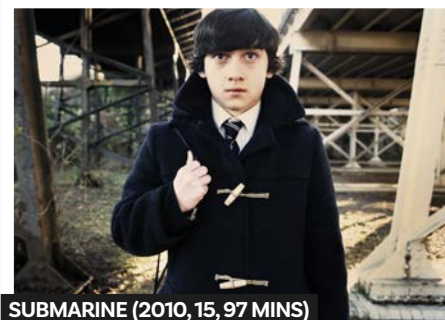


US MIL-STD
810G military
grade durability



All- rounded
rubber edges

Get Into Film



SUBMARINE (2010, 15, 97 MINS)

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Psychology; film studies

15-year-old Welsh schoolboy Oliver Tate has two urgent objectives: to lose his virginity to fiery classmate Jordana, and to stop a New Age guru from running off with his mum. But as this quirky, British coming-of-age comedy deliciously illustrates, these things are easier said than done...

...because what goes on in Oliver's mind has little bearing on reality – particularly since he's a duffle-coated social inadequate, rather than the coolly sophisticated hero he imagines himself to be.

The angst-filled struggles towards manhood that follow are hilarious and affecting, aided by brilliant performances and cracking dialogue. Along the way, nods to French New Wave cinema and other arty visual devices provide additional fun, while giving literal form to the self-absorbed drama playing in Oliver's head.

Discussion questions:

- By the end of the film, is Oliver's mental health in a better place or a worse one? Why do you think this is?
- Have you seen any other films featuring young people that broach the subject of mental health or depression? Were they successful?

Head online to intofilm.org to download the film guide for *Submarine*, which contains teacher notes on the above questions and much more



Retweets

Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?

Jay Davenport @jaydav20

As she sits in her bedroom, away from her peers, isolated due to COVID, diligently completing set work as no online teaching, is there any chance that my Year 11 daughter can find out how she'll be assessed after 2 years of disrupted GCSE study? Asking for me and probably others!

Laura McInerney @miss_mcinerney

Not sure I have any words to describe Williamson's time in office. It's better represented by a long guttural scream of pain.

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

TEACHER TALES

True stories from the education chalkface

Checking in

Following an inter-school rugby fixture, I took a 12-year-old prop forward to A&E after he'd shed blood on behalf of his teammates. While checking in, he was asked by the receptionist if he'd visited the hospital before and he replied that he had. There followed a few minutes of searching, and then some consultation with her colleagues. She asked again if he was sure he'd been there before, and he was emphatic that he had – two weeks previously. More feverish checking. Finally, she returned and apologised for not being able to find his details anywhere – but then asked what he'd come in for. His reply? "I came in to see my Granddad."

Know your place

An Ofsted inspector entered a primary classroom and sat himself down at one of the children's worktables. A boy sat nearby asked him if he was an Ofsted inspector, to which he replied that he was.

The boy then asked if he intended to do some writing, to which he again replied in the affirmative. The boy then asked a third question – "Will you be writing in joined-up handwriting?" The inspector, in calm and measured tones replied, "Yes, I will be." In a rather more forceful tone, the boy quickly replied, "Well, you're on the wrong table then!"

Dialling out

In the early days of mobile phones – back when they *definitely* weren't allowed in school – a boy managed to get locked in the toilets. Thanks to his contraband mobile, however, he was able to call his mum, who then phoned the school to tell us to go and get him out...

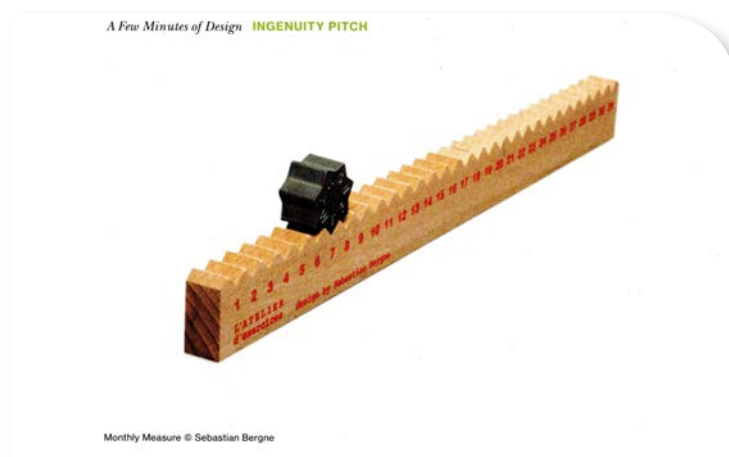
Find more true tales and amusing anecdotes at schoolhumour.co.uk

A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

#18 INGENUITY PITCH

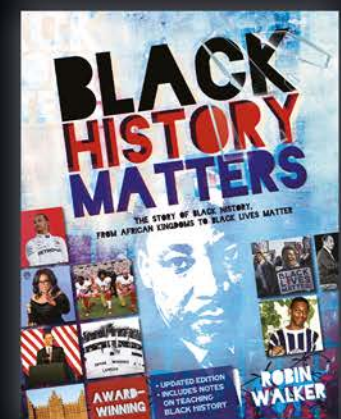
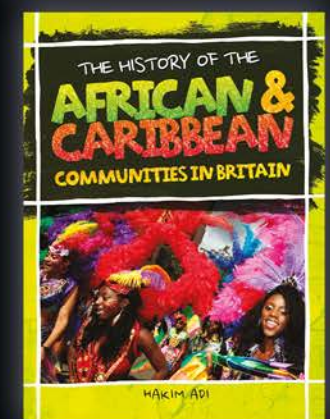
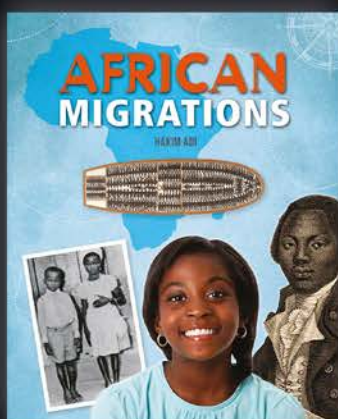
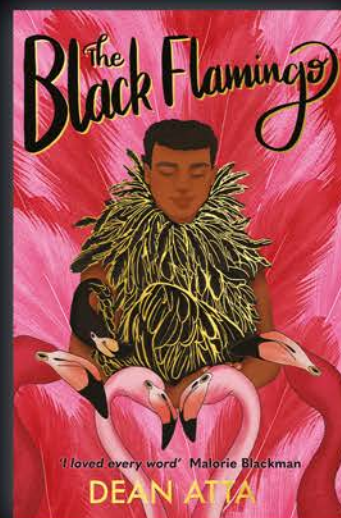
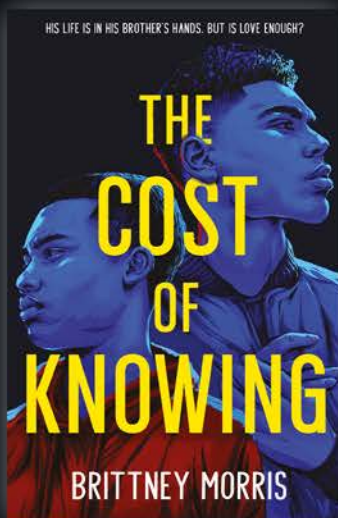
Look at the images on the other side of this card and work out what the designer was trying to achieve.

Write a 100-word blog post or magazine article to launch the product, identifying the problem it addresses and explaining why this is a good solution.



BOOKS TO EDUCATE AND INSPIRE

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AND TO SIGN UP TO OUR NEWSLETTER!

The Vocab Clinic

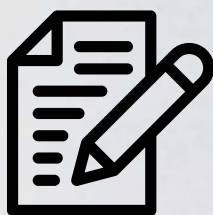
Support your students towards better language use, with the help of our resident word-wizard, **Alex Quigley**...



TRY THIS TODAY: 'TAKE FIVE'

Across all subjects, students will choose from hundreds of words in the course of their everyday writing. We can help those who might struggle with this via the engaging 'Take Five' activity, which encourages them to habitually use thesauruses to locate five handy synonyms.

Many of the words students are expected to use in class are examples of general academic vocabulary. In history, for example, when writing about a king, they could be encouraged to locate five synonyms for 'powerful', such as 'omnipotent', 'dominant', 'authoritarian', 'stalwart' or 'strong'. This way, shades of meaning can be explored and new words can be gained.



Cracking the academic code

One aspect of academic writing that's crucial for students' classroom success is effective editing – a complex, multifaceted process which is worth carefully chunking down.

The 'Add, Remove, Refine' strategy makes editing vocabulary in writing more explicit and more clearly understood. Pupils are tasked with revising a specific portion of their writing (by zeroing in on a single sentence, if needed) and told that this editing may include adding adjectives, removing redundant words and/or changing the vocabulary used to better suit their intended audience.

DO THEY KNOW?

Students can communicate functionally in a second language with around 5,000 common words

ONE FOR: GEOGRAPHY STUDENTS

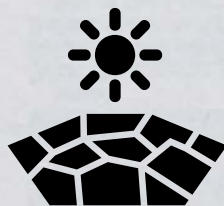
EROSION

Derives from: The Latin word 'erosio', meaning 'a gnawing away'

Means: The process of being eroded, or gradually destroyed, by wind, water and other natural agents

Related terms: corrosion, abrasion, dissolving, deterioration, weathering, decay

Note: The opposite of erosion is 'deposition', where natural deposits are built up on a landform



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

DEPRESSION

In geography

An area of low atmospheric pressure caused by warm and cold air coming into contact.

In English literature

A common mental disorder characterised by persistent sadness, common in tragedy

One word at a time

In the last two years, the words 'epidemic' and 'pandemic' have become universally known after crashing into everyone's everyday lives. Needless to say, both terms are closely linked, emerging from the same Greek roots.

Our current global crisis may be new, but the words used to describe it are ancient in origin. The root 'demos' is shared by both terms, meaning 'people'. The prefix 'epi' means 'visited upon' – so we can say that COVID 19 has been 'visited upon the people'.

The prefix 'pan', meanwhile, means 'all' – particularly in reference to spanning continents – and is thus used when referring to a hugely widespread disease that amounts to an international catastrophe.



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



ASK THE EXPERT

“Technology can present distractions”

Lenovo's Coby Gurr explains how LanSchool can empower teachers when it comes to digital learning

1 What differences have you observed with schools' use of technology pre-and post-pandemic?

One obvious change is the widespread adoption of 1:1 devices. Many schools previously had 1:1 for certain grade levels, but the pandemic forced them to figure out how to get devices into more students' hands, which often required them to be resourceful. Lenovo is working with schools to help where we can. We're currently running an 'Equity Program', whereby every Lenovo device purchase results in a small donation towards helping underprivileged children gain better access to technology.

One interesting outcome of distance learning is that teachers and students have become much more comfortable and skilled with using technology. Another is the growth of more innovative lesson planning. Those speak to the fact that technology will remain a staple in the classroom going forward, and that people are generally more accepting of that now.

2 Where do you see LanSchool fitting into this new edtech landscape?

Introducing new technology into classrooms can present distractions and various other challenges for teachers. It can be hard for teachers to know exactly what students are working on, especially with remote learning. LanSchool gives teachers more oversight of this, so they can guide students' digital learning both in class and when they're at home. Teachers can glimpse what students are seeing on their screens and message any who seem to be losing focus, and there are some built-in safety features for limiting the websites students can visit.

3 How easy is LanSchool to roll out?

There are two versions of LanSchool. LanSchool Classic is a self-hosted software



EXPERT PROFILE

NAME:
Coby Gurr

JOB TITLE:
General Manager,
Lenovo Software

AREA OF EXPERTISE:
How edtech innovation
can improve learning
outcomes

**BEST PART
OF MY JOB:**
“Creating digital
solutions for schools
that have a direct
impact on the lives
of teachers and
students.”

application schools can use on campus, while LanSchool Air is a cloud-based version that works both on campus and at home. 'Classic' has to be installed and hosted locally on school devices, but the process is straightforward and it's very easy to manage once installed. It also includes enterprise-level data collection, allowing IT teams to see how the software is being used and spot where teachers might need help. LanSchool Air can be implemented remotely by simply sending links to teachers and students and is fully maintained by LanSchool, so there's no IT infrastructure needed on the school's part before they can start using it. Our software integrates well with Google Classroom, Clever and Azure AD, making classroom rostering extremely easy, and it even supports the importing of CSV data.

4 LanSchool is partly designed to reduce teachers' workload –can you tell us more?

LanSchool allows teachers to see when students are off-task or performing tasks incorrectly. Teachers can discreetly reach out and correct students before they require additional supervision, and also save time when guiding students by pushing content to all devices or blanking screens as needed.

ASK ME ABOUT

CONNECTIVITY – and how LanSchool's classroom management software is an effective complement to digital learning in connected and virtual classrooms

SECURITY – in relation to us partnering with online safety specialists to provide LanSchool's safety features, making it easy for schools to adopt a multi-pronged approach to their digital security

CONVENIENCE – and how LanSchool includes support for the single sign-on integrations used by Google Classroom and Azure Active Directory

lanschool.com/gb

[MATHS PROBLEM]

SYMMETRY

In everyday life, things are often described as either 'symmetrical' or not. But in mathematics it's a bit more complicated than that. This lesson aims to help students to sort out confusions with line symmetry and rotational symmetry.

Imprecise use of language, such as saying that 'a hexagon is symmetrical', may be tricky to unpick. This lesson focuses students on being precise about what exactly they mean when they use the word 'symmetry' in mathematics.

THE DIFFICULTY

This task is intended to bring to the surface the need for precision when talking about the symmetry of a shape.

Sajid says:

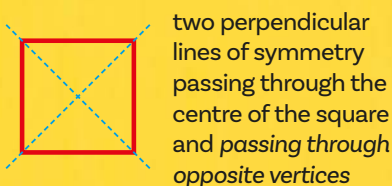
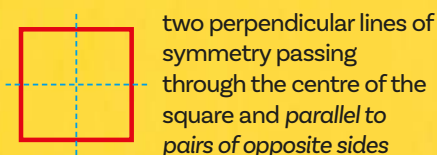
A square is more symmetrical than a rectangle.

What might he mean by this?
Do you agree with his statement?
Why / why not?

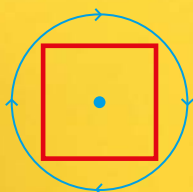
This is a deliberately ambiguous and imprecise statement. To begin with, *all* squares are rectangles, since a rectangle is any 4-sided polygon with 4 right angles, and that includes all squares. Students will probably agree that all squares, regardless of size or orientation, are 'equally' symmetrical. But how does the symmetry of a *non-square rectangle* (sometimes called an **oblong**) compare with that of a square?

THE SOLUTION

Students will agree that a square has **4 lines of reflection symmetry**:



and **order 4 rotational symmetry** about the centre of the square:



This may be a good opportunity to encourage accurate use of terms such as *side, vertex, parallel, perpendicular, right angle, rotate, (anti)clockwise* and *centre*.

An oblong, even though it still has 4 sides and 4 vertices, has only **2** lines of symmetry and **order 2** rotational symmetry. Students might disagree initially, and want to include the diagonals of the rectangle. Taking a piece of A4 paper and folding along the diagonal should convince them that the diagonals are **not** lines of symmetry.

The best way for students to develop their sense of line and rotational symmetry is for them to be challenged to find or invent shapes with various different possible symmetries. This forces them to consider what is possible and what isn't. Students could devise their own questions, but here are two to begin with:

1. Is the number of lines of symmetry always equal to the order of rotational symmetry?

Students will find that this is true for the regular polygons (like a square) – a regular n -gon has n lines of symmetry and order n rotational symmetry – and also for some **irregular** shapes, such as a rectangle (2 and 2) and any completely unsymmetrical shapes (1 and 1). It is

possible to find shapes with **any** order of rotational symmetry but **no** lines of symmetry, such as



which has order 4 rotational symmetry, but no lines of

symmetry. However, the reverse (e.g., 4 lines of symmetry but no rotational symmetry) is **not** possible, and students should be challenged to think about why.

2. When there are exactly 2 lines of symmetry, are they always perpendicular to each other?

This turns out to be true, and students could explore what happens with more than 2 lines of symmetry.

Checking for understanding

These questions should enable students to demonstrate what they have learned from thinking about this:

I'm thinking of a shape. It has 3 lines of symmetry. What orders of rotational symmetry might it have?

Now I'm thinking of another shape. It has order 5 rotational symmetry. How many lines of symmetry might it have?



Colin Foster (@colinfoster77) is a Reader in Mathematics Education at the Mathematics Education Centre at Loughborough University. He has written many books and articles for mathematics teachers. foster77.co.uk

The importance of impartiality

The value of educational impartiality is being imperilled by the determination of some practitioners to produce student activists, writes Alka Sehgal Cuthbert

There is a legal public duty for maintained and independent schools to enact impartiality in their practice, as set out in the Education Act and the Independent Schools Standards respectively. MATs are meanwhile regulated by their funding agreements with the Secretary of State as charitable companies, and are subject to both the Independent School Standards and Academies Financial Handbook.

It's important to note, however, that this requirement for schools to be impartial extends beyond party politics alone.

Deeply pernicious

Last year, the Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, gave a speech in which she reminded the teaching profession of its duty to maintain impartiality, prompting accusations from some quarters that the government was attempting to censor teachers. Academics at the UCL Institute of Education, for example, remarked that her (disapproving) citation of critical race theory (CRT) amounted to "An attack on Black scholars and activists who are already struggling against racial injustice."

And yet somehow, amid all the concern over whether teachers can or should be teaching material produced by activist groups such as BLM and The Black Curriculum, the issue of impartiality itself was barely remarked upon.

The notion of 'impartiality' is often conflated with demonstrating a lack of passion or ethical commitment. Contrary to received wisdom, though, being an impartial educational institution actually requires high levels of both passion *and* ethical commitment – only to truth and its attendant virtues, rather than nebulous 'social justice' causes.

We're currently witnessing the emergence of a disturbing trend, whereby some educators and LAs appear keen to accept – or even promote – the idea that schools ought to be incubators of socially responsible activism. The focus might be racism, trans rights, environmentalism or even a combination of all three. In any case, it's a tendency that's both wrong-headed and deeply pernicious, since it undermines the very idea of education being a public and liberal good, underpinned by the practising of political impartiality.

Social constructs

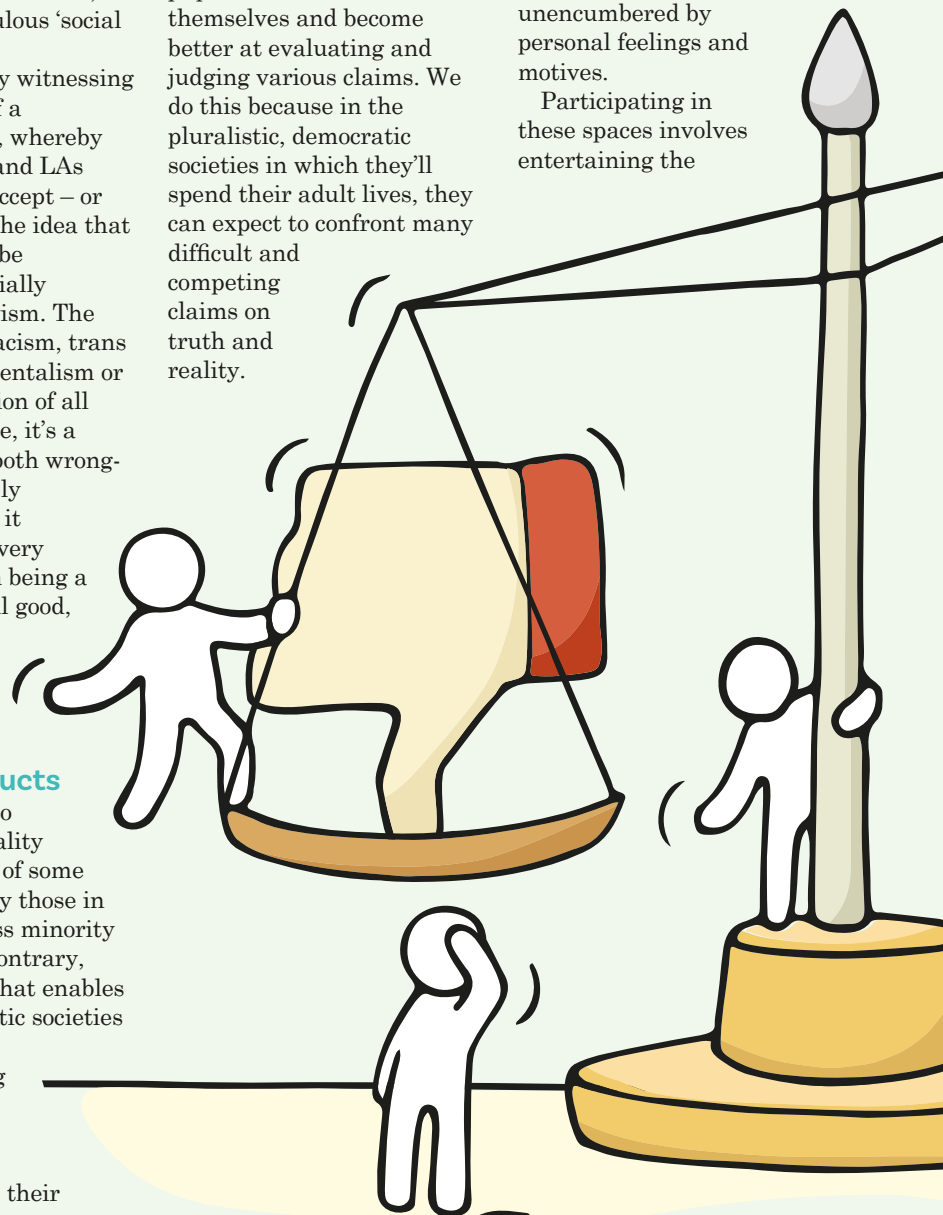
This adherence to political impartiality isn't the product of some ruse cooked up by those in power to suppress minority groups. On the contrary, impartiality is what enables modern, pluralistic societies to function.

Demonstrating impartiality in the classroom doesn't require teachers to leave their

personalities and political convictions at the school gates, but it does demand that they embrace temporary identities as educators charged with a specific task – introducing the next generation to the best (i.e. reliably validated) knowledge we have to date, in ways that encourage pupils to think for themselves and become better at evaluating and judging various claims. We do this because in the pluralistic, democratic societies in which they'll spend their adult lives, they can expect to confront many difficult and competing claims on truth and reality.

In our daily lives, we typically won't encounter fully neutral, discursive spaces in which we're encouraged to consider the existence and meanings of different ideas. Such spaces are purely social constructs, and highly valuable ones at that. They allow us to evaluate and judge ideas on their own terms, relatively unencumbered by personal feelings and motives.

Participating in these spaces involves entertaining the



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possibility that the everyday meanings by which we navigate our personal and social lives can be held in abeyance. Instead, we ask our pupils to consider concepts and statements much more freely, and from multiple perspectives – even those we may dislike.

That involves recognising that it's possible to like, and perhaps even love individuals holding ideas and beliefs we might otherwise vehemently disagree with.

This is no great philosophical insight; most of us do this constantly in relation to our own families!

Collective practice

Impartiality is a collective effort. It can't be 'taught' via discrete lessons, but is instead acquired gradually, through collective practice. It's this approach that's historically informed the growth and development of Britain's education system, albeit sometimes unevenly, with accompanying battles over pragmatism versus principles.

A common, broad and balanced curriculum up to an agreed age of compulsory schooling. The application of universal standards of behaviour, uniform rules and expected standards of work. Both have been core features of Britain's education system up to now, and contingent upon the recognition of impartiality as a guiding principle for the teaching profession.

Sadly, however, the

intellectual and imaginative steps needed to inculcate impartiality are increasingly at odds with an education culture that appears to be placing a greater priority on emotional safety and risk aversion.

Indeed, impartiality is inherently risky, because it increases the likelihood of encountering ideas that lead us to question deeply held beliefs. In 2008, Dennis Hayes and Katharine Eccleston identified problems that the therapeutic turn in education posed for education and wider society in their book, *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education*. Today, continuing efforts at reconceptualising individuals (be they pupil, teacher or citizen) as fragile and in need of protection, more than intellectual or aesthetic freedom, are further bolstered by modern redefinitions of anti-racism, which in turn threaten to erode publicly accepted models of liberal education.

The extent to which the status and value of liberal education is being demoted, and even stigmatised among cultural and academic elites can be seen in the cultural validation afforded to the Channel 4 documentary *The School That Tried to End Racism*. Originally broadcast in 2020 and subsequently honoured with a BAFTA award, its influence appears to have been wide, with a number of LAs and headteachers now busily hiring their own diversity, inclusion and equity experts for advice on how to join the 'actively anti-racist' movement since it was aired.

Original historical sin

The qualifications of these groups offering 'expertise in race' vary widely, as do

their proposals. Some seem reasonable enough – using anonymised CVs when recruiting, for instance – but these groups often tacitly endorse two central tenets that are, in my view, educationally and socially highly destructive.

The first is the notion that we're born into a society where, due to an 'original historical sin' (typically colonialism or slavery), racism is baked into every aspect of private, social and public life. The second tenet is that the purpose of schools and the curriculum is to directly address these structural disadvantages.

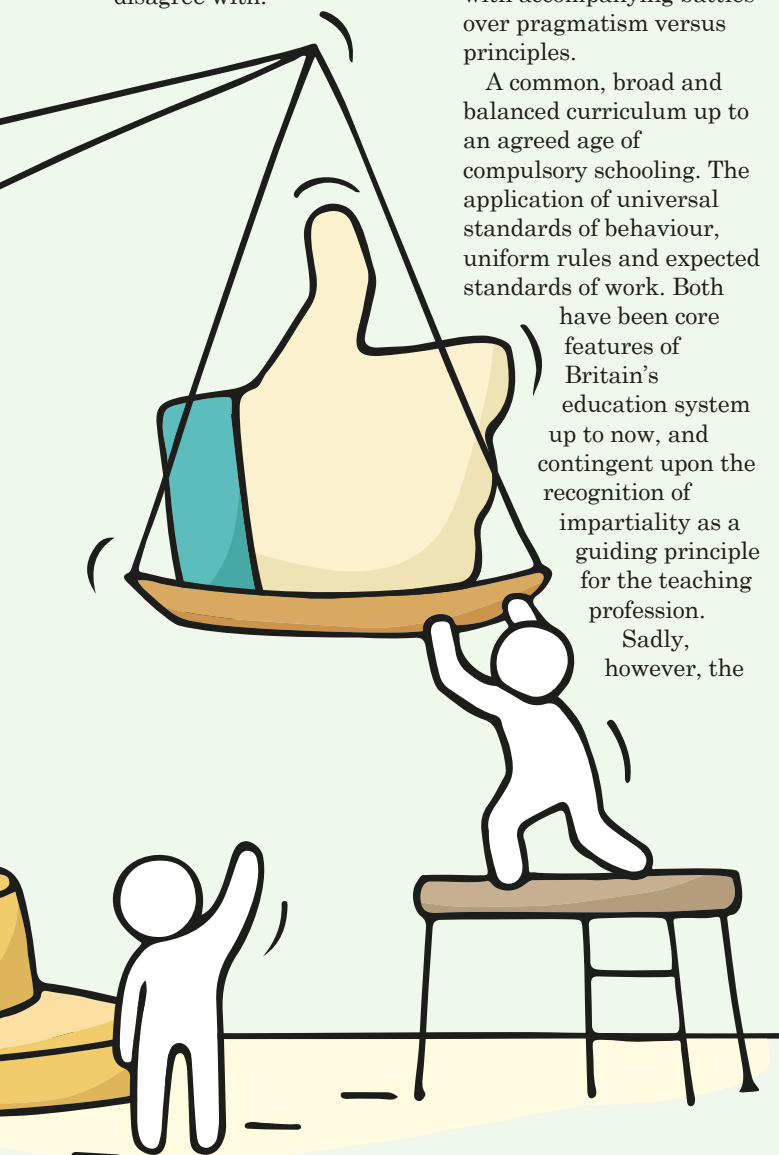
However, there has been little substantive thought or discussion as to whether either of these tenets are wholly, or even partially true. We're seeing schools and councils enthusiastically promote anti-racist strategies, yet the beliefs underpinning those efforts are fundamentally antithetical to those of a liberal society and a liberal education system.

We've arrived at a point where a thorough public discussion needs to be had over the first principles of education. Is there genuine public support for schools' attempts to produce pupil activists who will go on to articulate the political beliefs of their teachers? Or is teacher impartiality more important? For some, that will be a difficult question – but one that needs to be answered.



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. (£25, UCL Press); follow her at @ASCphiled





CLASSROOM LIFE

A journey of discovery

Headteacher **Lynn Gibson** looks back on the crucial role edtech played in helping to bolster her school's level of student support during the pandemic

The past year has been undeniably difficult for everyone, and it was no different for Castlemilk High School. Our school community was presented with challenges we could never hope to have foreseen.

The mere thought of switching to remote learning almost overnight and having to support pupils from a distance during such a traumatic time caused considerable angst among our staff. However, thanks to the hard work of everyone working at the school and our newly incorporated learning platforms, the transition we made was almost seamless.

The process has included providing our students with more personalised feedback, using tools to more effectively track student progression and offer round the clock wellbeing support. Our implementation of new technology into our classrooms has meant we've been able to use this difficult time to ensure our pupils are more supported now than ever, even before the pandemic.

Personalised and effective feedback

Just before the pandemic started, I had reached out to Abdul Chohan at Showbie, who helped us roll out their learning platform across the school and provide the necessary training to all



"RECORDED VERBAL FEEDBACK IS SOMETHING WE ARE NOW LOOKING TO KEEP IN PLACE INDEFINITELY, DESPITE US BEING BACK IN THE CLASSROOM. UNLIKE IN-PERSON FEEDBACK, STUDENTS CAN REVISIT ANY VERBAL FEEDBACK THEY'VE PREVIOUSLY RECEIVED WHENEVER THEY NEED TO, WHICH CAN ALSO HELP WITH THEIR REVISION."

**LYNN GIBSON,
HEADTEACHER
AT CASTLEMILK
HIGH SCHOOL**

who needed it. At the time, I had no idea what a blessing that decision would turn out to be. By the time the need for remote learning was announced, our staff and pupils were all as prepared as they could have been to make the switch.

One thing we immediately noticed when using the new digital platform was how it helped us improve the nature and efficacy of feedback for our students. Where we would normally provide written feedback for all homework and reports, the new platform enabled us to offer our students a more personalised approach.

Depending on how they preferred to receive said feedback, this could take the form of annotations throughout the text, an overall summary or even voice notes. This 'verbal feedback' proved to be the most popular option and crucially, was great for all types of learners and abilities – thus ensuring that no student was left to struggle.

It also meant that students were able to hear the tone of their teacher's voice, preventing the kind

of misunderstandings that can sometimes arise through the use of written feedback. Recorded verbal feedback is something we are now looking to keep in place indefinitely, despite us being back in the classroom. Unlike in-person feedback, students can revisit any verbal feedback they've previously received whenever they need to, which can also help with their revision.





Additionally, it has helped our teachers provide almost immediate feedback on student work, meaning topics have still been fresh in students' minds when receiving their grades and marked assignments. It's such a small thing, but it has made a real difference. Teachers and students alike have said that it has had a really positive impact on learning and attainment.

Mental health and wellbeing support

The adjustments we made to our provision of mental health and wellbeing support were perhaps among the most important changes at the school since the pandemic. Edtech has enabled us to harness and provide round the clock pastoral care and wellbeing support to all of our students. This proved invaluable whilst our schools were shut, since we were able to continue supporting students right at the time when they needed us most.

The support we were able to offer spanned challenging situations at home and mental health difficulties experienced by the students themselves, to the delivery of food parcels to struggling families. We were able to ensure that all of our students and families were safe and well during what was an incredibly uncertain and unsettling time for us all.

This support has since remained in place as an integral part of what we now offer at Castlemilk; students can still reach out to us for support whenever

they need it. Furthermore, our youth workers now use Showbie to send regular videos and wellbeing updates, ensuring students are aware that we're always on hand if they need us.

This has also helped to shine a light on the importance of recognising and understanding feelings, and gives students a friendly reminder to take a moment each day to check in on their emotional wellbeing.

Student progression and assessment

We are committed to ensuring that no student is left to fall behind, and we continue to achieve this. Using the same platform, we have been able to create short assessments throughout the school closures, which meant we could monitor students' results at all times. In turn, this has helped our teachers easily identify gaps and provide any necessary extra support to those students who might be struggling in certain areas.

This has been particularly beneficial for us upon returning to classrooms, as we've been able to assess each student's performance, and shape the additional support needed, prior to transitioning back. It's given us a great way of

seeing where knowledge gaps might lie more generally, to aid future classroom teaching and thus help us ensure every student has the right materials and assistance they need to fully prepare them for their exams.

Despite the challenging circumstances and uncertainty of the past year, the hard work and dedication of our staff, supported by our digital learning platforms, has paid dividends. As a school, we're now far from being in a situation where students are needing to catch up. On the contrary, we've actually seen progress and attainment significantly improve. Our results last year were our best yet, and we've seen more students than ever before going on to higher education.

While the past year and a half isn't something we'd ever want to relive, we have at least learnt some really important lessons along the way. The powerful role that technology has played in aiding our teaching and learning isn't a temporary one. It's now firmly incorporated within our long-term strategy, and we're greatly looking forward to seeing how this will continue to progress, post-pandemic.

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Inside this issue...

- Take control of your online CPD training
- 6 ways to ensure your edtech has an educational impact
- How to engage parents using digital tools
- Using video games in secondary schools – what teachers can learn

Fixating on academic catch-up efforts will only get us so far; addressing the real impact of the pandemic will require us to tackle persistent social disadvantage

Melissa Benn



During the first lockdown, I stopped to chat with a friend in the street. She told me that far from missing school and her friends, her teenage daughter had been relishing the absence of peer group pressure.

For the first time in her secondary career, she had no Fear of Missing Out. Being out of school gave her a sense of inner freedom – though that may not have lasted much beyond those initial few weeks.

Another mother told me how, having taken on the task of home schooling, she and her two children had been able to relish a sustained period of experimental and imaginative learning. For her, the pandemic brought home just how dull, rigid and meaningless so much of the official school curriculum had become.

Huge differences

Both of these parents are highly educated, working in well-paid jobs, and live with their children in stable and secure homes. For all the disruptions of the past 18 months, it seems unlikely that they will suffer too many long-term consequences as a result of their children spending prolonged periods outside of school. In fact, their children's vocabulary and intellectual ambition may have even been enriched by the time they've spent at home reading for pleasure and spending time around articulate adults.

However, these encounters got me thinking about the huge differences in children's experience of the pandemic, and how the government's 'catch-up' narrative misses many important factors.

As always in this country, it's class (broadly speaking) that lies at the heart of those differences. For a seven-year-old living in a confined space, maybe alongside several siblings, and with parents possibly out of work or worried

about money, the time they've spent away from school may well have been isolating, dull or even fearful.

Social lag

Through talking to state school heads in disadvantaged areas over the past year, it became clear to me that the most vital part of their job has been to stay in touch with families in trouble and offer what help they can.

They understand the nature of the educational losses suffered by children in such families, and how one-to-one tutoring – a key part of the government's official programme – will be of limited use to them. One head at a large, socially mixed secondary told me that teachers are especially conscious of how much their pupils are lagging behind, socially and emotionally: "Those are the gaps that schools are noticing most. We see immaturity, poor verbal development, more mental health issues. The size of the gap links to social disadvantage or parental neglect."

Links between lack of verbal development and social class have also been noted by the Centre for Education and Youth. The organisation's 'Oracy

After the Pandemic' report found that 71% of teachers polled felt that online teaching had negatively impacted on the development of pupils' oracy skills, with teachers in state schools more than twice as likely to see this impact as 'significant.'

The same report further noted that half of those teachers surveyed saw school closures as having negatively impacted upon the spoken language development of pupils receiving free school meals. Just one in five had observed the same among the most advantaged pupils.

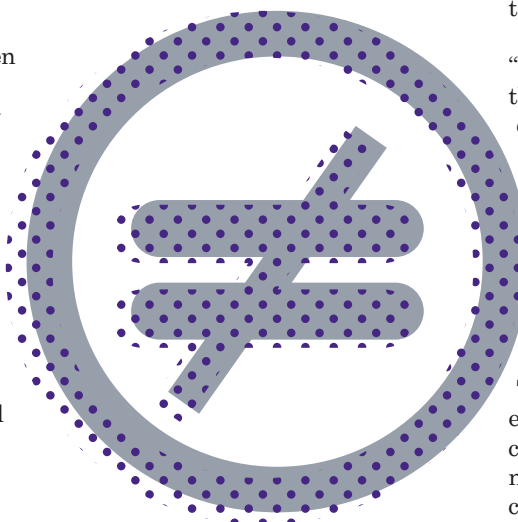
A broader approach

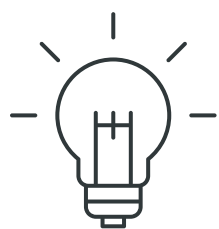
Meanwhile, the British Psychological Society has issued repeated warnings regarding the pandemic's emotional impact, and emphasised that pupils' wellbeing must remain a priority over the coming months and years.

It's therefore no surprise that school leaders have discussed the need for a much broader approach from government in relation to pandemic recovery, with less pressure on children to 'catch-up' and more money for schools, so that learning gaps can be addressed more by class teachers than outside tutors.

In the words of one trust leader, "We just need to get on with giving the children the best education we can – demanding more resources to do so, and campaigning to rid of the distractions such as Ofsted, pointless policy changes, stupid market reviews of teacher training and so on."

Or as Rae Snape, a primary school head in Cambridgeshire, puts it, "'Catch-up' is a deficit term. The pandemic affected everyone everywhere. Why place a burden on children to catch up in a race they never knew they were part of? Let's call it 'rise up' instead."





THE NEXT BIG THING

ECO-SCHOOLS

Find out how what this long-running environmental awareness programme can facilitate better outcomes and closer links with your local community

[THE TREND]

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

The Eco-Schools programme has changed to help more schools across the country drive environmental action to combat the climate emergency, biodiversity loss and pollution in their local community, all whilst working towards the international Eco-Schools Green Flag.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Over the past year, the national Eco-Schools team at Keep Britain Tidy has taken the opportunity to consider how the Eco-Schools programme needs to adapt to support the thousands of schools that are already part of the programme, and welcome thousands more that wish to do their bit to avoid climate catastrophe by taking action!

As of September this year, the Eco-Schools Green Flag is now an annual accreditation that is renewed each academic year with an application window in the summer term. This change will allow all participating schools to work concurrently through the international Seven Step framework to achieve the Eco-Schools Green Flag over the school year. The annual pathway also means that the national Eco-Schools team can provide targeted advice, inspiration and ideas to help your students address multiple environmental issues.

WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

Our new Eco-Schools Green Flag online application process provides schools with over a hundred impactful ideas for reducing their ecological footprint, engaging with their wider school communities and boosting educational attainment. The move to an annual accreditation will further enable the national Eco-Schools team to highlight the global collective impact of accredited schools at the end of each academic year. The resulting Eco-Schools England Impact Reports will be published yearly and contain school case studies and eco-statistics, which we hope will inspire others and make all accredited schools feel like part of a much larger community – working together to counteract the climate anxiety many young people and school staff are currently facing.



WHAT'S NEXT?

School staff can register with the programme for free via the Eco-Schools England website (eco-schools.org.uk), after which they will be able to access numerous resources to help students work through the Seven Steps. The website also features a number of exciting case studies drawn from our existing Eco-Schools – some of which have been flying their Eco-Schools Green Flags for over 20 years! Students can additionally apply to join our National Eco-Committee, which will work alongside the national Eco-Schools team and awarding body OCR to turn all curriculum areas green, and help organise a Green Careers week currently scheduled for April 2022.



Contact

01942 612 614 | eco-schools@keepbritaintidy.org
eco-schools.org.uk

GET INVOLVED

Tackling the climate emergency can seem like a daunting challenge, especially if you're not a subject specialist. Through the Eco-Schools programme, you will be provided with the resources and confidence needed to help students become environmental change-makers. We support everyone who wants to make a difference, no matter how small. Remember – there are over 59,000 registered Eco-Schools globally. Together, we are ensuring the next generation inherit a healthy world.

We might think we fully understand our roles as teachers, but how often do we consider what's now expected of us legally, ethically and morally?

Alan Newland



During my first six weeks as a teacher back in 1979, I organised a trip (on my own) to the Natural History Museum and lost a child on the London Underground. Beat that for an introduction to teaching.

The child found her way back to us without much incident, of course. No-one was hurt, or even upset, and off we went to the museum and had a great day. In fact, I thought the whole matter was so inconsequential that I didn't think of mentioning it to the head, or even the child's mother until weeks later, casually in conversation.

Cut to 20 years later. I was now a headteacher, and one of my staff experienced the same mishap – only this time with four children and seven other adults in attendance. That was the end of their day out. Following a full-scale search and rescue operation, it turned some of the kids had stepped on the wrong train, became hysterical and ended up at the end of the Metropolitan Line in Amersham, Buckinghamshire.

A taxi was duly dispatched to pick the children up from Amersham station. Again, no one was hurt, but far from being considered inconsequential, the incident prompted a posse of around 12 parents to besiege my office, demanding to know who was 'accountable' for such a 'negligent' lapse in 'safeguarding procedures'.

Personal and professional

In recent decades teaching has, like some other professions, become increasingly 'professionalised' through the imposition of inspection regimes, accountability models, statutes of legal responsibility, codes of ethics and practice and the regulation of

competence and conduct. When I was a young teacher, none of those existed in the way they do now.

I regularly address new teachers on various matters of professionalism at universities and SCITTs across the country. The questions and discussions raised often relate to ethical codes, such as the Teachers' Standards (applicable in England since 2012), which straddle both personal and professional values. I have no problem with that. In my view, teaching is unique among professions in that we're charged with purveying society's most fundamental values, with the result that the public must be able to trust us, implicitly.

I will therefore often posit a series of scenarios and discussions that challenge teachers to question how they would navigate various personal and professional dilemmas. For example, I might ask my audiences, *'If you are a good teacher,*

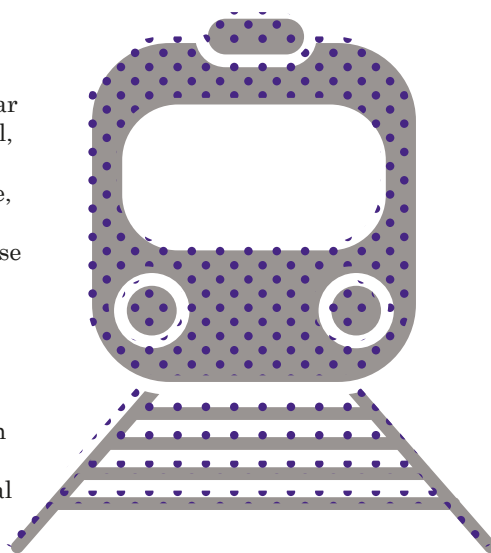
does it matter if you regularly speed in your own car? Get drunk in pubs and clubs? Flirt with colleagues? Use recreational drugs? Stream adult pornography in the privacy of your own home? Become active in extreme or contentious political causes?'

Liberty for teachers

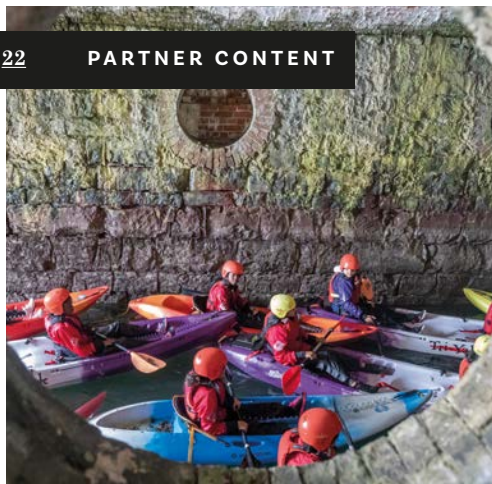
In order to teach the latest generation of children the difference between right and wrong, teachers must assume the role of agents cultivating moral understandings among young people. They have to enlist, persuade and secure children's commitment to moral standards, and get them to believe that they're justified.

By distinguishing between the legal, ethical and moral dimensions of teaching, and the upholding of public trust, I aim to be clear about teachers' individual liberty within a free society. Teachers should obey and uphold the law (though I've broken it few times myself). Teachers should uphold and promote an ethical code – the Teachers' Standards – that binds them together as a professional community (though I've questioned some aspects of it here and there on occasion). Teachers' personal and moral values should be considered their own business, and not a matter for intrusive public or professional scrutiny (though we should all do our best to keep our private lives private).

Over my four decades in teaching, I've seen the public's formal expectations of teachers massively intensify, but also a transformation in their perception of, and respect for us as 'a profession' – and that is surely a very good thing.



Alan Newland spent over 40 years as a teacher, lecturer, headteacher and advisor for the DfE and General Teaching Council, and now writes and speaks on ethics and professional values in teaching. His new book, *Becoming A Teacher: The legal, ethical and moral implications of entering society's most fundamental profession*, is available now (Crown House Publishing); follow him at @newteacherstalk



ASK THE EXPERT

“No child gets left behind”

The outdoor activities on offer at The Conway Centres can support students in many different ways, explains Nick McCavish – even in the depths of winter...

1 What do the Edsential Conway Centres offer?

The Conway Centres work in partnership with schools to extend and enhance their curriculum, enabling students to experience a wide range of real-life adventurous outdoor activities, as well as engaging creative and performing arts sessions. Courses contribute to building the health and wellbeing of students, encouraging reflection, self-awareness, communication, appreciation of others – and fun! We also provide direct curriculum support, delivering courses that contribute to raising attainment in examinations.

2 What will be the main highlights for schools visiting the Anglesey centre?

Our largest centre in Anglesey accommodates up to 380 students and 55 staff, making it the perfect location for whole year groups. Situated within 169 acres of National Trust parkland, it overlooks the Snowdonia National Park and is adjacent to the Menai Strait. Our vast range of on-site activities and in-depth sessions allow young people a significant amount of time to both enjoy taking part in them and develop new skills.

3 Great! When is the best time for my school to visit?

Schools enjoy visiting us in the warmer months, but what's unique about the Conway Centres is that winter needn't mean the end of adventure! Our winter residential courses, such as our secondary transition course, are purposefully run when the weather may be more challenging, to encourage children to thrive in their natural environment. These courses challenge, motivate and develop students' resilience, confidence, and self-esteem in a safe environment. Through encouragement, they become stronger physically and mentally – and all at low winter prices!



EXPERT PROFILE

NAME:
Nick McCavish

JOB TITLE:
Head of Residential Centres

AREA OF EXPERTISE:
Outdoor Adventure

BEST PART OF MY JOB:
Creating unforgettable experiences that bring out the best in young people, and seeing how the experiences we deliver make a real difference to their confidence and health.

4 How do Edsential Conway Centres go about improving outcomes for children and young people?

Through employing a high calibre of very qualified and experienced staff who are able to differentiate their teaching to suit the specific needs of a group, or individual within that group. Our staff come from, and understand, education. Schools tell us that our staff are a significant highlight of their stay, being supportive, friendly and professional; no child gets left behind. We pride ourselves on delivering bespoke courses that meet the needs of specific schools, rather than providing an 'off the shelf' service and making it fit the group.

5 In your view, why are residential so beneficial to children and young people?

At Conway Centres, children take away far more than just fantastic memories! Our residential aim to develop pupils' physical and emotional health and wellbeing, and have a positive effect on their self-esteem, confidence and ability to interact successfully with others – all whilst offering a unique opportunity for them to become more independent, make their own decisions and establish new friendships.

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ASSUMING THE WORST IS OFTEN FOR THE BEST

Colin Foster makes the case for why assuming students will struggle is actually the most positive approach teachers can take in the classroom...

When teaching, always assume the worst!

No, that's not some world-weary call to pessimism, but actually a positive strategy for supporting students in the classroom. Because consider the problems that can arise when you don't do this, and instead take as your starting assumption that things are probably, basically okay:

Teacher: Did you get on all right with the homework questions?

Student: Er, yes...

Teacher: Are there any you want to go through?

Student: Er, no – it's fine...

What's going on here? The student clearly feels that 'yes' is the expected answer to the first question, but having said that, they're then more or less forced into answering 'no' to the second. Any problems they might have experienced are buried, and consequently go unresolved.

The student saves face, and the teacher may genuinely think that all is well, and so move on – but learning doesn't happen, and is in fact *blocked*. It's akin to quickly asking a class, 'Any questions?', pausing for a microsecond and then saying 'No? Okay, good!' before swiftly moving on. It's usually unproductive, and simply ensures that any potential difficulties are swept under the carpet.

Here comes trouble

A much better approach is to assume the worst, to the point of setting up total

failure as the starting point. Then, if necessary, the student can be in the happy position of bringing you good news, which gives the impression of placing them in a more powerful position. Let's imagine that same exchange again:

Teacher: Those homework questions were hard. Did you manage any of them?

Student: Yes, I did the first one, but I couldn't do any of the others.

Teacher: Okay – do you want to go through the others?

Student: Yes please.

This time, we've made it easy for the student to admit their difficulties. There's no pretence around everything being fine when it isn't, and no shame in the student admitting to having problems, as that's clearly the teacher's starting assumption.

It takes no longer to frame

things this way round, but makes it so much easier for the student to be honest. Paradoxically, it's also much more positive in that the student is constantly exceeding the teacher's expectations – 'You managed question 1? Well done! Now, let's look at the others...'

High expectations

We're often told of the importance of setting high expectations. While there is certainly truth to this, if it simply means living in an alternate reality (*'I'm sure you all managed those questions without any problems, didn't you?'*) then what does it achieve? It's far better to set challenging tasks and assume students will struggle with them (*'If it were easy, I wouldn't have bothered wasting your time by asking you to try them'*).

There's no point in framing the situation with positive, leading questions that give the teacher a false sense of security regarding their students'

capabilities, only to then have that facade come crashing down once the next controlled assessment takes place, or when those skills are tested in some other context.

Every counsellor knows that if they ask a client 'Did you have a good week?' they're more likely to get a positive response, even if their week was actually horrendous, because it's a leading question that doesn't communicate a strong interest in hearing the truth. Instead, a more neutral question like 'How was your week?' is much more likely to elicit an honest response.

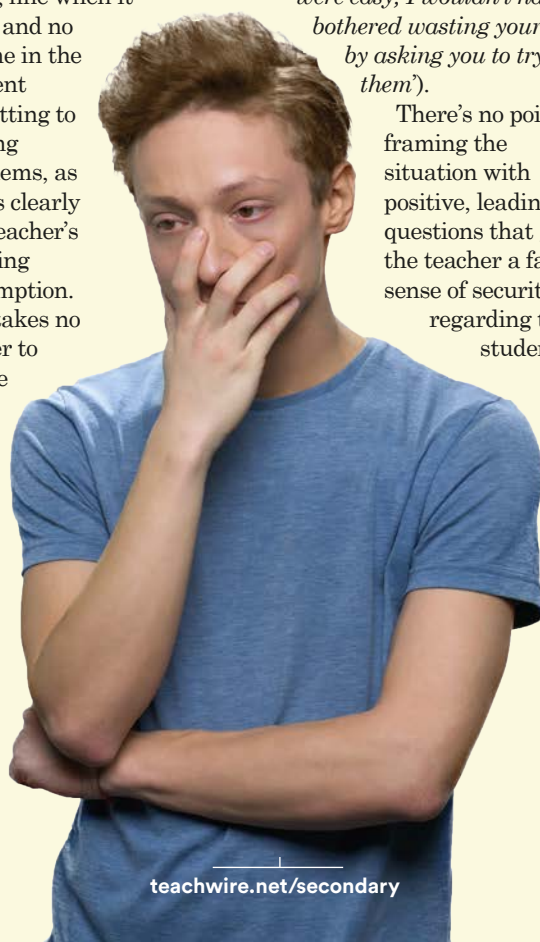
The same applies in the classroom. We want to avoid fakery and being told what we want to hear. Instead, we have to probe for the problems, the difficulties, the things that make no sense to the student, and make it easy for them to tell us those things.

Instead of asking 'Any questions?' we could ask, 'What questions do you have?' so that it's clear from our entire stance that questions are something we welcome, not an inconvenience. Only then will we put ourselves in a strong position to help students move forwards in their learning.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colin Foster (@colinfoster77) is a Reader in Mathematics Education at the Mathematics Education Centre at Loughborough University. He has written many books and articles for mathematics teachers – find out more at foster77.co.uk



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3 things we've learnt about...

THE PROCESS OF 'GETTING BACK TO NORMAL'

The start of this new academic year saw teachers still eager to teach, but also somewhat wary of current safety measures and pupil behaviour in the months to come...

1 Teachers are cautious about the coming year

At the start of September last year, 71% of teachers were looking forward to heading back into the classroom, following the widespread return of students to school after most had been learning at home since the previous March. This year was slightly different, with that all-time high of 71% having dropped to an all-time low of 55%. Why the dramatic change?

It seems that the relaxing of pandemic restrictions, combined with the restart of school caused a spike in teacher anxiety. 64% of teachers reported being worried that either they or their students would catch COVID upon their return to the classroom.

A further 78% of teachers expressed a lack of confidence in the notion that students' learning wouldn't be affected by COVID. Yet even amid the uncertainty of the year ahead, the new academic year still provides teachers with what two in three profess to love doing most – teaching lessons!

2 Masks are still the item of the month

At the time of writing, the bubbles are gone, masks are no longer required and contact tracing has been taken out of house. The data suggests these new guidelines aren't lost on staff, with 87% of headteachers expressing confidence that their colleagues at least moderately understand what the updated rules involve. That's still down on 2020/21, though, where the same figure was 95%.

Though no longer recommended, masks are still very much in vogue with 43% of teachers continuing to wear them in corridors and 12% in classrooms. Curiously, those teachers most sure of the latest government guidelines seemed less likely to wear masks!

Those guidelines will likely soon change again in any case – not least because of the decision to provide vaccinations to 12- to 15-year-olds. The vast majority of teachers (90%) support this, while 58% of teachers would extend the vaccine to all pupils.

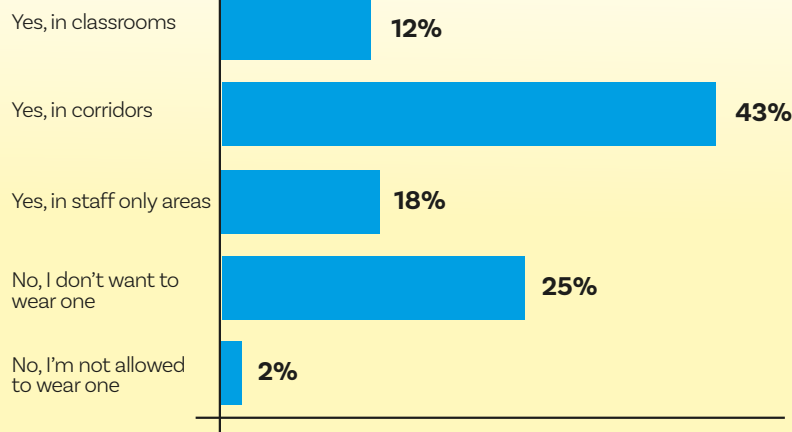
3 Pupil behaviour has neither improved, nor worsened

Despite turbulent times for students and teachers alike, some things haven't changed – one being student behaviour. Every so often we'll ask teachers whether a lesson of theirs was disrupted due to poor behaviour. When we asked this recently, 30% of teachers said their lessons were disrupted for more than five minutes – a surprisingly similar proportion to what we've seen previously, both last year and pre-pandemic.

However, past data indicates that behaviour often worsens as the year progresses. 39% of teachers predict that December will be the most challenging for behaviour this term. Hardly surprising, given the likely dips in concentration after the longest term.

Another distinct pattern is that less experienced teachers often experience worse behaviour than their more senior colleagues – so if you're passing by a classroom of an ECT this term, why not pop in to see if all's okay?

ARE YOU GOING TO WEAR A MASK OR VISOR IN SCHOOL THIS TERM?



Question answered by 3,673 secondary teachers on 01/09/2021 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

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ENGAGE YOUR 'QUIET MIDDLE'

Ben Dunford of Firefly Learning suggests some ways of improving motivation and engagement among your quieter students.

After more than a decade in the classroom as an ICT and computer science teacher I got to know all the different types of students and how to get the best out of them.

There were the enthusiastic stars with their hands seemingly permanently in the air, and then there were the disengaged and occasionally disruptive. Both types demanded attention, prompting me to think hard about how to improve engagement with one set of pupils and sustain it with the others.

And like many secondary teachers, I knew full well the challenge of meeting the needs of another set – those altogether quieter students there in the middle, diligently working away.

Eclipsed from view

These students, the 'quiet middle', can sometimes be eclipsed in a teacher's consciousness by the stars and the renegades. The quiet middle often goes unnoticed. They aren't very outgoing, but their attendance is good, they work hard and get solid grades, even though they might not be top of the class.

When put like that, it might seem that this group doesn't like a challenge, but of course we all know

that they do. If a student's efforts are properly recognised, this will create, sustain and develop their motivation and engagement. That applies just as much to your quieter students as it does to the stars and the disengaged.

When looking to improve the engagement and motivation of quieter students in particular, however, try the following:

- **Recognise effort, rather than achievement**
The quiet middle will often

put in lots of effort, but because they don't shout about it or ultimately get the best grades, their efforts may well go unnoticed. Look for those students who are pushing themselves, however modestly.

- **Ask questions of everybody in class**
'Hands down questioning' isn't exactly a new idea, but it's a very powerful one. Ask the students to keep their hands down after asking a question, give them thinking time, then randomly pick a student to answer the question.

- **Talk to everyone**
If there are too many students for this to be practicable in one lesson, make it your mission to spend quality time with each student over two or three.

- **Get to know them**
Find out more about what your students like doing outside of class, and don't be afraid to

talk about yourself and any hobbies you have. Getting to know someone works best when it's a two-way thing.

- **Let them speak up**
Group work can be a positive for the quiet middle if done in the right way, but be careful that quiet students are given opportunities to use their voice. Give them specific roles within a group that requires them to speak up.

- **Celebrate meeting expectations over time**
Students are expected to turn up on time every day, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's easy for them to do so, and it doesn't mean we shouldn't celebrate when students consistently meet these expectations.

- **Look at automating your rewards systems**
A manual approach can be an inefficient and time-consuming way of recognising the achievements of all pupils, not just your quieter ones.



**ABOUT
THE AUTHOR**

Ben Dunford is a former secondary computer science teacher, founder of Epraise and head of product at Firefly Learning; Epraise is a school rewards system and learning engagement platform that helps schools motivate students, engage parents and save teachers time. A new ebook, *The rules of student engagement*, is now available from Firefly via bit.ly/3hSgsB6; for more details, visit epraise.co.uk or fireflylearning.com

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New perspectives

Sarah Eastaff outlines how schools can benefit from participating in the NT's New Views programme

I want to show a perspective of autism that I believe hasn't been truly shown in modern media, and yet which some people experience every day of their lives." – Mackenzie Wellfare

New Views is the National Theatre's annual playwriting programme for young people in secondary schools and FE colleges. The New Views competition received more scripts last year than ever before, with the winning play – *Perspective* by 17-year-old Mackenzie Wellfare, from HSDC Alton College – chosen by a panel of judges from over 400 scripts nationwide. Mackenzie was inspired to write his play to share both his own and others' experience of autism.

"No targets to meet"

The programme sees hundreds of students write 30-minute plays on issues that interest them, with support from their teachers, mentor playwrights and the NT. Through writing their plays, the students get to explore and respond to contemporary issues such as mental health, relationships and politics, develop their creative skills and learn how to effectively communicate messages to an audience.

Last year saw New Views being delivered digitally, with online workshops presented by professional writers, free access to recordings of NT productions and masterclasses with renowned playwrights, such as Simon Stephens and Vinay Patel. This year we're once again inviting teachers to attend introductory training sessions that cover the aims of the programme, a range of teaching approaches they can use and the supporting New Views classroom resources.

One teacher from Ricard's Lodge



High School told us that, "The training sessions were brilliant, and we've absolutely loved working with our mentor playwright and were amazed at the support during such a challenging time." Another observed that, "It's not just the students this programme helps. Teaching, even in English and Drama, can often suck you of energy and creativity, as you're forced into ticking boxes and teaching to exams. Being able to work on something purely creative, with no targets to meet other than to enjoy, create and discover, has been such a gift. Every school in the country should be doing it."

Tricky restrictions

The New Views Festival usually takes place at

the NT, with audiences watching rehearsed readings of shortlisted plays, followed by a production of the winning play on stage. Due to COVID restrictions, however, Mackenzie's winning play was performed at the NT and streamed to participating schools to watch as part of a digital festival.

To bring his play to life, we worked within tricky restrictions. Picture a rehearsal room where everyone was always two metres apart, and only six audience members were allowed in the auditorium at any one time. Yet with support from our brilliant technical departments, we were able to stream the production to teachers and students across the UK.

Our digital producer, Joey, notes that, "The journey of capturing the

winning play for New Views was a unique and exhilarating experience. Unique, because filming a play for the festival in this way has never been done before at the NT, and exhilarating because the wealth of experience the NT has to offer was available to everyone. Lighting, sound and video specialists embraced the challenges of making a play exclusively to be filmed, while teachers thanked us for finding a way to share the work more widely."

Perspective and this year's other shortlisted plays were additionally BSL-interpreted and captioned, so that they could be made accessible to the widest possible audience.

There's much that we won't miss about the past year, but also plenty we now want to take forward – including the embrace of digital and the access and convenience it can provide, while still appreciating that there's nothing quite as special as being in a room together making theatre.

This autumn, the NT will be holding a series of CPD sessions for over 250 PGCE drama teachers on how they can work with the NT once they qualify, and we'll be kicking off our New Views training for teachers. Through this, we hope to continue meeting teachers from across the UK and support them as they reach thousands of young people every year.

National Theatre

The NT makes theatre for everyone, staging productions in London, on tour nationwide and worldwide and via digital broadcasts, while supporting creative education through nationwide learning programmes.

Sarah Eastaff is secondary and further education programme manager at the National Theatre; to find out more about New Views and the NT's Learning programmes, visit nationaltheatre.org.uk/learning

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THE TS GUIDE TO... REVISION

Effective revision is a student's most reliable tool for succeeding in their exams – so what can schools do to embed good habits, and make the act of revision itself more appealing and engaging?

IN THIS SECTION

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Claire Gadsby serves up some ideas for developing a more varied revision 'diet' for your students that's less reliant on drilling and completing exams from yesteryear...

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If your students are struggling to maintain effective revision habits at home, try pointing them towards Natasha Devon's study tips...

36 THE POWER OF EXPLANATION

The process of explanation is so integral to what teachers do, that we can sometimes miss how important it actually is, observes Michael Chiles



IN FIGURES: LEARNING IN LOCKDOWN

42%

of parents with children in Y11 during March 2020 reported not receiving any remote learning from their school

12.5%

of students in London received daily online teaching during school closures, compared with just 5% in the East Midlands

28%

of students in the south-east received four or more pieces of offline work per day during school closures; in the north-east, the figure was just 9%

Source: Ofqual

3 TEACHWIRE ARTICLES FROM THE ARCHIVES

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

Revision shouldn't be a last minute strategy, advises Alex Quigley – it should be an integral and ongoing part of every learning journey
bit.ly/107special1

NOTE THIS DOWN

Amy Forrester explains why the Cornell Notes system is just the thing for boosting your pupils' revision and retention skills
bit.ly/107special2

WHY RETRIEVAL PRACTICE IS THE BEST REVISION TACTIC

It's not the easiest way to revise, but definitely the most effective says Adam Boxer
bit.ly/107special3

Life Beyond PAST PAPERS

Claire Gadsby serves up some ideas for developing a more varied revision ‘diet’ for your students that’s less reliant on drilling and completing exams from yesteryear...

The need to prepare students for examination success is a vital part of any teacher’s job, and brings with it a distinct set of pressures. The specific challenges may vary – anything from changed exam specifications to the fallout of COVID-19 – but the stakes remain consistently high.

It’s therefore perhaps no surprise that the use of past exam papers remains such a common practice in the lead-up to exams – but is this really the most effective way of preparing students for examination success?

“Pupils soon tire of looking at past papers – it’s actually possible to achieve many of the same benefits, but in a much more engaging way”

Fun, low stakes and rooted

On the one hand, using past papers allows pupils to become familiar with the language and layout of the exams they’re due to take, and may help alleviate some of the anxieties they might have. It can also help to identify areas of strength and weakness, which can then be used formatively by teachers.

However, as I’ve seen in my work with thousands of pupils across hundreds of schools, pupils soon tire of repeatedly looking at past papers – it’s actually

possible to achieve many of the same benefits, but in a much more engaging way. How? By weaving past paper practice into a wider, more varied revision ‘diet’, with the key levers of ‘choice’ and ‘challenge’ at its heart.

Research suggests that 88% of students who revise effectively achieve or exceed their target grade. Yet revision is still often perceived as a daunting, difficult and/or boring activity by pupils – so how can we change this? We can all create more effective revision activities by:

- Better harnessing pupils’ emotional engagement and curiosity
- ‘Drip-feeding’ revision and exam practice into day-to-day learning, to make it both more manageable and memorable
- Including opportunities for collaborative revision

These components are always powerful, but perhaps more so now than ever. A key part of our current challenge surely lies in trying to minimise the stress and anxiety currently being experienced by learners who are striving to achieve their full potential against the

backdrop of an ongoing pandemic.

All the more reason, then, to focus our energy on creating classrooms in which revision activities are fun, low stakes and crucially, rooted in the latest research about how memory actually works.

Enhancing the revision ‘diet’

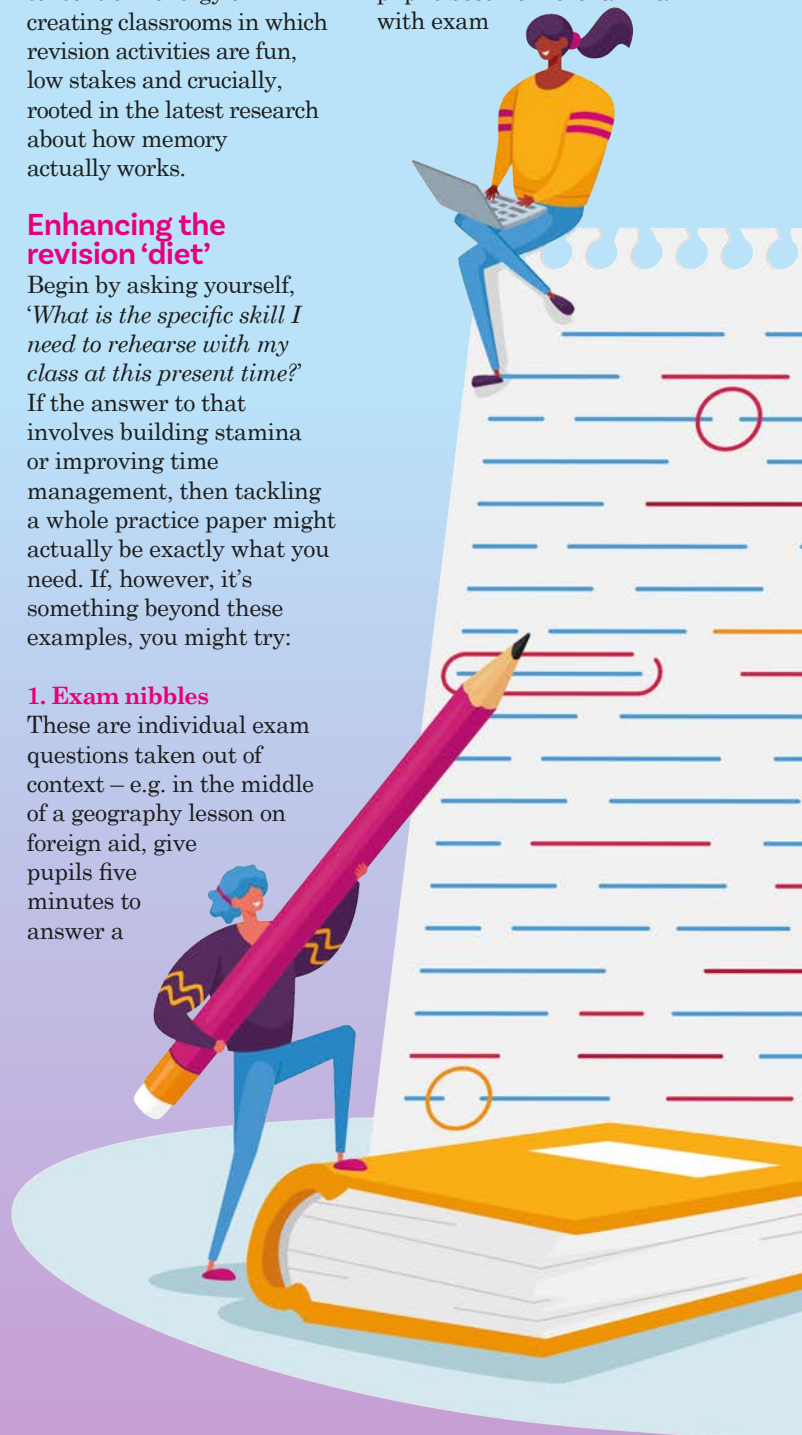
Begin by asking yourself, *‘What is the specific skill I need to rehearse with my class at this present time?’* If the answer to that involves building stamina or improving time management, then tackling a whole practice paper might actually be exactly what you need. If, however, it’s something beyond these examples, you might try:

1. Exam nibbles

These are individual exam questions taken out of context – e.g. in the middle of a geography lesson on foreign aid, give pupils five minutes to answer a

short exam question on deforestation.

Here, we’re still helping pupils become more familiar with exam



questions and terminology, but in a more palatable and less stressful way that's easier to fit into usual lessons. As there's no time to revise or panic, we can get an accurate snapshot of what pupils have understood and retained. As teachers, we can analyse specific gaps and weaknesses and feedback/model improvements in smaller chunks that are easier for pupils to retain. Compare this to 'mock feedback' lessons, where pupils can feel swamped by too many targets for improvement being delivered simultaneously.

Importantly, this approach involves interleaving – the mixing together of different

topics and types of practice – which has been proven to strengthen long-term learning (see bit.ly/ts107-pp1).

2. Magnifying the Message

Build an interactive classroom display around an exam question you have blown up, making it readable from anywhere in the classroom. Involve pupils in physically highlighting key words, generating bubbles with suggested ideas and explaining their thinking. Update the questions regularly throughout the course.

Drawing on the proven power of metacognition, this strategy helps to reiterate key learning and exam etiquette by keeping it in pupils' eyelines.

3. The sealed envelope challenge

Arrange your class into small groups, before piquing pupils' curiosity by placing different exam questions inside sealed envelopes and allocating one per group. Each group must then work together to answer their question on large poster paper, before presenting their answer to the rest of the class. You could add further challenge by asking them to do this as creatively, quickly or succinctly as possible. Their finished posters could then potentially form part of your revision displays.

Discussion and teamwork elevate this activity.

Whilst each pupil will only answer part of the exam, they will experience all of it through peer explanation. Intervene to correct, and probe

SCIENCE EVOLVED

Radical Revision is a motivational online revision programme for exam success in all subjects, launching in January 2022. The 12-week programme of live, interactive workshops is designed to offer sustained structure and support to pupils in the lead-up to their exams. Students are introduced to Claire's cutting-edge revision techniques, which have been developed based on the latest research into how the brain and memory works.

understanding where necessary.

4. Beat your Best – The 'Just a Minute' challenge

In the middle of a typical lesson, set a timer for 60 seconds and challenge your pupils to generate as many words, ideas and/or pictures as possible that relate to a particular topic, *without talking to anyone*.

Afterwards, ask pupils to count and record how many they came up with. There's no need for you to record their scores – instead, explain that you'll be challenging them to beat their own score when you repeat the activity at the end of that lesson or week. Invite them to quickly look back at relevant notes in preparation.

It's powerful to be able to demonstrate to each pupil that they're improving incrementally over time – something that's hard to do when practising whole papers and feeding back in whole grades, where there may be little difference. It can be more motivating to practice questions and skills separately, so that learners can see exactly where they're getting better, relative to their own previous personal best.

5. Lucky Dip Learning

Fill a brightly coloured gift bag with a range of questions, symbols and key terms, minus their definitions. These should be based on prior learning from across the syllabus, but with multiple examples of those aspects your pupils find most challenging. Place the bag somewhere prominent in the classroom and regularly

DOWNLOAD

A 'Getting Organised Checklist' for your students at

teachwire.net/ts106-revision



invite pupils to pull out a random challenge to be tackled individually or by the whole class.

Ideal for use in starter or plenary slots, this approach again breaks revision down into more manageable and appealing chunks. It's further based on the principle of randomisation, which is often employed to great effect in online games and hard to resist. Try it, and you might be surprised by how even the most jaded and cynical pupils can't seem to resist the lure of the lucky dip!

Ultimately, revision doesn't have to be a chore for pupils or teachers. Find out more about our Radical Revision online revision programme – and how its innovative power strategies, such as '30 Circles', 'Nailed with Neon' and 'Split Them Up' can help your pupils achieve their full potential – by joining one of our FREE online introductory sessions for your Y11 and Y13 pupils.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claire Gadsby is an educational trainer, author and founder of Radical Revision; for more information, visit clairegadsby.com/radical-revision

“THE HUMAN BRAIN loves a narrative”

If your students are struggling to maintain effective revision habits at home, try pointing them towards **Natasha Devon's** study tips...



Your driving force is the reason you get out of bed in the morning. It's the thing that

puts fire in your belly and makes life worth living.

People who know what their driving force is will tend to give their work their full attention, and are also generally happier. If you allow your environment to dictate your motivations, you'll inevitably end up resenting working because your life doesn't really inspire you.

Say, for example, your driving force is freedom, but you haven't taken the trouble to work that out. You're offered a job with a high salary and long hours and you think, *'This is what success looks like, I should take it'*. After a few months of never seeing daylight because you're trapped in

the office, you're going to end up very dissatisfied, no matter how many zeros are in your pay packet.

Find your driving force

Think of the last time you were incandescent with rage over something which was, objectively, not that important. Chances are, whatever happened violated your biggest value. Incidents which breach our values don't have to be objectively significant in order to have a profound psychological impact on us.

I was once talking about this to a group of Y10s and asked if anyone could tell me about a time they overreacted to something, and heard what's still my favourite anecdote about

value violation. A student told me that she'd walked into town after school with her best friend, feeling excited because she had some cash on her, having been given £5 in lunch money and spending only half. After some deliberation, she decided to spend the remaining £2.50 on a giant

“Tunes help us remember words, so put a melody to what you're studying”

soft cookie and hurried off towards a park bench.

At this point, for no reason she could fathom, her friend stuck out her leg out and deliberately tripped her up, so that she fell over and dropped her cookie in a

puddle. The friend then apologised and claimed she didn't know why she did it – all while helpless with laughter. Our heroine was so upset that she turned her back on her friend and 'marched' home in a fit of strop.

The next day, her friend brought in a replacement cookie, which the student threw it in the bin. Finally, the student told me she blanked the friend, remarking 'I don't really understand why, because at the end of the day – it was a biscuit.'

It wasn't 'just a biscuit', though; it was what the biscuit *represented*. The incident had made our heroine feel daft and broke a bond of trust. Above all, it was unfair. Fairness is a key value for some people, and in

study time (see 'Driving forces and study habits').

Make studying interesting

Beyond being sensitive to your driving force, there are some general steps you can take to revise more effectively – beginning with incorporating as many of the five senses into your routines as you can.

Mind maps These involve arranging combinations of images and words in a colourful spider diagram format to summarise key information. They work because when you read a word, your brain 'hears it'. Words are therefore an audio, as opposed to a visual, cue. By using images and colours, we give the brain more than one metaphorical 'peg' on which to hang the information, and can therefore recall it more easily.

Some people swear by using smell to similar effect. Try applying a distinct brand of body spray or perfume whilst studying, or apply a few drops of essential oil to a piece of toilet roll or hanky; use a different one for each subject.

Tell Stories The human brain loves a narrative. Throughout our evolution, this was how tribal elders passed down vital information to their children and grandchildren, thus helping them survive and flourish. We're therefore wired to remember information much more easily if it's conveyed in the form of a story.

Sing! Ever noticed how you can remember the lyrics to songs you don't particularly like, while mathematical formulas simply won't stay in your head, however hard you try? It's because tunes help us remember words. Put a melody to whatever it is you're studying. Use a song you already know well, and that way, if you find yourself going blank, humming the tune can help

this instance, the student in question was a keen campaigner, vocal member of the student council and frequently motivated by wanting to make the world a fairer place.

Another way of identifying your driving force is to imagine being stranded on a desert island. If could pick only three objects to take with you, what would they be? Consider what each object represents and chances are, it will be a key motivator for you. You can also call to mind your happiest memory – when did you feel most contented? From what was happening, and by identifying significant details about the memory – Were you alone? With friends? Perhaps performing onstage? – you may be able to identify your unique driving force, to which you can then try to tailor your

DRIVING FORCES AND STUDY HABITS



I'M A PEOPLE PERSON

If your driving force is being sociable, it makes sense to study in groups. Social distancing makes this harder, but not impossible. Get everyone on a digital platform, or email each other quizzes you've designed on the subject material.

I WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Is there someone in your friendship group who struggles with a subject you enjoy? Help them with their revision. There's a good chance you'll be going over the same material yourself, and explaining it to someone else is a great way of helping you remember it.

LOOK AT ME, PLEASE

Teaching is a type of performance, so prepare a 'class' on your chosen topic and present it to your friends via a digital platform. Make it funny and entertaining, as this will help both them and you retain the information.

I'M COMPETITIVE

Start a competition with yourself. Get hold of a mock or past paper and time yourself answering the questions. Log your times and see if you can beat them. You could even grade yourself and track your improvements over time on a chart (because competitive people tend to love charts)...

you remind yourself what you were doing previously.

Plant reminders Write notes or copy images from your mind maps onto Post-it notes and place them in locations your brain doesn't usually associate with studying, such as the bathroom mirror or the fridge door. Your mind's capacity for thought is 90% unconscious, which means that even if you don't actively register them, you'll still absorb what's written on your reminders almost instinctually as you pass by them each day.

Schedule your study 'like boobs' Your recall is at its highest at the beginning and end of a single period of concentration. Let's say you have an hour to study – this means your ability to focus will peak during the first and last few minutes of that hour. If rendered visually, it would look like a 'U' shape. If, however, you divide your hour into two shorter periods of 25 minutes with a 10-minute break between them, you'll double the amount of times your recall peaks, allowing you to recall more information. In this

instance, your concentration would look more like a 'UU' – or a pair of boobs.

There's a balance to be struck, however, since we know that constant interruptions can interfere with your ability to focus. The ultimate aim is to spend those breaks on endorphin-releasing activities that release cortisol and adrenaline from your system and restore its chemical balance, such as physical exercise, stretching, laughing, listening to music or performing a mindfulness activity. That way, you'll optimise both your ability to study and overall level of mental fitness.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Natasha Devon MBE is a campaigner who has spent the past decade visiting an average of three schools per week throughout the world, delivering talks and conducting research on mental health and related issues. To find out more, visit natashadevon.com or follow @NatashaDevon

The power of EXPLANATION

The process of explanation is so integral to what teachers do, that we can sometimes miss how important it actually is, observes **Michael Chiles**

When we're explaining and modelling concepts to young children, or sharing something we're knowledgeable about with friends, the quality of our explanations is crucial. As the science writer Dominic Walliman puts it, "You can pretty much explain anything to anybody, as long as you go about it the right way."

And yet, within the teaching profession there can be a tendency to underestimate the importance of this for our classroom practice. After all, the way in which teachers deliver their explanations will determine how pupils receive the information, which will in turn inevitably affect their understanding of the subject they're studying.

This is why investing time in preparing and practising the delivery of teacher explanations ought to be made more of a priority in any school's CPD curriculum.

Self-reflection

We've all been there – you've just finished delivering a lengthy explanation to the class when one pupil puts their hand up with the words, "*I don't get it!*" Conversely, there will also have been other times when you've observed pupils experience that lightbulb moment

before exclaiming, "*Oh, I get it now!*"

Our classrooms are diverse places, contained within learning environments that are constantly changing based on a multitude of different factors and events that might occur over the course of a typical school day. For all that, though, the difference between whether a pupil 'gets it' or doesn't will largely depend on the quality of our explanation. When we explain something, we do so in order to enable pupils to acquire new knowledge and skills – which is, of course, a core part of our roles as teachers.

I believe, however, that the power of our explanations rests upon three core principles: how we set up our arena (i.e. the classroom); the time we spend on preparing our pitch; and how we actually deliver those explanations.

I can personally remember how, during the early years of my career, I wouldn't always be fully prepared for lessons. My strategy would sometimes be to just have a quick skim through the PowerPoint the night before, and reason that teaching the content would be no problem.

This tended to happen most when covering lessons I hadn't planned myself, using presentations prepared by colleagues within the department.

Inevitably, of course, this approach would lead to problems when delivering the lesson, because I wasn't prepared for tricky questions and didn't always possess the necessary confidence or conviction when giving explanations.

The upshot of this would be that pupils found the subsequent tasks difficult to complete. I'd soon find myself frantically running around the room, trying to answer individual questions so that the pupils could actually complete the task they'd been set.

Time investment

In an extensive 2014 research review titled 'What makes great teaching?' (bit.ly/ts107-exp1), the Sutton Trust found pedagogical content knowledge to be a significant component of successful teaching, observing that, "The most effective teachers have deep knowledge of the subjects they teach, and when teachers' knowledge falls below a certain level it is a significant impediment to students' learning."

With this in mind, preparing explanations shouldn't be something teachers do on a whim. If teachers are to develop a genuinely deep knowledge of their subjects, they will need to invest time in preparing the delivery of the explanation(s) they'll be giving during the lesson.

This is important for ensuring a level of precision that will reduce misconceptions and prevent pupils' understanding from becoming fragmented.

So how can we do this? First, we need a clear understanding ourselves of the curriculums we're expected to deliver. That means being sensitive to the curriculum sequence, and how everything fits together to form a complete subject tapestry. Once teachers fully understand how each knowledge base is layered, it's worth taking the time to work collaboratively with colleagues on practising the delivery of your explanations.

Subject and school leaders could also try building in time for departments to present an example of how they intend to deliver a particular explanation for a lesson the following week.

In geography, for example, we might be teaching how longshore drift influences the morphology of a beach. This is a complex series of processes that works to change the shape of beaches, thus departmental meeting time could be set aside for colleagues to demonstrate how they would explain that to a class.

Reflect on each

other's pitches and give constructive feedback. This will give you and your colleagues time to not only craft and hone your explanations, but also consider any misconceptions pupils might come away with and how those could be dispelled. Spending departmental time working on your own explanations while seeing how other colleagues approach theirs will be time well spent.

Finding the right pitch

Another area worth considering is the level of demand applied to the knowledge we want pupils to know. This is a sentiment echoed by Mary Myatt, who has talked passionately about the importance of teaching pupils content that is 'Above their pay grade'. If we pitch the knowledge too high, pupils will naturally – and quickly – hit a mental panic zone and effectively switch off. It doesn't help that this can also happen if the level of demand isn't

challenging enough.

Again, from a geography perspective, a classic example of this would be teaching map skills to a Y7 class in the first few weeks of September. Most of the pupils will have already learnt some form of map reading at primary school, so you can be fairly certain that dedicating a whole half term to exploring different map skills won't create the awe and wonder we want pupils to get from studying geography.

If, however, we integrate map skills with other aspects of the subject, we could show them something new and create a meaningful challenge for pupils, right from the very beginning of their KS3 studies. The first step to creating challenging lessons that activate deep level thinking is to therefore consider what we are going to teach, why we are starting with this, and how we can create a series of rigorous and challenging

lessons. This is where that aforementioned curriculum planning would come in.

The power of our explanations is largely determined by the amount of time we invest in preparing, practising and critically reviewing them. As teachers, our aim is for pupils to be challenged, and to hopefully enter into a zone where there's a healthy struggle that activates deep thinking.

But if we're to get this right, then we need to give teachers time to invest in the intricacies of their subject, and work collaboratively with colleagues to establish the most effective ways of delivering their explanations with precision.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Chiles is a teacher of geography and head of department, and the author of *The CRAFT of Assessment* (John Catt, £14); follow him at @m_chiles



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5 REASONS TO TRY... Eduqas

Melanie Blount, head of digital resources at the awarding body Eduqas, sets out five ways in which teachers can get the most out of their free resources and boost their students' learning experience



30 SECOND BRIEFING

An exam board with a difference, Eduqas can provide teachers with a wide range of free resources to help students revise, gain experience of how exams are structured and presented, and ultimately craft the kind of answers needed for them to succeed.

1 START WITH OUR KNOWLEDGE ORGANISERS

Each knowledge organiser provides a succinct overview of a topic or theme, giving students all the key information about what they'll be learning, including keywords, and sample questions. They make ideal aide-mémoires, or quick reference tools that can be used throughout a topic.

2 BROWSE OUR FULL RANGE OF FREE RESOURCES

We have a huge amount of free teaching and learning resources and materials that can aid classroom delivery – particularly when teaching difficult concepts and bringing challenging content to life. There's also a range of generic tools that can help students to develop their thinking and acquire the skills they'll need for success.

3 REINFORCE LEARNING THROUGH PRACTICE

Our Online Exam Review tool is an excellent resource for evaluating what makes a good answer. There are hundreds of sample scripts that can be used to not only exemplify good answers, but also highlight potential pitfalls, thus helping both students and teachers understand what success looks like.

Question Bank is another great tool, which can be used to practice answering a range of past paper questions either in class or at home. Teachers and students can build their own paper from our database of available questions, ensuring students only receive questions they need to practice rather than the full original paper – an excellent way to target areas of weakness.



4 FAMILIARISE STUDENTS WITH THE STRUCTURE OF ASSESSMENTS

Past papers are useful for helping students practice, prepare, and build their understanding. By completing past papers under timed conditions, students can develop their time management skills, gain experience of reviewing their answers, identify areas of strengths and weakness and consolidate their learning.

5 REGULAR REFLECTION AND PROGRESS CHECKS

These are both vital parts of learning. We recommend using learning logs or journals so that students can reflect on their learning, identify areas of success, and highlight challenges

or areas for improvement.

Another good idea is to use simple checklists where students can tick-off what they have covered, and identify whether they are confident with their level of knowledge and understanding, or could do with a bit more help.



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KEY POINTS

All Eduqas digital resources are FREE – they can be accessed from www.eduqas.co.uk/Resources

Eduqas has a dedicated Digital Resources team who produce our unbeatable range of FREE digital resources to support the delivery of our qualifications

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CLASSROOM VOICES

“Remember that the classroom is *your* domain”

Nikki Cunningham-Smith outlines the numerous benefits of establishing a ‘September rapport’ with pupils to clarify boundaries and expectations

Teachers starting the new academic year after recent events could have been forgiven for entering their classrooms last month with a certain amount of trepidation – especially early career teachers with no experience of teaching environments other than those created in the wake of the pandemic.

It’s long been known, both anecdotally and through research, that the biggest dips in learning and engagement can occur after the summer break. It makes sense; all those weeks of late bedtimes, different routines, not having to pick up a pen for over a month, an almost ‘anything goes’ attitude because there’s no school in the morning – and that’s just the teachers...

So what now, after an even dicier period of engagement than usual, with no two schools able to meaningfully compare their attendance data, bubbles bursting, a pingdemic and more besides?

Pupils’ ability to attend and engage in school has taken a hit, and where there’s a lack of consistency, cracks are bound to show in terms of behaviour from even the most disciplined. But how, when the curriculum is so tight and time so precious, can individual teachers hope to tackle such challenges? Those days spent in the classroom may feel long, but the academic year can start to feel awfully short when it comes to ensuring all elements of a scheme of work have been completed.

SEPTEMBER TO REMEMBER

That’s why I’ve coined the phrase ‘September to Remember’ – a period of time at the very start of your teaching year that you can allocate to setting out your expectations and boundaries. The beauty of designating this particular period

of time to training the pupils you’ll be working with is that at any point later in the year, if you feel standards are slipping, you can invoke ‘September to Remember’ and instantly trigger memory muscles you trained back then and get quick results.

Earmarking that time at the very start of the year could actually result in you saving time that might otherwise be lost through classroom disruption, enabling you to deliver teaching at a pace that conceals any deviations from your medium-term planning.

To any ECTs who might be pondering how to get through this first term – I hope you’re in a school that has strong systems in place, so that you’re confident in being able to deliver your content undisturbed. Remember that the classroom is *your* domain – in there, you are the pack leader, and have ownership of all that goes on when the door’s closed.

SECOND NATURE

During your ‘September to Remember’ period, consider outlining the different practices you expect of the pupils.

What do you want it to look like during the transition periods of your lessons, such as moving from a practical task to a listening task?

For example: *‘When I play this particular song through the speakers, you need to stop talking, place your mouse and keyboard out of reach and find where I am in the room. Those able to do that the quickest will gain a house point during September.’*

Playing that distinctive tune will then act as a Pavlovian trigger for pupils in future lessons.

By explaining procedures like this to the class clearly, and with no grey areas, you’re establishing your boundaries. You can then go a step further by demonstrating what you do and don’t want to see. Modelling practice and being repetitive in execution, to the point of almost doing this excessively throughout September, will hopefully result in something approaching automatic behaviour among your pupils, and those routines becoming second nature.

The benefits of doing this are great, and will sustain you throughout the year – though there will likely be the occasional need to revisit, remind and sharpen when the moment demands it. By putting this into practice, you’ll have assembled the foundations needed to build a positive relationship – which will be vitally important, given the element of trust that goes hand in hand with maintaining classroom consistency, and your pupils’ understanding of what’s expected of them from the moment they enter.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nikki Cunningham-Smith is an assistant headteacher based in Gloucestershire



Dynamo

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pearsonschools.co.uk/dynamo3stars



teach SECONDARY AWARDS 2021

LET'S MEET THE WINNERS...

After the collating of initial entries, drawing up of shortlists, judges' deliberations and return of the final verdicts, we're now ready to unveil the winners of this year's Teach Secondary Awards

Education professionals can now call upon an array of electronic and physical resources to support them in their daily duties. But with so many providers offering so many different options, sifting through and finding the best can be a time-consuming exercise.

That's where our annual Teach Awards come in. Each year, we issue an open invitation for companies and

organisations to submit their education resources for analysis by a team of expert judges, to identify those most worthy of schools' time and attention. Across this year's

10 categories you'll find everything from engaging curriculum materials to cutting-edge admin systems and innovative coding tools.

We hope readers will discover some offerings over the following pages that may be new, useful or intriguing to them. Many thanks to our judges, and congratulations to the triumphant winners.

Lenovo's LanSchool has helped teachers improve student outcomes for more than 30 years, now providing screen monitoring/sharing, web limiting and push website functions, among others. Find out more via bit.ly/ts-lanschool

How it worked

We invited providers of education resources to enter one or more of their products and services for consideration within 10 different categories.

Teach Company staff then produced shortlists of up to eight submissions which were passed to our judges for analysis. The judges were asked to observe the following criteria when deciding on their final verdicts:

- Does this resource meet a genuine need?
- What impact is it likely to have?

- How easy is the resource to implement and use?
- Can the resource be adapted for use in different settings?
- Does the resource represent good value for money?

After assigning numerical scores to the shortlisted entries in their respective categories, the judges confirmed to us their three highest scoring entries, which were then assigned ratings of five, four or three stars.

MEET THE JUDGES



APPS

ADRIAN BRIGGS

is a curriculum leader of computer science and lead teacher of virtual digital technology at Middleton Technology School



ASSESSMENT

MICHAEL CHILES

is a lead practitioner of geography and principal examiner at King's Leadership Academy Warrington



CPD

NICOLA BROOKS

is a professional development co-ordinator for Reach South Academy Trust and lead trainer for the Wiltshire Autism Education Trust



CURRICULUM IMPACT

JULIE KETLEWELL

is the assistant director of Huntington Research School, a teacher of psychology and experienced pastoral leader



FREE RESOURCE

LIZY WATSON

is a lead practitioner for teaching and learning at Philip Morant School and College



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

ANN MARIE CHRISTIAN

is a safeguarding and child protection consultant, trainer, author and troubleshooter



REMOTE LEARNING

ADAM RICHES

is a senior leader for teaching and learning



SCHOOL BUSINESS

HILARY GOLDSMITH

is a school business leader, consultant on school business matters and mentor for the NAHT



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



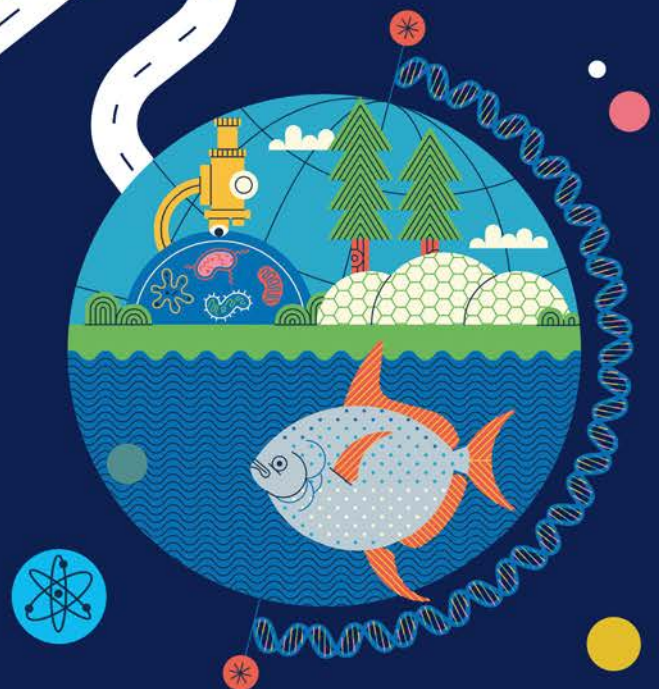
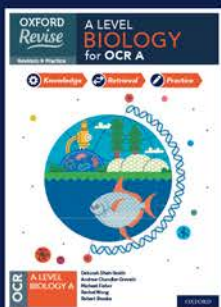
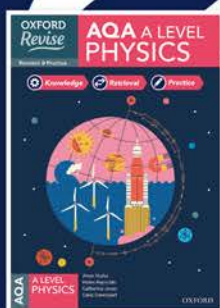
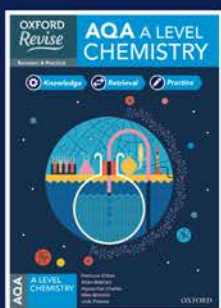
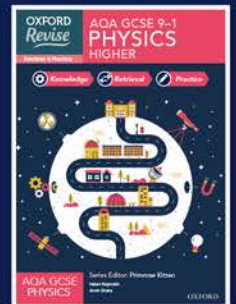
STEM

ANDY MITCHELL

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



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2021**



www.oxfordsecondary.com/oxfordrevise

WINNERS

CURRICULUM
IMPACTWHAT WERE WE
LOOKING FOR?

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



WHITE ROSE MATHS

(Collins)

collins.co.uk

"The DfE recently published research showing that following the coronavirus pandemic, primary aged pupils have experienced a learning loss of between 3.1 and 3.6 months in maths. This series of books helps to address that, while supporting children with their transitions from KS2. The books are available as hardcopies or digitally, so they can be used flexibly by classroom teachers. Interleaving is used to support students and help them see how different topics are interconnected, helping them with their long-term learning." **J Kettlewell**

OXFORD REVISE: AQA
GCSE SCIENCES

Oxford University Press

global.oup.com

"This series of revision guides is deliberately planned in stages to increase students' confidence and motivation for studying, in a way that will help them become more effective learners. The guides have been developed based on evidence derived from cognitive science approaches in the classroom, and effectively combine retrieval and interleaved questions with answers." **J Kettlewell**



DYNAMO 11-14 FRENCH

(Pearson)

pearsonschoolsandfecolleges.co.uk

"This language resource is highly engaging, with lots of interactive activities. Teachers can be flexible in how they use Dynamo, deciding for themselves which activities they wish to make use of in the classroom and which - depending on students' IT access at home - they would prefer to set as independent homework tasks." **J Kettlewell**

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WHAT WERE WE LOOKING FOR?

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



READ WRITE INC. FRESH START FAST TRACK TUTORING

(Oxford University Press)

"This resource ensures that non-specialists working to improve the literacy skills of the many learners still struggling at secondary transfer have the capability to use a tightly structured literacy programme with individuals and small groups of learners. The training is cost effective with clear guidance, and could be followed flexibly at trainees' own pace." **J Galloway**

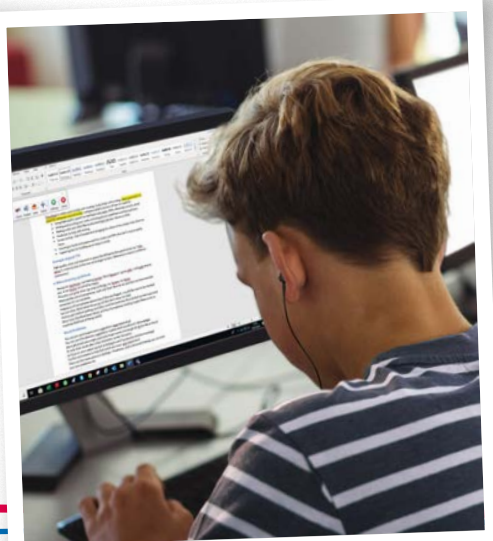


CLAROREAD PLUS

(ClaroRead Plus)

clarosoftware.com

"A Swiss Army knife of edtech tools for dyslexic learners and others with literacy challenges, such as EAL. It's a resource focused on individual users, enabling them to select the functions they need as and when they're needed, thus increasing independence and confidence. This flexibility allows for a range of uses, depending on each learner's needs and the stage they're at in their school career." **J Galloway**



INTRODUCING BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE

(British Sign Language)

british-sign.co.uk

"An innovative resource for those who need to grasp the fundamentals of BSL. This online course features many useful tools, and is clearly laid out and consistent in its approach. The pricing structure makes it available to anyone, and it also includes a number of functions, such as a 'Fingerspelling Animation Maker' that can provide users with ongoing tools and support." **J Galloway**

WINNERS

FREE RESOURCE

WHAT WERE WE
LOOKING FOR?

Print and electronic resources that are available to secondary schools entirely free of charge, other than for P&P (excluding time-limited offers)



LGBTQ VOICES

bit.ly/ba-lgbtq-voices
(British Army)

"This resource challenges perceptions, linking modern day inclusion efforts with the exclusion of the LGBTQ+ community throughout history. The materials allow for discussion and reflection within the context of a self-contained presentation, making them well-suited to PSHE and history lessons or assemblies. It's a powerful and engaging resource, without being overly complicated or time consuming. The links to modern day case studies and well known historical figures will speak to a range of pupils, and provide a unique perspective that can facilitate powerful conversations. As a form tutor myself, I consider this a 'must use' resource." **L Watson**



TALK ABOUT ALCOHOL

(The Alcohol Education Trust)
talkaboutalcohol.com

"A comprehensive set of lessons that includes detailed lesson plans, resource suggestions and presentations, covering key learning objectives for both PSHE and the science curriculum. The detailed plans allow non-specialists to cover the important topic of alcohol, its effects and safer choices in a fun and engaging manner, while feeling fully supported by the Alcohol Education Trust. The lessons allow teachers to assess knowledge and build on ideas from KS3 to KS4." **L Watson**

LEARNING THROUGH
LOGISTICS

(Talent in Logistics)

talentinlogistics.co.uk/learning-through-logistics

"This exciting resource is aimed at both parents and teachers, and seeks to engage learners at home and at school through problem-solving activities and games. The included 'Business On The Move' board game is a fun way to get families both playing and learning together, and has potential for use within the classroom. The resource also includes a range of other cross-curricular material, spanning maths, geography, English and science, with a focus on logistics and problem-solving via a series of engaging activities." **L Watson**

WINNERS REMOTE LEARNING

WHAT WERE WE LOOKING FOR?

Guidance materials, online platforms, software and similar resources that can support a school's ability to offer a robust and sustainable remote learning provision



EDUU.SCHOOL

(Hodder Education)

hoddereducation.co.uk/eduoschool

"EduuSchool is a platform that boasts everything a teacher at the virtual chalkface needs. The simplicity of its design, combined with the overall power of the platform empowers teachers and ensures that students can be quickly engaged. The quality of the thematic content is second to none, while its integration of mental health and wellbeing features shows that Hodder is fully aware of what's important when teaching at distance." **A Riches**

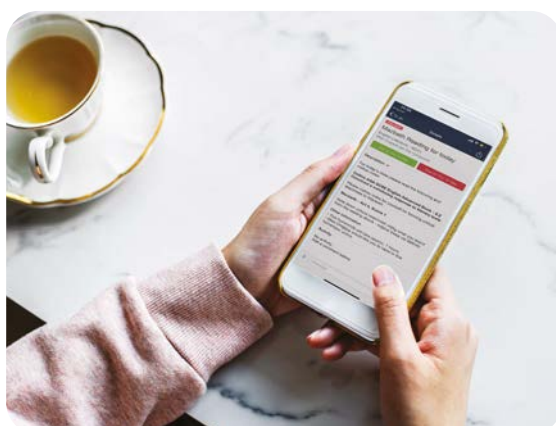


SACHEL ONE

(Satchel)

teamsatchel.com

"Satchel One has been a pivotal platform for many schools overseeing distance learning, and has proved its resilience and versatility. The platform allows teachers to quickly and effectively access and disseminate information on learners, as well as set work to be done via a pupil-friendly interface. Satchel One is also fully translatable and usable within the context of a traditional classroom setting, and/or as part of a school's blended learning provision." **A Riches**



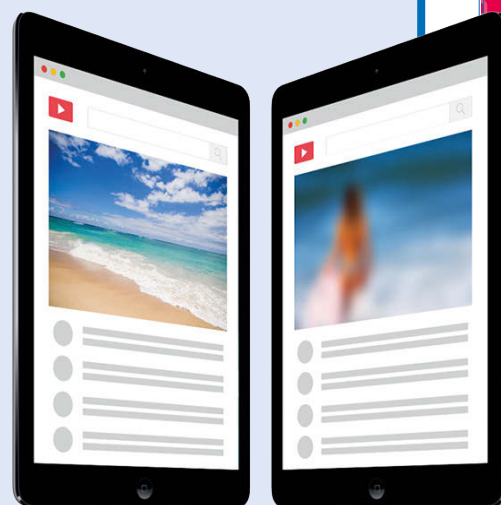
DELEDAO

(Deledao Education)

deledao.com

"Keeping learners safe online is a difficult job – especially when they're not on the school's network. Deledao is an application that uses advanced AI to ensure learners are kept safe while exploring the internet, and can provide umbrella

support and protection across numerous devices, stopping any malicious content in the browser. Deledao goes beyond simplistic databases, working intelligently to ensure that students' learning and ability to access content isn't disrupted by heavy-handed, blanket restrictions." **A Riches**



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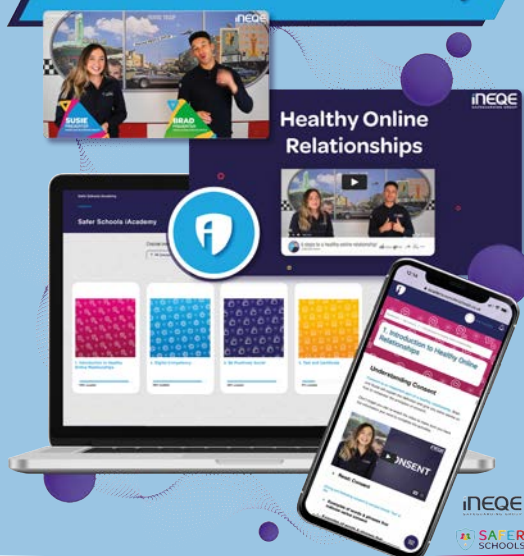


WINNERS HEALTH AND WELLBEING

WHAT WERE WE LOOKING FOR?

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

Safer Schools iAcademy



HEALTHY ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS

(Ineqe Safeguarding Group)

ineqe.com

"An excellent resource that adopts a modern, highly interactive approach to educate young people about a difficult subject. Healthy Online Relationships presents users with narrated videos, visual scenarios, quizzes and other resources that cover the areas of law, social media, respect and key themes that children can relate to, both online and in person." **A M Christian**

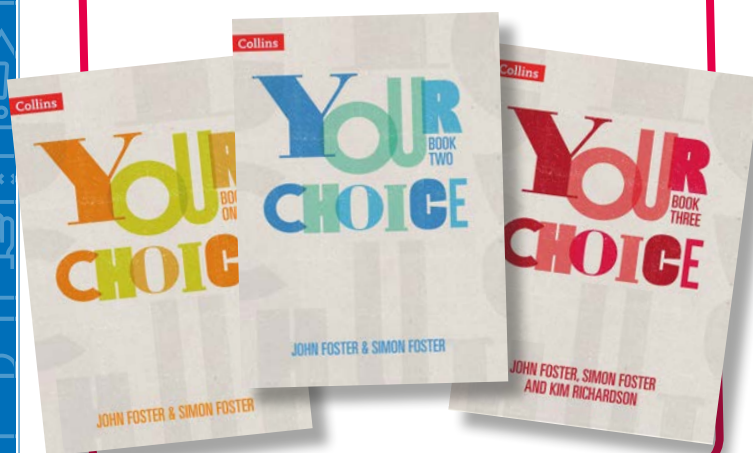


YOUR CHOICE FOR KEY STAGE 4

(Collins)

collins.co.uk

"A comprehensive book that covers units relating to modern life and RSHE modules. Simple, yet effective, it gives teachers a straightforward way of starting what can often be awkward conversations with pupils. Learning objectives are clearly laid out, with accompanying resources and key vocabulary in each module supporting consistency with themes in learning." **A M Christian**



MIND MECHANICS FOR TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS

(Sarah Rawsthorn, Jessica Kingsley Publishers)

uk.jkp.com

"This book ably supports professionals in understanding the complex area of mental health and wellbeing. As well as containing a series of exercises, workshop plans, activities and resources

for assisting young people in promoting their own wellbeing, it also includes informative explanations of neuroscientific processes active in teenagers and young adults, allowing readers to feel more confident in understanding the subject." **A M Christian**



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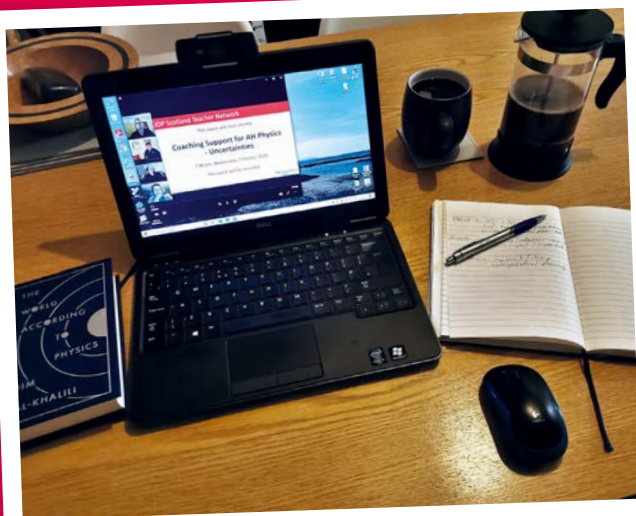
SCAN ME





WHAT WERE WE LOOKING FOR?

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



INSTITUTE OF PHYSICS

iop.org

"Created by the Institute of Physics, IOP Domains is an online resource that supports the teaching of physics across the full secondary age range. This is an impressively-featured, free resource that can build confidence, teacher expertise and knowledge, particularly among non-specialist teachers who may not have studied physics at degree level. The website is well-organised and easy to use, supporting both individual CPD and the ability for departments to learn together." **N Brooks**



TEEN TIPS

(Teen Tips Ltd)

teentips.co.uk

"Teen Tips is an online training module that can be used on-demand by individual staff or accessed collaboratively. It focuses on mental health and wellbeing, and is endorsed by the Inclusive Education Department at the University of Brighton. This is an ideal resource for developing staff confidence and skills in supporting learners' social and emotional needs. It's accredited by the CPD Standards Office, and staff receive a CPD certificate upon completion. Teen Tips also operate a 'community gifting' offer, whereby every school that invests in the hub can gift a second account to a maintained school in their local community." **N Brooks**



ROYAL SOCIETY OF CHEMISTRY – EDUCATION WEBSITE

(Royal Society of Chemistry)

rsc.org

"This comprehensive online resource from the Royal Society of Chemistry helps teachers deliver high-quality chemistry education. Covering more than 15 topics, it can be used to develop both chemistry subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. It's suitable for teachers at different stages of their career, including ECTs and non-specialists, and provides access to 19 free online courses. These are well-structured, and come with accompanying classroom resources, including practical demonstrations, downloadable activities, common misconceptions and quizzes." **N Brooks**



WINNER

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Ofsted,
Forest Gate Community School, 2020



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“The DPR was the best life without levels secondary assessment system I have seen accessible to all stakeholders”

Miranda Perry,
Director of World Class Schools Quality Mark





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



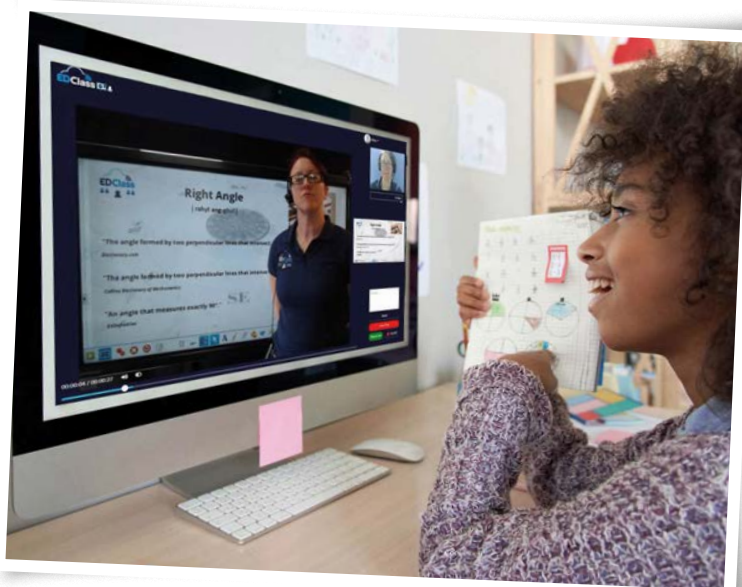
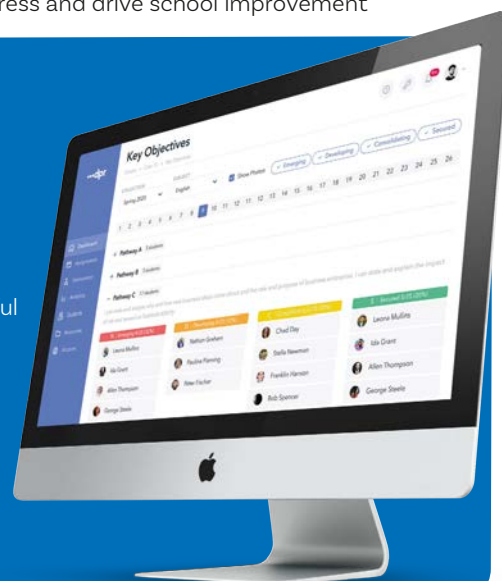
DYNAMIC PROGRESS REPORTING

(Axle Education)

axle.education

"Axle Education's DPR is a comprehensive assessment system and powerful platform that schools can personalise to suit their own needs. One of its key draws is the triangulation it formulates with its system for reporting to parents – an important element in all pupils' learning journeys. The rich, personalised data provided by the system allows parents to see how their child is performing in each of their subjects and what they need to do to improve. This is often difficult for schools to communicate to parents and pupils in a way that doesn't just consist of multiple repetitive statement banks, and is therefore a feature that makes DPR really stand out."

M Chiles



EDCLASS

(EDClass Ltd)

edclass.com

"EDClass is a platform that provides a wealth of support for a range of education stakeholders. Its tailor-made pathways are an excellent feature, enabling users to create a bespoke experience that delivers unique benefits to them. The resources available cover teaching and learning, safeguarding and assessment, with the latter comprising a 6-step process that enables pupils and teachers to gain a clear understanding of current knowledge and any gaps that may need to be addressed, allowing for a targeted approach."

M Chiles



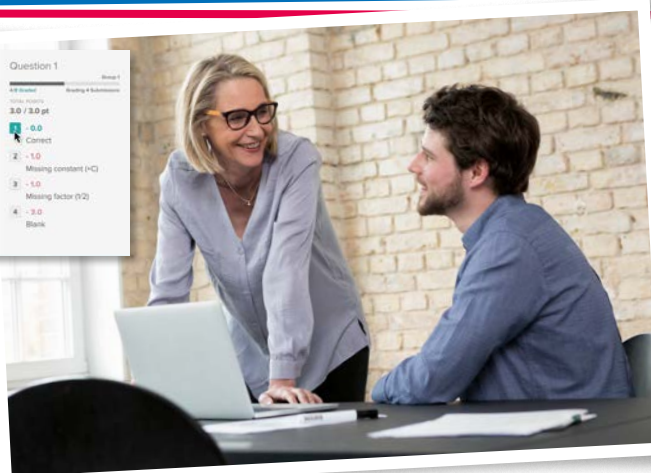
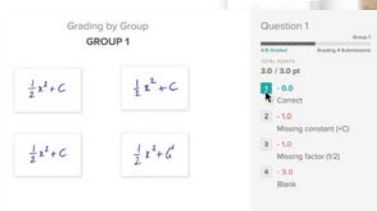
GRADESCOPE



(Turnitin)

turnitin.com

"Gradescope is an excellent platform that can help reduce teacher workload around marking and assessment. The flexibility in the type of assessments the platform can accommodate is a particularly welcome feature, and one that schools will be able to apply and use in a way that suits their particular context."

M Chiles






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IRIS ED:GEN

(IRIS Software Group)

iris.co.uk

"I absolutely loved this new approach to the traditional MIS, which puts teaching and learning right at the heart of its design. This is a new MIS that's built for the future, with MAT leaders and teachers firmly in mind. It's a refreshing approach that still delivers all the backroom functionality

you'd expect from cloud-based system designed for a modern school, while adding extra layers of interaction and design elements that enable all users – not just techies – to access, interpret and enter data simply and securely. An innovative and refreshingly different product with a lot to offer." **H Goldsmith**

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



THE DAY

(The Day News & Media Ltd)

theday.co.uk

"The Day is a news platform for young people that looks and feels like a national newspaper, but with tailored and curated content that builds strong links between education, learning and real-life stories that young people can engage with." **H Goldsmith**

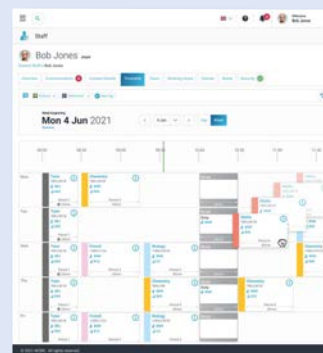


HUBMIS

(WCBS)

wcbs.co.uk

"HUBmis is a fresh and attractive MIS platform that features great integration with other products, meaning schools don't need to worry about syncing data manually. It can confidently join the ranks of the new and upcoming SIMS competitors which the education system is crying out for." **H Goldsmith**





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Colin Dean, Network Manager Ferndown Upper School, Dorset, UK

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WINNERS APPS

WHAT WERE WE LOOKING FOR?

Apps available from the App Store (iOS) or Google Play (Android) that function as self-contained resources in themselves, or as a mobile interface for a larger online platform or software package



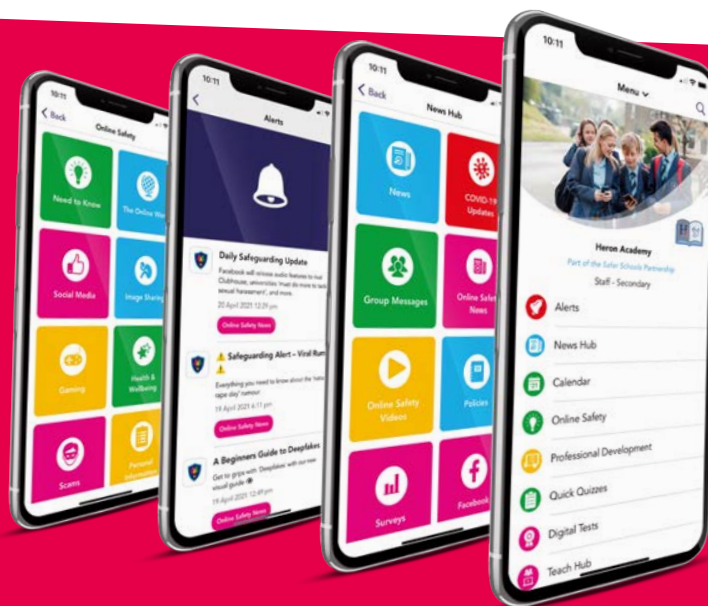
SAFER SCHOOLS

(Ineqe Safeguarding Group)

oursaferschools.co.uk

"A very clever and useful app. The push notifications are really useful for keeping in touch with everyone in the school community, while its 'What's popular now' feed keeps teachers, pupils and parents up to date with real world issues in real time. The alerts and daily updates are extremely good, and can be updated to coincide with important tech and safety announcements."

A Briggs

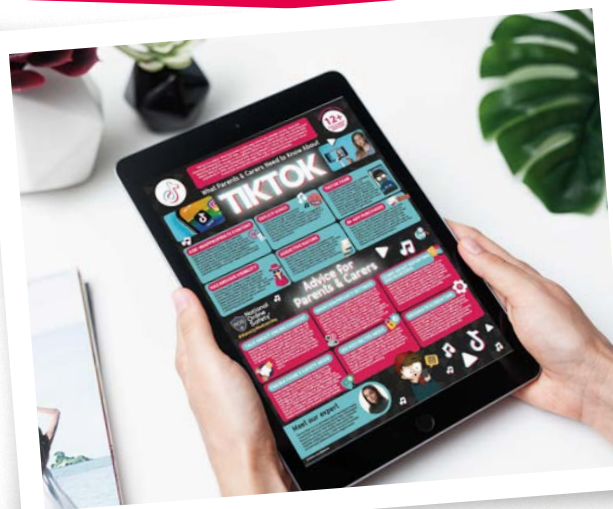


THE NATIONAL COLLEGE

(National Education Group)

thenationalcollege.co.uk

"A smart resource that gives staff ownership of their own CPD. The ability to filter by subject or type of CPD is especially good. As an app, it adopts a 'no nonsense' approach, taking you straight in and showing you what's on offer straight away. It's clear, concise and easy to navigate." **A Briggs**



NATIONAL ONLINE SAFETY

(National Education Group)

nationalonlinesafety.com

"A great little app that allows teachers and parents to view and filter safety information. Its search and refine functions are easy to use, and the way updated content is matched to what's relevant in real time is very good. Another added bonus are the links to certification opportunities spanning different areas, making the app even more appealing for school staff." **A Briggs**

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WINNERS TECHNOLOGY AND 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



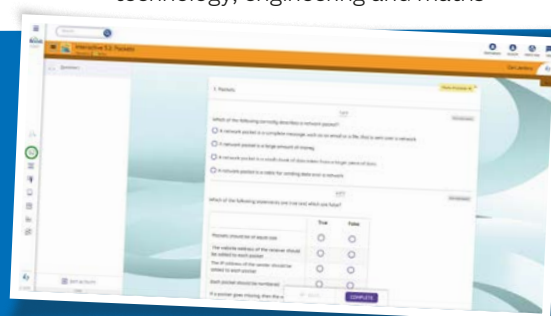
PROGRESS IN COMPUTING: KEY STAGE 3

(Hodder Education)

hoddereducation.co.uk



"If you were to describe this resource in one word, it would be 'comprehensive'. Well designed, it contains everything needed to deliver the computing National Curriculum and develop students' fundamental ICT skills. Progress in Computing: Key Stage 3 includes lesson plans, presentations, interactive resources, videos, animations, quizzes and assessments, alongside a Student Book and a flexible 2- or 3-year scheme of work. Available in eBook and print formats, any schools keen to inject additional rigour, structure and pace into their computing provision, and support less confident or experienced staff, will find much to appreciate. Fun activities, too!" **A Mitchell**

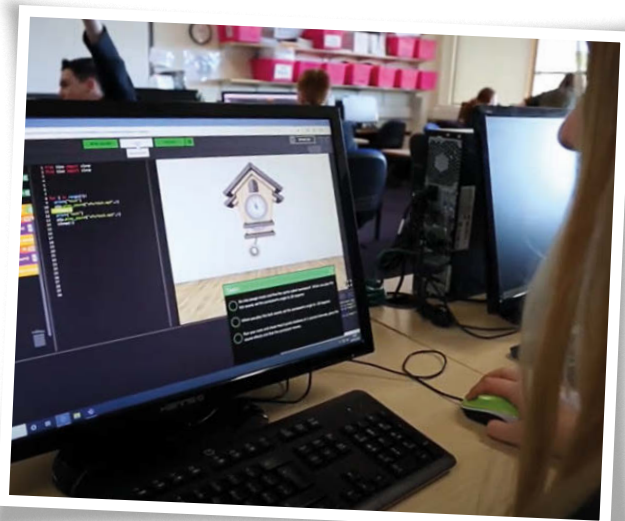


PYTHON IN PIECES

(2Simple)

2simple.com

"Making the leap from block coding to text coding presents challenges for both pupils and teachers. This cloud-based resource provides separate interfaces for teachers and students, both of which are intuitive and easy to navigate. Its key feature is the ability to convert block to text code and vice versa. Short video tutorials enable teachers to differentiate activities and pupils to work independently. The process of learning how to use the resource can also provide excellent CPD for teachers wanting to move into the teaching of computing." **A Mitchell**

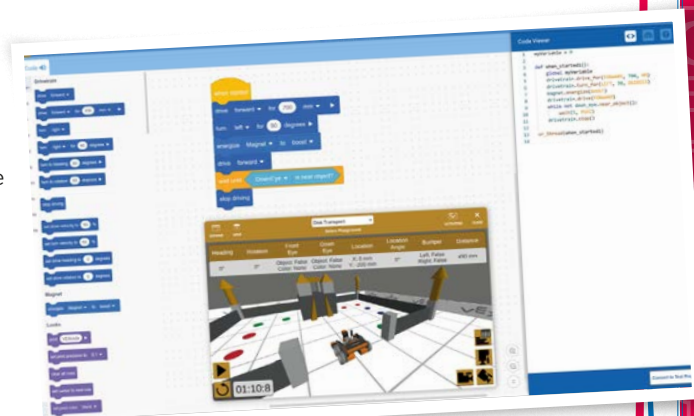


VEXCODE VR

(VEX Robotics)

vexrobotics.com/vexcode-vr

"Presumably developed in response to the explosion in home learning over the past year, this is a unique coding system for the teaching and learning of robotics. VEX Robotics has produced an excellent eLearning platform for those lacking access to physical robotics equipment at home. The VEXcode VR coding system is entirely free and runs in a web browser, giving students an easy way to write code for a virtual robot before watching it carry out its programmed tasks in a variety of environments." **A Mitchell**



What makes a powerful assembly?

James Handscombe offers his thoughts on how to make the most of your assemblies, and what it takes to keep your audience engaged

I walk to school along a chestnut-lined avenue, early sunlight illuminating a crisp autumn morning. I bend down to pick up a prickly green husk and, like schoolboys everywhere, delight in the shiny brown conker that lies within.

Unlike those ubiquitous students, I'm an adult – I am, in fact, 43 and the headmaster – and my ruminations now go beyond the potential for demolishing my friends' conkers with my new treasure.

I reach the end of my commute as the bells chime the hour, and stroll to the front of the assembly hall where I hold up my glistening prize and explain that the conker is a symbol of hope; that the trees are metaphors for the students, and that the season of autumn itself is a rich source of inspiration both for poets and aspiring scholars. I tie in the school ethos of high ambition, and round things off with a few cheering words of comfort.

Messages and more

Some of my colleagues have the impression that this is how I prepare assemblies, and I prefer to bask in their admiration rather than setting them right – because it cannot, of course, be the whole story. That serendipitous finding of the conker and the delivery of the assembly may be the end points of the process, but it's certainly not the case that everything else took place within a short train journey.

Crafting a powerful assembly takes time. It involves writing 1,500 words in coherent sentences and structured paragraphs so that the listener, without aids to memory or concentration, is at least able to take away the key messages. This, therefore, is the first characteristic of a powerful assembly – messages that are clearly communicated and rendered memorable.

That said, a great assembly does more than simply hammer home some key messages – it exemplifies the school ethos. It not only tells, but also shows. When sitting in a powerful assembly, you'll hear described the aspirations of the community, but also see them lived. Exactly what characteristics the assembly has will thus depend on the ethos of the school in which you work. Using someone else's assembly as inspiration is wise; downloading and delivering it as written, much less so.

The final characteristic of a great assembly springs from that idea of communicating an ethos, and it's that every assembly is a teaching opportunity. Students should go away having learned something.

Beyond the curriculum

To achieve these ends, you can deploy personal anecdotes, high culture references, pop culture references, tales from history, stories of inspiring heroes, or warnings from the lives of those for whom 'hero'

maybe isn't the right word. To tie it all together, you can draw on your own ruminations and reflections, the words of your foundational documents or the content of assemblies gone by – this is a team effort, of course, since building an ethos is the work of many speakers.

The idea of showing, rather than simply telling is an extraordinarily powerful one for an assembly writer. We encourage students to use their words cleverly and develop a wide vocabulary. Assemblies give them opportunities to see us doing the same ourselves.

Assemblies also remove us from our expertise pigeonholes. A maths teacher can endorse the interests of the history teacher. The English teacher can speak to the beauty of maths. They allow us communicate our humanity and tell (suitably Bowdlerised) tales of misspent youth, recount eccentric enthusiasms and share the words and music that make our fragile hearts beat faster.

In an assembly we can pass on the advice and life lessons we long for students to learn, but which simply won't fit into the timetabled curriculum.

High and low

One of the most challenging decisions you'll make is how to pitch your cultural allusions. Should you talk about autumn by invoking Axl Rose's words on the cold 'November Rain', or by citing

John Keats' misty and far mellowed ode?

My reflection on this is that assemblies are about learning, so we should expose them to things they don't know. I like to aim *just* over their heads, with content that will be largely new to them, but which they may have at least heard of, dipped into or been intrigued by. This way, they should be looking up and lifted by what is offered.

This approach gives you the opportunity to stealthily drop popular culture references into your discussion with the same gravitas and respect you'd afford great writers from centuries past. It emphasises that the students' existing culture is valuable, and worthy of engagement and reflection. It also encourages them to listen out for your roguish tricks. They might just be listening carefully for the next sneaky Taylor Swift lyric, but at least they *are* listening.

Natural bias

Another challenge is that your cultural touchstones will spring from the minuscule part of human experience that is *your life thus far*. On our own, none of us can ever be as culturally diverse as the schools we serve – a natural bias we would do well to monitor and take active steps to remedy.

Expressing your own character and sharing your culture with students is a real

“A great assembly does more than simply hammer home some key messages – it exemplifies the school ethos”

privilege of delivering an assembly, and one we shouldn't be shy of (Paul Simon and JRR Tolkien are frequent visitors to my scripts). However, we must also be careful not to give the impression that this is the *only* culture we're interested in, or worse, that this is the only culture that has value.

The poetry of Rabindranath Tagore; the novels of James Baldwin; the history of Sudan – all have an equal claim to time and space. Writing an assembly is an opportunity for us to learn something new ourselves, as well as teach.

When approached as a standalone presentation, however, even a truly brilliant assembly will lack power. An assembly's greatness comes from its place in a collection, which is why I believe assembly givers should also be listeners, and why the best cultural reference for an assembly is another assembly – ideally one given by someone else.

These cross-references allow assemblies to reinforce and build on each other. They turn ephemeral, individual pieces into a rich and evolving tapestry of shared understanding. They can tap into and develop the ethos of the school, and turn a building into a community.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Handscombe studied mathematics at Oxford and Harvard before training to be a teacher. He worked in schools in south Wales, Australia and south-east London before becoming the founding principal of Harris Westminster Sixth Form in 2014. His new book, *A School Built on Ethos: Ideas, assemblies and hard-won wisdom*, is available now (£14.99, Crown House Publishing); follow him at @JamesHandscombe

8 FEATURES OF POWERFUL ASSEMBLIES

1 An assembly is made up of stories, references, a big picture ethos and take-home messages – start with one and add the others in.

2 Your take-home message must be clear; structure the assembly to make it so.

3 You are exemplifying good writing for the students; spend time crafting your sentences and paragraphs.

4 Remember that an assembly is another opportunity for pupils to learn something, especially advice and life lessons that won't fit into the timetabled curriculum.

5 Your assembly isn't just what you say, but how you say it. Make sure you're in touch with the school ethos and its aspirations.

6 Take inspiration from all walks of life, including high culture, pop culture, tales from history, stories of inspiring heroes or warnings from the lives of villains. Ensure these sources are culturally diverse.

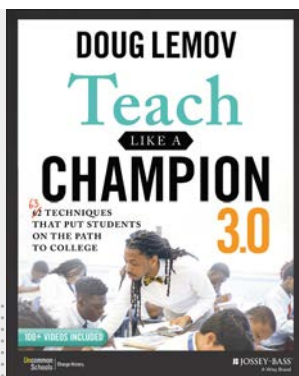
7 Aim high with your content. Assemblies should expose pupils to things that are new to them, or which they may be somewhat familiar with and would like to explore further.

8 Have fun with your assemblies, and be your own, idiosyncratic self – even if this involves a fascination with the fruit of the horse-chestnut...



Off the Shelves

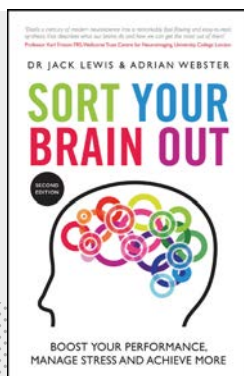
Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore



Teach Like a Champion 3.0 (Doug Lemov, Wiley, £26.99)

This book starts from the premise that while teaching is an art, it also relies on the mastery and application of various skills and techniques based on research, observation and close analysis of lessons. From there, Lemov proceeds to present a toolbox of ideas which, theoretically at least, anyone can apply – though some of techniques outlined assume that teachers have enough time to implement them. Others will likely appear obvious to seasoned vets (or at least ought to), but it would have been remiss to omit them. Each chapter contains a series of useful notes, but the inclusion of chapter summaries would have been welcome, as would an index of the techniques discussed. That said, this will be a welcome manual for new teachers and a useful refresher to old hands.

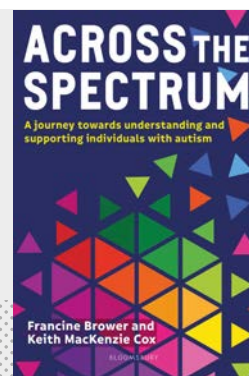
Reviewed by Terry Freedman



Sort Your Brain Out: Boost Your Performance, Manage Stress and Achieve More, 2nd Ed. (Jack Lewis and Adrian Webster, Wiley, £10.99)

You arrive in school at 8am, grab a quick coffee and begin sorting your classroom. At lunchtime you grab a quick sandwich and another coffee, but instead of taking an actual break you eat lunch while tackling a pile of marking – when you know you should be getting fresh air, exercise and decent food. From that perspective, this book won't tell you much you don't already know, but where it scores is that its advice on getting things done is based on research, rather than nebulous theory. Drawing on studies in fields such as neuroplasticity, Sort Your Brain Out is highly readable and well-structured, with handy end-of-chapter summaries and practical suggestions. Definitely a good book to have as your guide while navigating the demands of the modern workplace.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman



Across the Spectrum (Francine Brower and Keith MacKenzie Cox, Bloomsbury, £24.99)

By the authors' own admission, the material contained in this detailed exploration of autism's many different forms took shape throughout 2020, via remote calls to each other at their respective homes. That may date it for future readers, but in all other respects, its content is likely to remain relevant for some time to come. Brower and MacKenzie Cox both draw on their respective experiences of leading specialist settings for pupils with autism to produce a book that places far more emphasis on exploring and demystifying the complexities of autism than on theorising and prescribing strategies. Structured around areas of challenge commonly encountered by pupils with autism – including socialisation, expectations around flexibility and sensory responses, among others – the book contains plenty of invaluable insights for mainstream and special school teachers alike, and useful advice grounded in real-life stories and case studies.

THE WORD

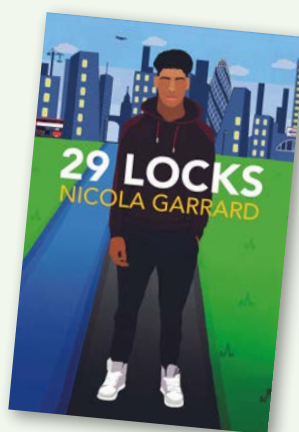
Find out what our regular student reviewer, Oliver Minter-King (Y13) has been reading this month...

29 Locks

(Nicola Garrard, HopeRoad Publishing, £8.99)

Growing up in poverty within inner-city London, Donny has had a rough start in life. As his mum struggles with drug addiction, he is groomed by local gang members and coerced into committing theft. Donny eventually finds himself in Hertfordshire with a new foster mum, and finds solace in undertaking work experience on the canals and making a new friend, Zoe. Donny still misses his mum, however – so after Zoe is offered a sketchy modelling job in London, the pair 'acquire' a boat and begin their journey through the 29 locks to London.

I appreciate how thoroughly Garrard explores what Donny goes through as a child. His experiences with gangs feel especially realistic, shown here as starting when he's drawn into one by an older foster brother he idolises. Donny's troubled but loving relationship with his mum further paints him as a fully three-dimensional, sympathetic character engaged in a gripping and compelling journey. A genuinely gritty and emotive YA novel.



Meet the author

SHARNA JACKSON



What was your starting point with *Black Artists Shaping the World*?

The idea of publishing a book celebrating Black contemporary artists had been brewing for a few years. I, along with Anna Ridley and Roger Thorpe at Thames and Hudson, had been keen to showcase a selection of artists creating exciting and important work today and introducing them to young people with the hope of inspiring them, while also giving the artists the recognition they deserve. Some of the artists in the book are famous, some are emerging, but all of them make us look again, and think again, about both art and life.

Can you tell us more about your partnership with Dr Zoé Whitley?

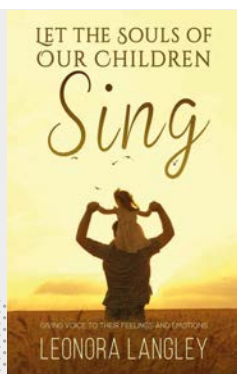
Dr Zoé Whitley is an inspirational curator and artistic director; her incredible exhibition, 'Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power' has toured internationally to much acclaim. To say I'm a fan of her and her work would be an understatement, so when she agreed to collaborate on *Black Artists Shaping the World*, I was delighted. Zoé was absolutely instrumental in informing the selection of artists – she brought both kindness, and an encyclopedic knowledge of art and artists to the book.

How did you go about deciding which of the artists' works to highlight?

It was incredibly difficult to select just 26 artists for the book. We wanted to make sure we had diverse representation; artists from across the world, artists of different genders, and of course, we thought about their practices – photography, painting, performance, ceramics, textiles, installations and everything in between. From there, we selected the very best artists working with those art forms.

What would be your advice for teachers keen to further explore the work of contemporary Black artists?

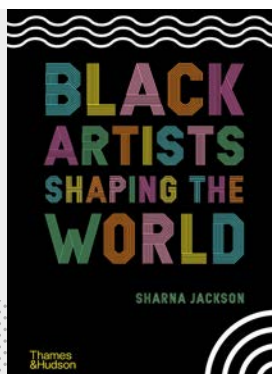
Black Artists Shaping the World, I hope, is an inspirational starting point for teachers and students to find out more about the artists in the book. If you're struck by the work between the pages, I suggest visiting the artists' official websites and, where appropriate, looking at their social media to see what they're currently working on and what might be coming in the future.



Let the Souls of Our Children Sing

(Leonora Langley, Austin Macauley Publishers, £8.99)

For some years now, there's been an ever-growing chorus of voices criticising schools' focus on students' attainment over their wellbeing – and then COVID came along to send student mental health rocketing up schools' priority lists. In some respects then, this book's appearance is well-timed. Its central argument – that an ageing model of education based around quasi-Victorian conceptions of pedagogy is increasingly out of step with today's sensitivities to notions of enrichment, compassion and cognitive difference – is likely to find a receptive audience. Commendably, the book includes both diagnosis and prescription, with a chapter dedicated to explaining how more liberated, creative and art-focused learning environments may hold the key to lifting the education system as a whole out of its current malaise. Readers may or may not agree with the book's conclusions, but Langley sets out a convincing case.



Black Artists Shaping the World

(Sharna Jackson, Thames & Hudson, £14.99)

Art teachers looking to introduce their students to the work of Black visual artists need look no further than this collection of 26 concise, but informative profiles. Each one takes the form of mini essay focusing on a specific artist, variously presenting biographical overviews, insights into their practice and evocative glimpses of their daily routines and artistic inspirations, alongside a photo depicting one of their key works. The book's main strength is its breadth and scope, alighting upon male and female artists young and old, established and just breaking through, who are informed by a whole host of diverse influences and produce work in all manner of media, from traditional oils and collage to textiles and even wearable sculpture – thanks in part to input from Chisenhale Gallery director, Dr Zoé Whitley. An intriguing source of ideas and inspiration for both teachers and students.

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WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT EXTREMISM

Kamal Hanif OBE argues that the recent anniversary of 9/11 was a timely reminder that secondary schools need to initiate discussions about extremism

More than 20 years on from the murderous events of 11th September 2001, and in light of recent events in Afghanistan, it's clear that the legacy and learnings from that day are no less relevant in classrooms today.

Amid COVID lockdowns and young people learning from home without interacting in classrooms with their friends, peers and teachers, there has been a rise in the online grooming of young people into extremist ideology, particularly Far Right extremism.

We saw this in the hate directed at England players in the Euro 2021 finals earlier in the year, and more recently in games played abroad.

Meaningful dialogue

As an education charity, SINCE 9/11 is focused on supporting teachers with tools that enable them to teach the events, causes and consequences of 9/11, so that we can create a better, more peaceful and harmonious future.

Our specially commissioned report from the UCL Institute of Education, 'Addressing Extremism

Through the Classroom' (see bit.ly/ts107-extremism1), highlights how, by opening up meaningful conversation, debate and dialogue in classrooms, extreme ideas and ideologies fuelled by intolerance of the 'other' can be challenged before they take hold.

By allowing students to engage in difficult discussions and confront extreme ideas – such as Islamophobic, misogynistic, homophobic, racist or antisemitic views – we will help build a legacy of hope from 9/11.

What makes an identity?

Open debate in classes should be encouraged, and time set aside in the curriculum so that students can come to understand different perspectives on topical issues, while developing respect and tolerance towards alternative views. Such discussions can, of course, result in extreme, offensive or biased views being raised, but this presents an opportunity for teachers – and more powerfully, students themselves – to

challenge such views and explore an alternative perspective.

School leaders can help by promoting opportunities to have these discussions, whether it be during lessons and/or in tutor times, assemblies and incidental conversations with students. This needn't involve specific discussion of extremism itself; it's more about finding space for views to be expressed and then challenged.

I would recommend that teachers provide a structure that allows pupils to investigate their own cultural and ethnic identities, and allow time to examine the origins and consequences of their attitudes and behaviours towards other groups.

Efforts should also be made to represent the broad range of experiences and peoples that compose the British population. Acknowledge the ways in which multicultural experiences have contributed to the knowledge base, value systems, and ways of thinking within the curriculum. This ought to be accompanied by the teaching

of critical literacy skills right across the curriculum.

Students should learn that all cultures and religions interpret their history through certain narratives, and that these contribute to individuals' identities. Acknowledge that these identities will be based on multiple factors, including the diverse and sometimes contradictory realities of belonging to multiple groups. Depict people from a range of cultural and religious backgrounds who have achieved in the public sphere.

This is not a job just for teachers. Wider society needs to be engaged, but schools can help by bringing families into these discussions. That way, we can truly build a legacy of hope.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kamal Hanif OBE is a trustee of SINCE 9/11 and executive principal of Waverley Education Foundation – a multi academy trust in Birmingham – and an expert on preventing extremism in schools, having advised on the subject nationally and internationally; for more details, visit since911.com or follow @SINCE911uk

Fight, flight OR FREEZE

Amy Sayer explores how the ongoing impact of COVID on children's mental health and behaviour can present as aggression, defiance or withdrawal – and looks at what schools can do in response...

Schools' routines and expectations may be gradually coming to resemble what they were before the pandemic, but the events of 2020 and 2021 will have left a lasting impact on the mental health of many students. In a survey of young people, the charity Young Minds found that 67% felt this applied to them (see bit.ly/ts107-cmh1), with loneliness/isolation, worries over being unable to attend school and an inability to undertake activities conducive to mental health emerging as the three factors affecting them the most.

“Some children may experience a flood of adrenaline when reminded of violence they’ve been exposed to, and respond by becoming aggressive, despite the absence of any obvious threat”

Of course, while every child will have had their own individual experience, some commonalities will include not being able to see teachers and friends within the ‘safe’ space of school during lockdown, lack of contact with relatives and other caring individuals in their lives, and the genuine fear for one's safety that many of us felt during the early

stages of the pandemic – the latter of which could mean that many children are still affected by trauma.

Then there are those children whose experiences may have included the sudden COVID-related death of a close relative, giving rise to painful feelings of grief that may not have been fully discussed or processed at the time, and which may now be potentially ‘triggered’ by, for instance, news reporting of COVID death rates.

Another example might include children who were previously victims of domestic abuse in the past, and who experienced the

to the charity Women's Aid, “91% of respondents currently experiencing domestic abuse said the COVID-19 pandemic had negatively impacted [this] in at least one way. Survivors with children who were currently experiencing abuse told us things were also worse for their children. 53% told us their children had seen more abuse to the survivor, and 38% said that their abuser had shown an increase in abusive behaviour towards the children.” (see bit.ly/ts107-cmh2)

This has meant that more children than ever before have witnessed, or been involved with domestic violence to some degree, at a time when the usual support mechanisms often haven't been available to them. In many cases, they would have been unable to speak freely to friends and teachers about what they were experiencing, which could well have left their bodies in a perpetual ‘flight, fight or freeze’ response typical of trauma.

Some may well experience a sudden flood of adrenaline when triggered by something that reminds them of the violence they've been exposed to, and respond by becoming aggressive, despite the absence of any obvious threat. For those children struggling with post-COVID trauma, their bodies will continue to act as though the original threat remains present – something that can be uncomfortable, scary and

exhausting to manage on a day-to-day basis.

Trauma and aggression

When a trauma response is triggered in a child, the resulting feelings can be intense and frightening. If this is a regular occurrence, the child may come to feel that they're different from their friends. They might not understand why they've experienced such a strong reaction, and will likely lack the emotional regulation strategies needed to manage and reduce its affects.

When children feel disturbing or scary sensations that stem from past trauma, the resulting adrenaline rush can easily lead to aggressive outbursts or worse. Where this is the case, you can sometimes see it exhibited in aggressive behaviour towards peers, or even teachers. It's therefore vital that schools are given adequate training in understanding how to support affected children, both in the short term and longer term. When spotting signs of trauma, therefore, it's useful to look out for agitated behaviour in response to sudden loud noises, lots of background noise, bright lights or distinctive smells.

You may also witness seeing some children being unusually ‘snappy’ or aggressive around their usual peer group for seemingly no reason. At other times, you may observe an inflexible or extremely

re-emergence of difficult emotions and behaviours when lockdown left them trapped at home and unable to see their friends.

Perceived threats

Indeed, we now know that the collective strain placed on families during lockdown coincided with a marked increase in calls to domestic violence helplines. According

defensive stance against anything that might result in profound changes to their daily routine – including the presence of new adults in their lives, such as a supply teacher.

General behavioural changes can meanwhile include withdrawal and wilful isolation from peers, and a desire to always avoid certain areas within school at certain times (such as busy and loud eating areas). Students perpetrating acts of violence may be doing so as a result of previous trauma, even if the violence in question amounts to little more than play-fighting or acting out scenes from a film or game.


Be aware that children affected by trauma will likely become more tearful than usual, and be less able to cope with standard school activities – even meditation or mindfulness activities designed to

help them. This could be accompanied by signs of tiredness, stemming from an insomnia caused by regular nightmares, which may in turn fuel other ailments, such as nausea or headaches.

Safe spaces

So what can schools do to support students grappling with symptoms of trauma? As a first step, lesson time should be dedicated to teaching around matters of mental health, so that students who are affected and those who aren't can better recognise symptoms of problematic mental health and respond appropriately.

In cases where a child starts to show aggressive behaviour, remain calm and



OUT OF CHARACTER

The traumatic impact of COVID on school students needs to be kept constantly in mind. Some students will be carrying the impact of events they've lived through during the pandemic in their minds and bodies, and as such, may now be displaying aggressive behaviours towards peers in a way that seems very out of character and unusual for them.

Staff must meanwhile be mindful of behaviours that may indicate a trauma response within children, and ensure there's an easily accessible framework of support in place. Ideally, all staff should be able to de-escalate both their own behaviour and that of students via appropriate emotional regulation techniques, which may potentially involve making use of a designated 'safe space' area – at least until further professional support is available.

assertive at all times. They need to know that you're there to help them feel safe again, and that you won't consequently treat them any

differently from their peers in the long term. If you can, try setting aside a small area within the school to serve as a 'safe space' which children can use to emotionally regulate themselves and calm down after being triggered.

Finally, be sure to refer parents to any external support services and/or online information resources that might be in a position to help them better understand trauma themselves.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amy Sayer is a head of religious studies, mental health first aider and writer



What's New?

Our pick of the latest solutions and innovations for secondary education

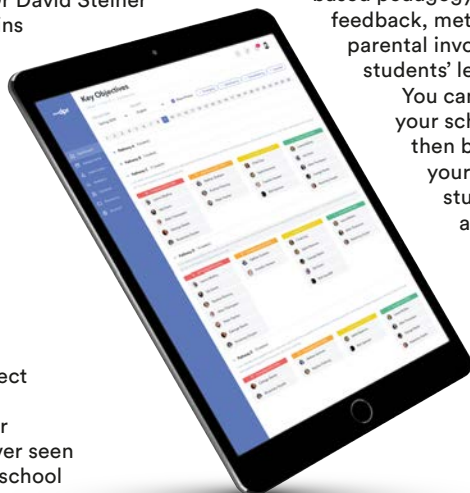
1

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2

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Apply for a Kick Start Grant before 5pm on Monday 8th November 2021 and inspire more of your students to experience the wonders of science!

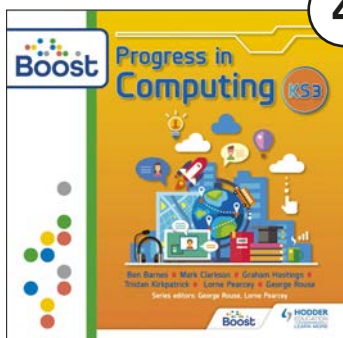
Find out more at britishscienceweek.org/kick-start-grant-scheme



3

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5

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6

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7



9

On the go

Perfect for busy teachers and students, the Samsung Galaxy Book Go is a flexible laptop that's reliable, simple-to-use, and keeps up with you without compromising on performance. Its thin and compact design makes the Galaxy Book Go the ideal companion for education on-the-go, while the speedy processor allows for multitasking with ease.

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10

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Claire Gadsby, renowned educational trainer and author, has developed Radical Revision – a motivational online revision programme based on the latest international research into memory and how the brain works. Claire's cutting edge revision techniques have been helping students achieve exam success for over 10 years – now students can receive sustained support and structure in the lead-up to their exams by subscribing to a 12-week programme of live online workshops with Claire.

Schools can sign up for a FREE introductory session to the programme for Y11 and Y13 pupils, with three dates currently available in November; for more details, visit clairegadsby.com/radical-revision



8

The school intelligence **REVOLUTION**

Following the unpredictability and upsets of the COVID pandemic, now is the ideal time for schools to rethink the purpose and processes of their management information systems...

Secondary schools have been hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis, with many secondary leaders and teachers still struggling to cope with its impact. Even with the vaccine rollout now in full force, it's clear that students will be in and out of schools for the foreseeable future.

The crisis has made an edtech shake-up all but essential for ensuring students can continue to learn, no matter where they are. The solution? A revolution in the school intelligence that has hitherto supported secondary leaders and teachers, and a radical reinvention of the traditional School Management Information System (MIS).

What is the revolution?

In a recent study, IRIS Software Group and EdExec questioned 265 school and trust leaders on the challenges they face with their existing MIS. A hefty 48% reported that the MIS they used was okay, but had obvious limitations. A staggering 90%, however, observed that their school data and analysis was a significant issue impacting workload, with 20% seeing a cloud-based

infrastructure as a necessity for future-proofing their software.

From these findings, it seems clear that a MIS revolution isn't just necessary, but actively being called for by school and trust leaders.

The trouble with the traditional MIS

To improve the opportunities for children, everyone from teachers to leadership teams needs accurate intelligence – yet this requires access to real-time data and the headspace needed to analyse it, and the traditional MIS simply isn't up to the task.

An Ofsted report published in November 2020 cautioned that most children in England were moving backwards in their learning, and that there was a risk of older children sustaining a loss of concentration upon returning to physical classrooms.

The publication of those findings coincided with warnings of decreases in physical fitness among secondary age children, increasingly frequent signs of mental distress and growing concerns over a rise in eating disorders and self-harm. Months later, many schools still remain in firefighting mode, having to focus on daily practical challenges and rapidly respond to new COVID-19 outbreaks.

Exacerbating all this is the fact that the traditional MIS has typically been kept at arm's length, locked away behind closed doors in offices. This has had the effect of paralysing the education sector, creating scenarios where teachers and leaders have been unable to access critical data while working remotely – and therefore been limited in their ability to make essential strategic decisions at a crucial time.

Case study: Bury Grammar School

Like many schools, Bury Grammar School was recently facing multiple challenges with respect to its existing MIS and urgently required a school intelligence upgrade. At the time, the school was using two separate systems issued by the same MIS

provider, but neither system spoke to the other and simple data sharing between the two wasn't possible.

This resulted in critical data being presented in a fragmented way; time-consuming manual reporting processes; frequent duplication of data; and persistent inefficiencies and miscommunication, all of which left teachers with less time for actual teaching.

In the absence of an appropriately configured MIS, the leaders, teachers and students of Bury Grammar knew they would be unable to make the decisions and changes that were right for them.

Their solution was to embrace the school intelligence revolution and move to a single iSAMS system supplied by IRIS. Having made the change, staff are now able to flexibly teach across each of the school's five sites without needing to enter details into the system multiple times. The new web-based system has since saved Bury Grammar considerable time and energy, which proved critical

when the need arose to co-ordinate remote teaching provision during lockdown.

Using just one central MIS has also enabled Bury Grammar to encourage and maintain strong engagement with parents, both before and throughout lockdown. In 2017, for example, the school rolled out several parent-focused apps as part of a home-school learning initiative, which had to be administered outside of the school's previous MIS due to incompatibility issues.

Having these in place before the pandemic put the school in an enviable position when it came to quickly transitioning to remote teaching, and keeping parents informed and engaged with respect to their children's learning.

Single source reporting

Many of those now leading schools and trusts are digital natives. Savvy to the benefits technology can deliver within their classrooms and broader teaching across their setting, they may well now expect an Apple-level user experience within their workplace – but a traditional MIS is rarely built with end users in mind.

It's not uncommon for a MIS to require multiple extra 'bolt-ons', and in some cases, make teachers to wait for as long as 24 hours while reports are generated. For today's time-poor teachers stepping into senior positions, these are non-starters.

What staff need instead is a single, trusted partner and a solution that can provide real-time intelligence on demand.

The future for leadership teams

As Bury Grammar School has found, embedding a MIS across the whole school or trust estate is essential, making it easier to access vital intelligence and establish the truth behind complex incidents and trends.

The presence of a modern MIS is also highly beneficial for Ofsted inspections, for the way it gives middle leadership the confidence to speak to inspectors about all students. Being able to access comprehensive school intelligence can give middle leadership clear,

informed insights into how students can be kept on track while improving their life chances.

For trust leaders, this 'grassroots approach' will help empower incoming senior leaders and give aspiring middle leaders a greater awareness of what it takes to run a school at a senior level – which may in turn help senior leaders develop and retain their staff.

The time has come to substantially change the market, and help education leaders gain better insights from integrated technology for the purposes of school improvement, collaboration and communication. This way, trusts will be able to make proactive, data-

TRACKING TRENDS

Another school that's reaped the benefits of moving to a centralised cloud-based MIS is Aylesbury Grammar School. As well as enhancing existing processes, staff at the school have been able to improve its safeguarding processes and outcomes for students.

The iSAMs Registration Manager module is used in every lesson, but teachers can also access it wherever they are onsite – even the playing field. In practice, this lets teachers and SLT monitor missed classes or ongoing behavioural issues across form and year groups, and identify worrying patterns that may require additional safeguarding measures, such as siblings missing classes on the same day.

Aylesbury Grammar has also been able to record notes against specific individuals and tag other students in the MIS when troublesome incidents have occurred, such as bullying. This revolutionary school intelligence has enabled teachers and heads of department to more easily alert senior teams of the extent to which certain events may ripple out and impact large numbers of students.

Combining this first-hand knowledge of students' lives with a streamlined reporting issues has enabled the school to develop a grassroots, bottom-up approach to safeguarding.

driven decisions that drive teaching and learning standards and ensure that strategic goals are achieved.

COVID-19 may well prove to be the catalyst needed to bring about a MIS revolution, and set educators up with the next generation technology they'll need to advance into the new normal with confidence.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Winston Poyton is senior product director at IRIS Software Group

D&T AT THE CROSSROADS

Andy Mitchell considers the challenges D&T subject leaders must address, as the subject faces cuts that could potentially diminish, or even neutralise its presence in a number of schools...

The start of the 2021/22 school year saw a number of D&T departments drawing up proposals for senior leaders on how they might be able to achieve 'efficiencies' from their teaching and learning. At the most extreme, these suggestions included reductions in curriculum time and increased class sizes of up to 30 students, compared to the currently recommended maximum of 20.

Some schools face further challenges, such as general budget reductions, support staff vacancies, sudden changes to exam arrangements and limited access to IT. Even those fortunate enough to be in settings where D&T subject needs are appreciated and met will likely soon see changes of this type start to impact upon them as well.

Opportunities denied

The pandemic has compounded these issues, but so too has the dismantling of long-established teacher training models that historically relied on universities. The loss we've seen of bespoke, well-resourced D&T centres staffed by specialists has further conspired to reduce the subject's status. Over the past decade in particular, attracting trainee D&T teachers in sufficient numbers has

become a bigger challenge than ever, with annual recruitment figures dropping to 40% below target. The prospect of losing D&T experience at all levels within the profession is now a major concern.

At the same time, there's been a massive reduction in the essential roles played by higher education

cross-curricular links. 2010, of course, heralded a sharp move away from this and towards the prioritising of knowledge acquisition and individual subject autonomy – a direction instigated by former Education Secretary Michael Gove that largely continues today under his latest successor, Nadhim Zahawi.

been denied opportunities to engage with any sophisticated delivery of the subject at all.

Necessary changes

Even so, there is still some scope for optimism – albeit depending on schools' ability to take action like never before. Those with D&T roles and responsibilities must rally and make their case widely. They need to articulate and demonstrate the broad benefits, advantages and successes that D&T can help deliver for individuals, right up to whole nations.

Considering the global challenges we presently face, and our ever-increasing reliance on innovation and new technologies, one might have hoped that this task would be easier than it's proved to be.

Teachers are now the main players in this struggle for D&T's survival, but it's hard to conceive of them succeeding in securing new, fit for purpose versions of D&T without help from a coordinating body. Arguably, that must be their subject association, the Design and Technology Association. Aside from being the most appropriately placed, there's currently no other comparable body that can

“There's little evidence to suggest that government ministers even understand D&T, let alone value its contribution”

institutions in developing the subject – including the provision of CPD, imparting of subject pedagogy and carrying out of research that informs curriculum development. Instead, these tasks must now form part of practising teachers' everyday workload.

There's little evidence to suggest that government ministers and decision makers even understand D&T education, let alone value its unique contribution. The 2007 National Curriculum review led by Professor Mick Waters, then director of the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, was predicated on valuing skills and making

The need to fight for D&T is nothing new. Indeed, it was necessary even before its status was elevated in 1989 by then Education Secretary Lord Baker, who championed technology as one of first 'foundation subjects'. There then followed a period where the subject's position went relatively unchallenged, being compulsory in all schools until the end of KS4 (though later reduced to the end of KS3 in 2004). More recently, however, the academisation process that most secondary schools have undergone removes the requirement to teach the subject altogether, meaning that some young people have

similarly represent the community's views and interests, provide leadership and act as a conduit for making their voices heard.

Those who value the contribution of D&T education, and particularly those whose careers rely on its continued existence, must take on board the certainty that the subject can and will change. It has to, for cultural, resourcing, logistical and practical reasons – but they must also play an active role in its reinvention.

Simply trying to carry on with a subject delivery model that's too often based upon predominately craft activity, to the detriment of actual technology and design, is unsustainable.

Though this may, of course, require further changes to existing assessment and examination systems.

Pivotal point

The case for reform is laid out in a recently published book, *Redesigning D&T ... Thinking ... Talking*. Some readers may be familiar with the book's editors, Alison Hardy of Nottingham Trent University and Eddie Norman of Loughborough Design School, and their 'Talking D&T' podcast series.

Their central thesis is that the subject as it currently stands – which they characterise as 'D&T

1.0' is effectively dead. In terms of what comes next, one of the book's contributors, David Spendlove, writes, "Ultimately, we have the intersection of the rapid demise of D&T 1.0 and the spectacular rise of design thinking, albeit in its ill-defined and unadopted form. There is a unique, perhaps once in a decade opportunity for a reorientation of the values that were instrumental within the development of D&T, through adopting and capitalising on the intellectual and reflective aspects of design thinking in D&T 2.0."

The concept of 'design thinking' is a complex one. Spendlove goes on to observe that its teaching and use isn't

necessarily the exclusive domain of D&T,

and that other subjects are starting to claim it too. Yet there's great potential for D&T to incorporate knowledge, skills and understanding from across the curriculum in addressing various design challenges in ways that are real, practical, relevant and can help develop a unique understanding of the world.

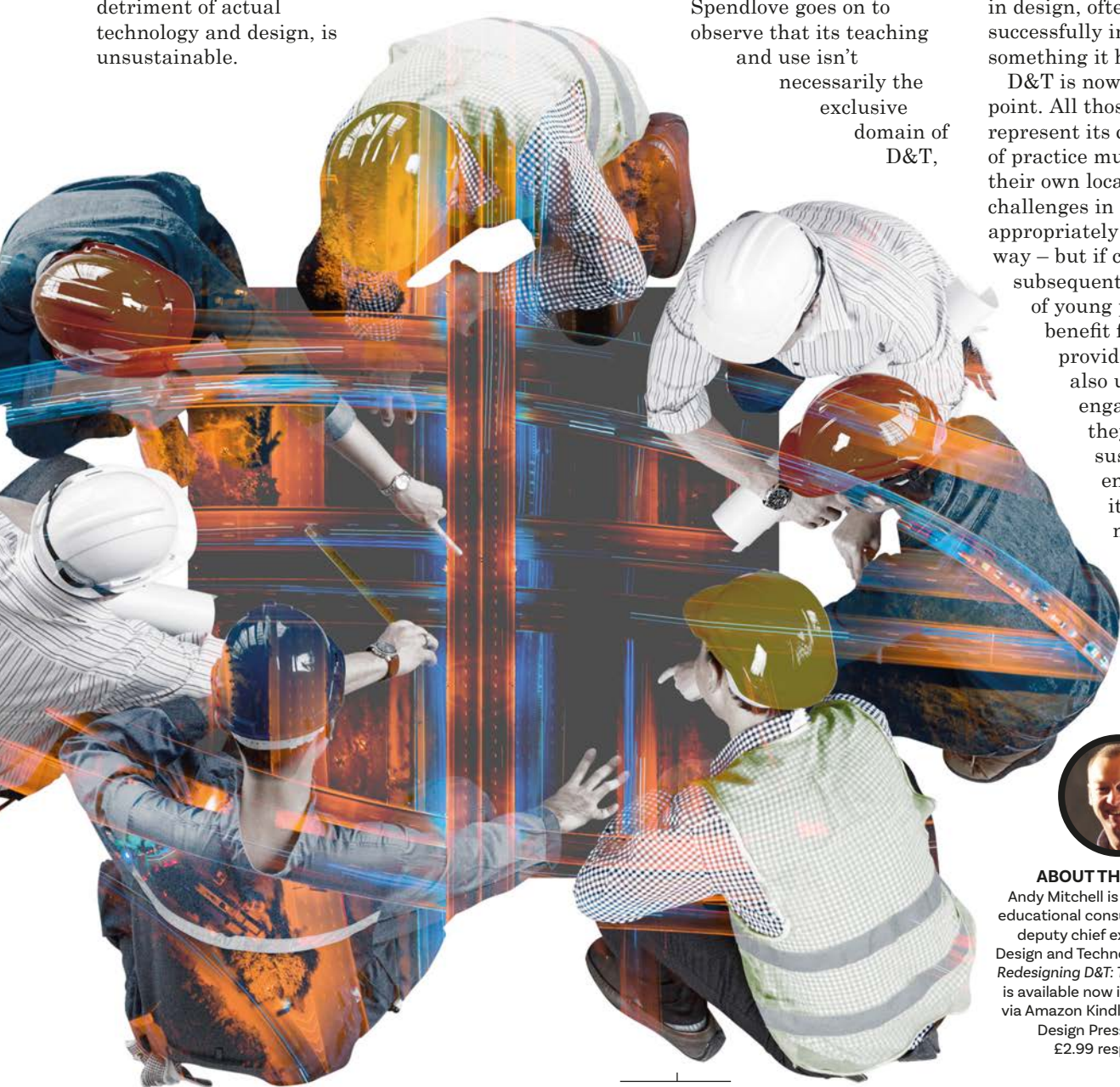
To have the nation that first devised the very concept of D&T education in schools allow it to fade from view, whilst other countries actively promote it, would be tragic. Perhaps it's just another example of how Great Britain, for all its international reputation in design, often fails to successfully implement something it has created.

D&T is now at a pivotal point. All those who represent its community of practice must deal with their own local school challenges in an appropriately creative way – but if current and subsequent generations of young people are to benefit from what it provides, they must also unite and engage however they can in sustaining and ensuring its future nationally.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Mitchell is an independent educational consultant and former deputy chief executive of The Design and Technology Association; *Redesigning D&T: Talking ... thinking...* is available now in paperback and via Amazon Kindle (Loughborough Design Press, £9.99 and £2.99 respectively)



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HOW SHOULD YOU RESPOND TO CYBERBULLYING?

We hear from two edtech experts on the practical steps schools can take to tackle cyberbullying



Karl Bartlam

is a computing teacher at Watling Academy in Milton Keynes and a computing hub lead for the National Centre for Computing Education

The most important thing is to be upfront with young people and to not shy away from certain topics. For instance, sexting and its consequences is one of the subjects we cover in Y7. It's a tough area to talk about, but the children need to know about it so that they don't do it.

We run an anti-bullying campaign called ABC, which encourages pupils to email an address displayed on classroom posters with details of any issues they may be facing. These are picked up by our pastoral team, who will then support the child in question and take action against any perpetrators of bullying.

We also run e-safety lessons near the start of the year in our computing and wellbeing classes, and show videos produced by the National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command. The videos show how serious this type of abuse is and how pupils can deal with it.

I recommend to parents that they talk to their children about ways of staying safe online, perhaps consider turning the internet off at night when youngsters are going to sleep and apply parental controls to certain apps.

To me, it seems the issue of online safety has got worse over the last few years – especially around the subject of sexual harassment, which has been quite a horrible thing to see in the press. We've been following this up in school, ensuring our safeguarding training for all staff is up to date.

Our training emphasises that if a pupil discloses something to us, as teachers we can't keep it to ourselves and must refer the details to our safeguarding officer. It's important that students know there are consequences and punishments for online bullying, just as there are for any other type of bullying in the real world.



Sara Trickey

is head of faculty for computer science, business and media studies at a school in the East of England; she is also a board member of Computing at School

Cyberbullying will usually involve comments on social media and unsolicited mean or unkind words. It can become persistent and intrusive, however, and sometimes encompass the sending of unsolicited images, links to questionable files and videos of inappropriate material.

It often takes place on Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Discord and sometimes via Twitter. It can also occur on gaming platforms, such as the PlayStation Network and Xbox Live. It's less common on Facebook these days, since the platform isn't as popular among young people.

My advice for fellow teachers and parents is to try and keep up to date as best you can with the latest platforms that young people are using, and how and what they're using them for – ideally while showing them how to use said services' account settings in order to stay safe.

We organise regular PSHE lessons and talk to our students about online safety often. It's built into the computer science curriculum and frequently discussed during tutor time. If a child discloses to us that something's happened, then we'll promptly make sure that a note is entered into the school's reporting system, which in turn goes into a wider bank to help build a picture of

what's going on in the young person's life.

We'll monitor both perpetrators and victims, since quite often the bullies will have been bullied themselves.

Spotting cyberbullying is mostly a case of keeping your ear to the ground.

We have a zero tolerance policy when it comes to bullying; if and when it occurs, students will be spoken to about the severity of their actions and have the implications of their behaviour very clearly explained to them.



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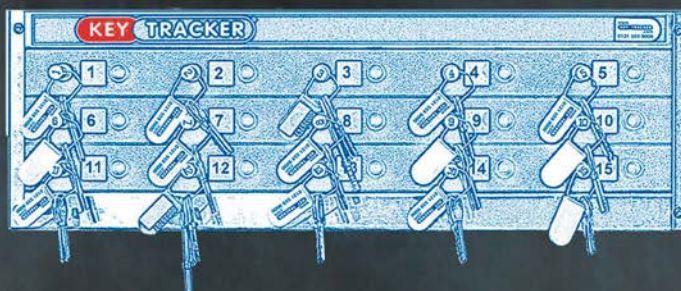
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We check in on the current state of play when it comes to the study of our, and other societies' historical development, current demographics and belief systems...

What should students be learning in the course of studying history, geography and RE?

THE AGENDA:

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A question OF TIME

History teachers shouldn't assume that all secondary students will already possess a solid grasp of chronology, observe **Terry Haydn** and **Alison Stephen**...

It would seem to be a reasonable proposition to suggest that part of the function of school history should be to give pupils some understanding of time and chronology.

If pupils are to make sense of history, they need to have some idea about how we measure and reference events in history in terms of when they occurred, and how to build up a mental framework of the past. Secondary pupils might have studied history for at least six years, but there may still be holes in their grasp of fundamental aspects of the concept of time.

“Chronology provides a mental framework, or map, which gives significance and coherence to the study of history”

Neglected and forgotten

It should be remembered that under the original National Curriculum for history, it was possible to get to Level 10 in all of the attainment targets for the subject, without knowing what century you were living in, or what AD and BC meant. Time was, at least to some extent, a neglected and forgotten element of the subject, and this was reflected in the textbooks published at

the National Curriculum's inception.

When asked about the reasons for these deficiencies, some heads of history suggested there was an assumption that all that had been covered at primary school, that they had taken such understanding for granted or that as it was not part of the '45 boxes' of the original Attainment Targets, it had not been a focus for teaching and assessment.

Whatever the reasons, it is important that you do not assume all your pupils possess a clear grasp of the rudiments

of time and chronology. Whereas time was a comparatively peripheral concern of the original NC for history, its status has been restored in the revised versions, and chronology is an integral part of the most recent version of the NC for history at KS3 introduced in September 2014 – one of the aims stating that pupils should “Know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent, chronological narrative.”

Differing understandings

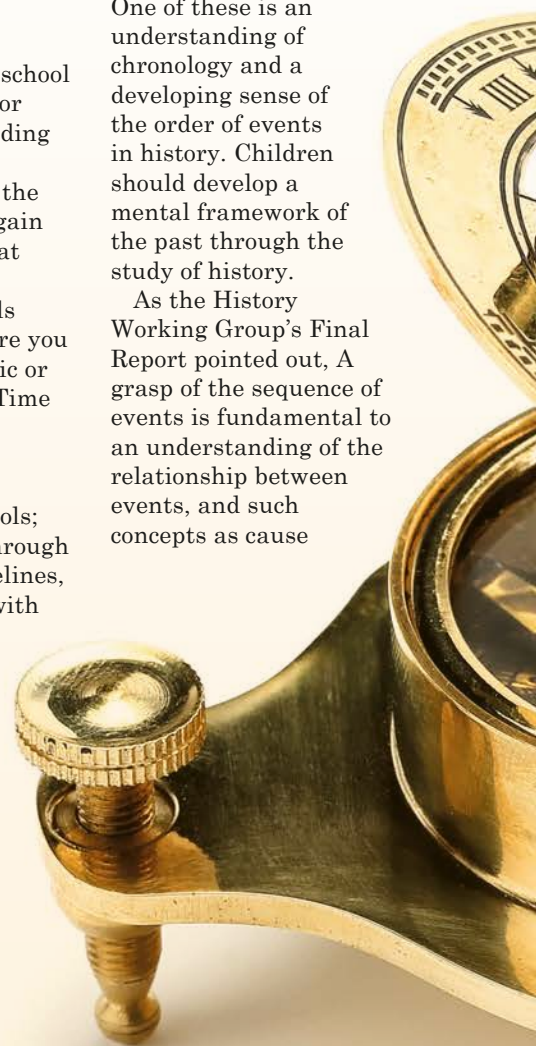
One advantage of the NC has been that all pupils have had some instruction in history at KS1/2, but as pupils are of differing abilities and have come from different feeder schools, it would be surprising if they all arrived at secondary school with a similar depth or breadth of understanding about time.

One of the tasks of the history teacher is to gain some insight into what knowledge and understandings pupils bring with them before you start to teach the topic or concept in question. Time may well have been approached in a very different manner in various primary schools; some have learned through family trees and timelines, others have started with ancient history and worked forward. Some already have a sound grasp of dating systems and some idea of a general framework of the past, others may have passed through KS1/2 without having mastered even the lowest levels of attainment in this domain of history.

The activity outlined in the panel opposite ('Children's understanding of time – a diagnostic exercise') addresses a particular strand of

children's understanding of time; that of the mechanics of time – dating systems and conventions, basic time vocabulary, how time works. Although this is important, there are other aspects of time children need to address. One of these is an understanding of chronology and a developing sense of the order of events in history. Children should develop a mental framework of the past through the study of history.

As the History Working Group's Final Report pointed out, A grasp of the sequence of events is fundamental to an understanding of the relationship between events, and such concepts as cause



and change. Chronology, therefore, provides a mental framework, or map, which gives significance and coherence to the study of history.

The tendency in recent years to study patches or themes in history, rather than a measured and even progression from the Romans to the present day, has meant that not all pupils have a clear grasp of the overall unfolding of events in history, or of the duration of different periods. The nature of the GCSE exam, with its emphasis on the critical examination of sources, means that it might be

possible to gain full marks on a source-based question on WWII, without necessarily knowing who was on whose side and who won.

Order of events

There are also some areas of history where it is essential to have a clear grasp of the precise order of events as a necessary, if not sufficient basis for providing a coherent explanation or analysis of a historical event, such as the outbreak of WWI or the



CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING OF TIME - A DIAGNOSTIC EXERCISE

An example of a diagnostic test of children's understanding of some aspects of time, which might be given to Y7 pupils, can be found at bit.ly/ts107-history2.

If the pupils have not already been subjected to such a test, give the test to a group of pupils and analyse their responses - the test should take between 5 and 15 minutes to complete.

The test attempts to address pupils' understanding of dating systems, their ability to understand and manipulate centuries and their familiarity with some time-related vocabulary. If the pupils have already done a similar form of test, check how the pupils performed and what gaps there were in their grasp of basic time concepts.

When the pupils have completed the test, analyse their responses to examine where there are gaps in their understanding of time. What activities might you devise to rectify any deficiencies in their understanding of time?

campaigns of 1066. Understanding of deep time - the distant past stretching back to prehistory, the Stone Age and the formation of the earth - might also be a facet of time which might be addressed in the course of school history. An understanding of what is meant by the term 'prehistory' can help give pupils some insight into the nature of the discipline of history itself.

Your skills of exposition in providing narrative frameworks of the past are an important part of developing pupils' grasp of time and chronology, including an awareness that pupils do not possess the map of the past that some teachers take for granted.

The use of timelines in the classroom, as well as in exercise books, can be helpful. The development of sequencing exercises, whether on cards, for group work, in exercise books, on

the blackboard or using educational technology can provide activities which require pupils to think through the precise order of events, using inference as well as knowledge, but there is a danger of sequencing for its own sake; that is, constructing arbitrary lists of historical events which have no necessary connection with each other.

Ian Dawson offers a range of well-thought out overview activities, and his website Thinking History provides a number of eminently practicable active-learning approaches to the development of pupils' understanding of chronology which can be viewed via bit.ly/ts107-history1.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Terry Haydn is a professor of education at the University of East Anglia and Alison Stephen is head of history at Abraham Moss School, Manchester; this article is based on an edited extract from their book, *Learning to Teach History in the Secondary School: A Companion to School Experience 5th Ed.*, due for publication in November 2021 (Routledge, £27.99)



Stand up and BE COUNTED

Steve Brace looks at how official Census data can provide some illuminating context for your students' explorations of human geography

One of the things that makes geography such a rewarding, and at times challenging subject is its need to respond to a changing world. This calls for up-to-date information concerning people, places and processes – indeed, Ofsted's research review series recently highlighted the need for geography lessons to accurately represent the diversity of people, communities and economies.

So when teaching lessons about the UK and the characteristics of our human landscapes, we have access to an invaluable tool in the data collected through the Census.

A telling snapshot

Starting in 1801, the Office for National Statistics Census has since taken place every 10 years, the only exception to date being the cancelled Census of 1941. These 10-yearly reviews help to support decision making across various areas of government, planning, finance and business in response to changing demand for public services – but they can also provide teachers with an informative map of the UK's human geography.

The 2021 Census for England, Wales and Northern Ireland was undertaken in March, right in the midst of the COVID pandemic (Scotland's

having been delayed until 2022). Once the data has been made publicly available, it will provide a telling snapshot of life during an extraordinary period of time. As Professor Danny Dorling has observed, it will "Capture young adults temporarily ensconced in parents' homes, thousands of mainland Europeans temporarily trapped in the UK and millions of furloughed workers counted as employed."

Teachers will have to wait until early 2022 for the first data releases, ahead of the full data being published in March 2023. Already, however, there is a wealth of data from earlier Census that teachers can start using now. The 2011 survey, for example, identified that:

- The resident population of the UK was 63.2 million (representing a growth of 7% since the previous 2001 census)
- 87% of the population described themselves as belonging to a white ethnic group
- The top three countries of birth for non-UK born residents were India, Poland and Pakistan
- The numbers of cars and vans available to UK households had risen from 26.7 million in 2001 to 30.7 million in 2011

Many research geographers have dug deep into this data to unearth new insights. Professor Dorling's work on inequality drew on 2011 Census data to highlight how, "Above the fifth floor of all housing in England and Wales, only a minority of children are white. The majority of children 'living in the sky' in Britain are Black."

The ONS' 'Understanding towns in England and Wales' spatial analysis (see bit.



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A guide for teachers on how to use the ONS' NOMIS online statistics service at

**teachwire.net/
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ly/ts107-census1) provides a further wealth of information regarding the nature of England and Wales' 1,163 'towns' (classified as populations between 5,000 and 225,000) and their changing demographics, incomes, rates of employment and levels of deprivation.

Required versus voluntary

The Census' questions change and develop over time, leading to new insights regarding who gets counted and how, and providing greater detail about the UK's

human geography. Some questions are compulsory, while others are voluntary. The 2021 Census included a new question on whether respondents had previously served in the armed forces, as well as a voluntary question (for those aged 16 and above) on sexual orientation and gender identity.

A perennial media story around the time of the Census concerns the answers respondents give to questions around their religion, often against a backdrop of campaigning for something new to be added to the list of recognised religions. In 2011, 176,632 individuals listed their religion as 'Jedi', making it the seventh largest religion listed in the census returns. A further 6,000 people listed their religion as 'heavy metal'.

Census data can be used to help tackle many areas of the geography curriculum, including the requirement for pupils to better understand the characteristics of where they live and other areas within the UK. It can



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- 64.9% having been born in the UK and 35.1% outside
- 76.7% reporting that they have a religion
- 38,933 households owning no cars or vans, and 1,786 households owning four or more cars, or a van
- The smallest occupation group is mining and quarrying, with 41 males and 24 females working in those industries

support KS3-level studies of population, urbanisation and economic activity, as well as lessons around the UK's human landscapes, and rapidly changing economy and society, and provide valuable baseline data against which fieldwork results can be compared and contrasted.

Curriculum opportunities

The term 'output area' (OA) refers to the smallest geographical area that census data is provided for. There are around 171,000 OAs in England alone, with the minimum population size being no less than 40 people (to protect peoples' confidentiality). In 2011 the largest OA was located in Canterbury, with a population of 4,140. Data can also be provided at ward or parish level, from built-up areas or from local, county and national authorities.

Teachers and pupils can easily search for data on their nearest AO, local ward, home town or even elsewhere online by simply entering a place name or postcode (see bit.ly/ts107-census2 for an example).

There are many practical ways in which to embed Census data within your lessons. Your class, year group or school could even undertake a census of its own, comparing your results to the picture of

your local area presented by the national data.

Teachers can set homework or create displays that use Census data to provide the geographical context for a new case study. Official data can also be invaluable when fact-checking sources and exploring sometimes erroneous views around levels of immigration, and/or the UK's ethnic or religious mix.

There are also plenty of opportunities to incorporate Census data when using geographic information systems. For instance, there's a guide produced by Esri UK (see bit.ly/ts107-census3) which shows how data can be entered into the ArcGIS mapping and analytics platform and rendered visually. Finally, older pupils could try applying statistical tests to Census data in order to explore various geographical concepts and themes.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Brace is a former geography teacher, now head of education at the Royal Geographical Society, working closely with the DfE, Ofsted and Ofqual – follow him at [@stevebracegeog](https://twitter.com/stevebracegeog)

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Why RE needs a REINVENTION

Benjamin Wood explains why the increasingly 'pick and mix' nature of modern society means that religious education as we know it has to evolve

There is a problem with RE. While there are many schools up and down the country where well trained, expert teachers provide high quality learning in the subject (including my own, Haslingden High in Lancashire), there are thousands more where provision is either poor, or barely there at all.

For teachers and leaders in the RE teaching community, the scale of the problem can be easy to dismiss. Those who work in schools like mine, where the subject is valued by the SLT, pupils and the wider community, our day to day experience of RE is positive. And for too many of my colleagues in these privileged situations, the status quo rules and the need for reform is denied.

Worthy of inclusion?

There are certainly some positives we could point to. A-level numbers are significantly higher than they were 20 years ago, and while GCSE numbers might have slipped this year, the numbers doing the full course GCSE are higher than in the past. But these figures can serve to mask the problem.

RE is a statutory subject for all pupils in all schools, and yet only around one in three students take it at GCSE. Some schools do provide excellent non-examined KS4 courses, but School Workforce

Data shows us that around 40% of schools provide no teaching of RE at KS4, and that the proportion of academies without a religious character not providing RE at KS4 stands at around 50% (see bit.ly/ts107-re1).

Research also tells us that many primary teachers have had little or no training in teaching RE, either as ITTs or since they began work in a school (see bit.ly/ts107-re2), and consequently have little confidence in teaching a subject that can deal with controversial and sensitive issues.

There are those who share a similar privileged position to me that would argue the answer to these problems lies in enforcing the law requiring RE to be taught to all students in all schools. This has been their argument for several decades now, and the subject has continued to decline. This approach will not work. Ofsted doesn't see compliance with the law as part of its remit as regulator, while the government trots out the same line each time – 'Statutory duty ... blah blah ... use complaints procedure ... blah blah...' – conveniently forgetting to mention that said complaints procedure is both Byzantine and Sisyphean.

Such responses also avoid the uncomfortable message emanating from

the aforementioned lack of compliance. For many school leaders, governors and parents, the subject in its current guise is simply not worth a place on the timetable. And that's where the challenge lies for those of us in the RE community. Do we have a subject that's truly worthy of inclusion within the jam-packed school timetable? For the answer to be yes – not just from RE teachers, but also from school leaders across the country – I believe it's necessary for the subject to evolve.

A truer understanding

As the UK changed from being an almost entirely Christian society in the 1940s to a more mixed society in the 1980s, RE similarly changed its focus. Originally conceived for the purpose of a particular form of Christian instruction, the subject used to focus almost entirely on certain interpretations of the teachings of Christianity. By the 1980s, the UK population was still majority Christian, but now included many more people of other religions and of no religion.

These changes were reflected in the classroom, as teachers increasingly taught lessons around a wider range of religions, and, in due course, came to cover non-religious perspectives. Now, some 40

years on, the population has changed again. Participation in some traditional forms of organised Christianity have declined markedly, while some Roman Catholic and evangelical churches thrive.

More people are opting for a 'pick 'n' mix' approach when it comes to their beliefs, practices, identity and culture, taking these from a wide variety of religious and non-religious sources. Those who study this evolving landscape have highlighted the rise of those who believe in God but don't belong to a religion, as well increases in the number of people who take part in religion, but don't believe in God. Surveys conducted by Y7 students at my

“For many school leaders, the subject in its current guise isn’t worth a place on the timetable”

school suggest a local community that’s diverse in its beliefs, practices, identities and ethics. In short, what we now see around us is kaleidoscopic – diverse and fluid, dynamic and pluralistic.

Just as the geography and science curricula have changed to reflect the growing urgency of climate change, so too must the RE curriculum change, in order to let our pupils build a truer understanding of the world they’re growing up in.

Meaning, truth and purpose

In 2018, the National Commission on Religious Education published ‘A National Plan for RE’ (see commissiononre.org.uk). Its recommendations included proper funding for teacher training (both for trainee teachers and those already in classrooms) and setting aside

space in school timetables for in-depth RE study. Perhaps most importantly, it also called for the establishment of a National Entitlement, freeing the subject from control by a small number of powerful religious lobbies. This would help ensure that all pupils were given high quality lessons that taught them about the complex world they’re growing up in.

A lack of time and inadequate training for teachers, however, can mean that only simplified and reductive presentations are taught. Christianity remains the religion that’s covered more than any other, but for many pupils, the Christianity they learn about doesn’t chime with the reality of Christian life for many Christians. Without careful teaching, religions can be presented as simplistic combinations comprising a few key beliefs, attendance at religious services and

reference to a holy book. Non-religion can equally be reduced to little more than simply not believing in God. None of this deals with what it might actually mean to be a Christian, Muslim or atheist in the UK today.

At its best, high quality RE teaches pupils about the many different ways in which somebody *can* be a Christian, Muslim or atheist. It helps pupils understand how beliefs can influence the way someone lives, but also how the way a person lives can influence their beliefs. It tackles challenging questions, recognising and addressing, for example, the points of tension that exist within and between religious and non-religious worldviews. It moves beyond superficial presentations of religious and non-religious ways of living, and towards grappling with questions of meaning, truth and purpose.

A reformed subject – one that takes seriously the environment in which pupils are growing up – has a vital role to play in children’s education, as part of a broad and

balanced curriculum. But don’t just take my word for it; this is how my headteacher, Russell Clarke, describes the value of RE:

“When expertly delivered, [RE] has the power to shape and develop the necessary understanding of the diverse perspectives and beliefs that exist, both locally and globally. It also equips students for the complex challenges that will inevitably feature in their daily lives and future careers. We must recognise that we live in a world that is increasingly diverse, and we must empower young people to be able to confidently discuss and celebrate those differences. RE has a vital role to play in a truly broad and balanced curriculum that is fit for the 21st Century.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ben Wood teaches RE at Haslingden High School – a large and proudly comprehensive school in Lancashire; he tweets as @Ben_Wood_RE

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ZEPH BENNETT

PE teacher and school achievement leader



How to use...

TEACHERS' NEW REMOTE LEARNING SKILLS

Lockdowns, bubbles, and blended learning have developed teachers' skills in numerous ways which are now making a positive impact in classrooms and across whole schools. Having had the opportunity to work with many secondary schools, I'm seeing first-hand how those skills are being applied.

1. Student questioning

Questioning was much harder online than in classrooms. Consequently, teachers regularly analysed their questioning techniques to see if they could 'dissolve the screen' and boost engagement.

Those reflections are continuing to have a positive impact on student questioning. I've observed lessons where teachers are much more comfortable with silence and allowing 'wait time' before posing follow-ups.

2. Critical appreciation of edtech

Post-pandemic, no-one discusses the 'merits of using edtech' anymore, since the benefits have been made abundantly clear to all.

However, that's not to say everyone has suddenly become 'pro-edtech'; it's

more that teachers have honed their critical understanding, and are now more likely to weigh up different tools and approaches. A recent report by the edtech company Sparx Learning highlighted how teachers' professional judgement, experience and expertise was key to making good use of edtech in the classroom.

3. Commonplace technologies

Online parents' evenings, recorded video messages, banks of video lessons, webinars for CPD purposes – all of these are now commonplace.

However, technology constantly changes and evolves. Teachers may have done well in identifying edtech tools and learning new skills during the pandemic, but it's not practical to continue in the same vein. At this point, schools need to critically engage with edtech at a strategic level, and focus on how technology can continue to support teachers and benefit learners in the longer term.

Schools can meanwhile benefit from the experiences of colleagues in similar settings to theirs, and devise a digital strategy of their own by accessing the DfE-developed Edtech Demonstrator Programme.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ben Antell is regional director at United Learning; the Sparx Learning report 'Using technology to enable learning in a post pandemic future' can be read in full via bit.ly/ts107-LL1

A WINDOW ON BROADCAST HISTORY



The use of broadcast media in schools has come a long way since the days of TVs on trolleys – to the point that the BBC is now preparing to give schools digital access to everything they could possibly ever want to watch or listen to...

The BBC has announced plans to make the entirety of its digitised broadcast archive available to students and educators across the UK. According to the Corporation, this amounts to ‘millions’ of TV and radio programmes spanning a century of broadcast output, and will encompass countless interviews with notable historical and cultural figures, as well as documentaries, dramas, comedies and arts programming.

The service is due to launch in January of 2022 – the BBC’s centenary year – and will be available to all institutions holding an ERA licence. Users will be able to submit requests for specific programmes to their existing education service provider, following which the BBC will make the relevant programme(s) available to said providers via a new Archive search

function. Academic uses for BBC content will extend to screenings held within education settings, multimedia essays and primary research/citation purposes.

According to the BBC’s Director-General, Tim Davie, “The BBC has played a vital role in education throughout the last century – from *Children’s Hour* broadcasts in 1922, introducing the microcomputer to schools in the eighties, to supporting an entire nation of home learners during the coronavirus pandemic. In 2022 we will harness the unique power of the BBC to provide educational support to inspire millions of children and students across the UK.”

The archive initiative will coincide with a second educational project, named ‘Share Your Story’, which will see BBC staff and onscreen talent present introductory sessions during school assemblies, aimed at developing students’ storytelling, writing and presenting skills. Names confirmed as taking part so far include Alex Scott, Graham Norton, Greg James, Laura Kuenssberg and Stacey Dooley, among others.

Students and teachers will then proceed to create written, spoken or video content that tells a personal story, with CPD assistance provided by the National Literacy Trust, Voice 21 and Into Film.

The two projects are intended to meet the second public purpose in the BBC’s Royal Charter, of supporting learning for children and teenagers across the country.

Commenting on his involvement with the ‘Share Your Story’ project, Radio 1 Breakfast Show host Greg James said, “Telling stories is what humans are best at. Whether it’s brilliant novels, hilarious comedies or just a good old gossip, stories make the world go round. I’m looking forward to sharing my own story with young people and helping them develop the skills and confidence to tell their own, because storytelling is one of the most enjoyable things you can do with your brain.”

TRY THIS

TEACHING BEHAVIOUR

EXERCISE BETTER CLASS CONTROL WITH THESE TIPS FROM ROBIN LAUNDER...

View behaviour management as one of your subjects. Let’s say you are a maths teacher. Well, you actually have two subjects – maths and behaviour management. Geography teacher? Same applies. You teach geography and behaviour management.

Wait, what if you’re a primary teacher? Then you have a billion and one subjects – the billion subjects that make up the primary curriculum and behaviour management.

In other words, you have to teach your students how to behave in your lesson. You can’t simply assume that they already know how to. In fact, the only assumption you can make is that some won’t know. Even those who come pre-loaded with appropriate behavioural settings won’t be aware of the specific details as to how you want things done.

So teach your students that behaviour. Teach them your rules, your routines and your high expectations.

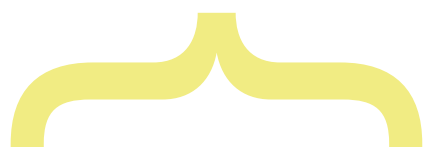
While we’re at it, start viewing instances of misbehaviour as learning opportunities. If students get a sum wrong, misspell a word or don’t know their *gluteus maximus* from their elbow, then you, as their teacher, would see those as learning opportunities. And so it goes with misbehaviour. It is a mistake that can be learned from. If you view it that way, there’s a good chance that your students will be more likely to view it that way too.

Robin Launder is a behaviour management consultant and speaker; find more tips in his weekly Better Behaviour online course – see behaviourbuddy.co.uk for more details

110 million

The number of lessons delivered by Oak National Academy across the last academic year

Source: Oak National Academy
2020/21 Annual Report



According to a new study by researchers at UCL and the University of Roehampton, the likelihood of teenagers becoming involved in politics is linked to the education level of their parents.

Using data obtained from 1,664 individuals, participants were asked a range of questions that included *'How interested in politics are you?'* and *'Who would you vote for in an election?'* From the responses received, the team found that significant social gaps in political engagement begin to emerge during adolescence.

As lead author Dr Jan Germen Janmaat, of UCL's Institute of Education, explains, "We found that at the beginning of adolescence there were no social differences in political engagement, but these differences soon start to appear and to grow wider at ages 14 and 15.

"After age 16, levels of engagement stabilise with young people from more educated families showing consistently higher levels of interest in politics than those from more disadvantaged backgrounds."

The study also found similar links between parental education and voting intention, with gaps widening during adolescence; by the age of 25, adults from the most educated families were almost twice as likely to vote than those from the least educated families.

The research can be read in full via bit.ly/ts107-LL2



YOUR GUIDE TO ...

MEMORY

Understanding the basics of memory is enormously significant when it comes to unlocking students' potential. Explaining, expanding and giving practical advice on memory, however, is no mean feat – it's a complicated field.

John Sweller has always been the theorist who makes the most sense to me. Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) was developed by Sweller back in the late 1980s, and therefore isn't new, but it's logical, the research still stands up and it's since been proven to work in the classroom. In short, it can really help you streamline your teaching.

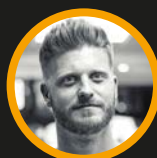
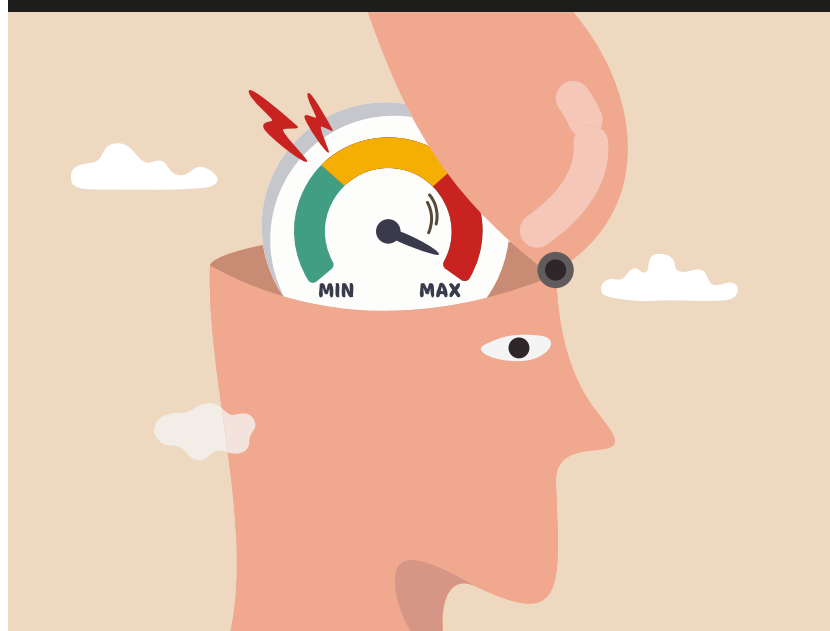
The basic principle of CLT is that working memory is limited, and that teachers should do all they can to ensure that learners don't become overloaded by instead allowing them to process only the information immediately required for learning. We want to ultimately keep extraneous loads as low as possible, to ensure that cognitive loads remain manageable.

CLT, however, also shows us how working memory can be extended. Sweller suggests that

the mind processes audio and visual stimuli separately, so that things that are being *said* don't directly compete with things that are being *seen*. Talking through a diagram or chart with your class will therefore call upon far less brain capacity than displaying a diagram or a chart surrounded by written explanations.

Another way in which we can harness and extend working memory is by helping learners build schema. By creating schema (set ways of working) we can learn to train our brains and significantly reduce the effort required to solve problems. The trick is to repeatedly practise this in order to master skills.

If we want to help our learners focus on what they need to, and work as effectively and efficiently as possible, then we need to ensure that they're taught the prerequisite skills *before* they're set any complicated problems. Wherever possible, learners should be focused on the task at hand, with other issues and distractions minimised.



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

64%

of UK adults believe religious education is an important part of the modern school curriculum (despite 52% of the public not regarding themselves as belonging to any religion)

Source: Survey of 2,000 adults conducted by Savanta on behalf of Culham St Gabriel's Trust

Need to know

Researchers at Anglia Ruskin University have found that increasing the spacing between letters within a piece of text can boost children's reading speed, delivering significant benefits for both dyslexic and non-dyslexic children alike.

The study involved 59 children aged between 11 and 15, recruited from six schools across Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and London. 32 of the participants had a statement of dyslexia, with 27 non-dyslexic children forming a control group.

Text rendered with increased spacing between each letter appeared to make a positive difference to both groups, with the dyslexia group showing a 13% increase in reading speed and the non-dyslexic children a 5% increase.

The participants were asked to read four texts rendered in either standard or extra-large letter spacing, both with and without a coloured overlay. The children were then instructed to read the text aloud while being recorded, after which the recording was used to check for reading speed and errors such as missed words, added words, wrong words, and mispronunciations.

The larger letter spacing was found to result in far fewer words being missed by the children with dyslexia. Over the course of the study, however, it appeared that the use of coloured overlays had little impact on either the reading speed or number of errors either group made during the recordings.



WHAT WE DO LEARNER VOICE

Education has the power to transform a child's future. As teachers, we cling to this knowledge though the whirlwind of all those late nights, early starts, marking jobs and the overwhelming sense that our work is never done.

Why do we weather the storm in this way? The holidays? The money? No – it's because our students are there through it all, and because teaching allows us just a moment to be a part of their learning journeys.

And yet the world in which students are living and growing up in is changing every day. The rise of social media has meant children now have a degree of independent agency over their lives that's entirely unfamiliar – not to mention unanticipated – by previous generations. What's interesting is that they're increasingly using the influence they wield to start grassroots movements, change the direction of politics and generally have a say in the world around them. More than ever, what our students are saying matters.

It's vital that they possess the skills needed to talk confidently, but even more importantly, they need to have the skills required to talk *responsibly*.

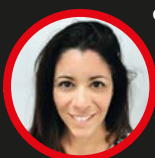
Around the country, and here at Danes Educational Trust, our learners have been working hard to

develop the skills and knowledge they need to thrive when studying a knowledge-rich curriculum. They have also become well-versed in the language of oracy and metacognition, which will equip them with the ability to discuss and truly understand what they do, how they do it and why – both in and outside of the classroom.

That said, it's no longer enough to simply give learners a voice – we need to make sure that we actually listen to what they have to say. That's why we established the Danes Educational Trust Learner Voice Council, to provide a forum for meaningful discussion and active research into the teaching and learning that helps our students the most.

Longer term, we're looking for students themselves to train as teaching and learning researchers, and establish learner-teacher partnerships within which they're enabled to become agents of change, both within their schools and across our wider Trust community. They will go out into our schools and talk knowledgeably about their findings.

Implicit within this work is a promise to all of our learners that we will listen, evolve and act. By teaching our students to harness the voice they have, they can hopefully transform the landscape of their futures.



NIKKI RAILTON IS A LEADER OF PURPOSE AND ENGLISH LEARNING LEAD AT DANES EDUCATIONAL TRUST; FOLLOW HER AT @NIKKIRAILTON



Fighting fit

Sport England has launched a free, on-demand video platform for schools in England designed to encourage teenage girls to get active and improve their levels of fitness. Named Studio You, users of the service will have access to 100 curriculum-linked fitness videos, with the option to search according to duration and discipline.

The platform forms part of Sport England's long-running 'This Girl Can' campaign, and was developed with input from teenage girls and PE teachers, with financial support from

National Lottery Funding.

Studio You content will de-emphasise the traditional competition and performance aspects of PE in favour of discovery (by introducing girls to the likes of Combat, Barre, and yoga), enjoyment and personal fulfilment. The platform's videos can also be selected on the basis of four themed moods: 'Energise', 'Relax', 'Party' and 'Focus'.

According to Kate Dale, campaign lead for This Girl Can at Sport England, "Engaging teenage girls with sport

and activity is notoriously challenging. But we cannot allow millions of girls to disengage at such a young age when the physical, mental and social rewards of an active lifestyle are so important. We want Studio You to help teachers increase the confidence of the girls who might otherwise disconnect by enabling them to inject fun, choice and ownership into the PE experience."

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER AN ACCOUNT, VISIT STUDIO-YOU.CO.UK

TRENDING

Our pick of the recent resources and launches teachers might find useful...

SNAP HAPPY

The non-profit organisation Photography Movement has launched a schools programme for 10- to 18-year-olds. 'Show and Tell' consists of free photography workshops, informative talks and expert-led feedback sessions, leading up to an exhibition of participants' work. thephotographymovement.com

PEPTALKS

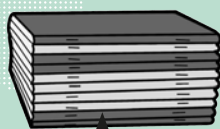
Youth Mental Health Day took place last month, but a suite of resources developed by the Mental Health Foundation's Peer Education Project (PEP) team to mark the event is still available. The materials support school staff in training older pupils to deliver a mental health curriculum to their younger peers, and cover the areas of body image, kindness and managing sleep. bit.ly/mhf-pep

TEACHER WALKTHROUGH

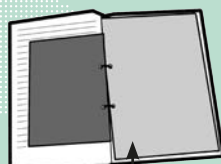
MARGINAL GAINS

SIX TIPS FOR TEACHERS, BY TEACHERS, AS VISUALISED BY ZEPH BENNETT...

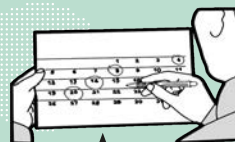
Set a minimum target of books to mark each day. Maintain this routine weekly.



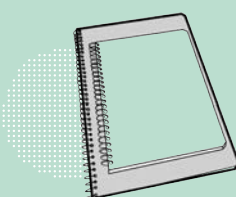
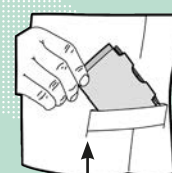
Hole-punch exercise books and attach lesson resources as and when you need to.



Plan your PPA or non-contact time and treat it like a lesson. Watch your productivity improve.



Keep a pocket notebook on you to record teaching moments that are too good not to repeat.



Use A4+ exercise books so that resources never need to be cut to size ever again.



Print a mini timetable and place it in your lanyard so it's always accessible.

ZEPH BENNETT IS A PE TEACHER AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT LEADER WITH 25 YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE; YOU CAN FIND MORE OF HIS EDUCATIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY FOLLOWING @PEGEEKSCORNER

Got a great learning idea? Email callum.fauser@theteachco.com or tweet us at [@teachsecondary](https://twitter.com/teachsecondary)

EDTECH

LanSchool Air

A classroom management system that helps take the hassle out of monitoring students' electronic activities



AT A GLANCE

- A sleek, intuitive and functional classroom management platform
- Helps guide learning, increase collaboration and maximise teaching time
- Connects teachers with students and creates more meaningful online experiences – both in the classroom and remotely
- Key features include screen monitoring, limit web, blank screen, messaging, and push website

REVIEW BY JOHN DABELL



When choosing their classroom management software, schools will be looking for a solution that teachers can use to leverage and guide learning, and encourage student participation. It needs to be on point for both classroom and remote teaching, and provide an immersive learning environment.

The cloud-based LanSchool Air system from Lenovo does precisely that. It's a straightforward software application that's easy to learn and use, and which allows teachers to manage multiple classroom activities via one central interface.

There are a number of features that help make LanSchool Air that extra bit special. For instance, there's its integrated instant messaging feature, which allows students to communicate with their teachers directly, and makes it super simple for teachers to share messages with the whole class.

The extremely useful share feature, meanwhile, lets teachers see precisely what students are doing and how they're working at any given time. A further thumbnail monitoring feature will help identify any areas of concern where students might need help, enabling teachers to address specific needs in a timely fashion and hopefully overcome learning obstacles at an early stage.

Students are likely to appreciate the latter feature in particular, since it offers a way of receiving the help and attention they need, without this being made public

in front of their peers. Students can discreetly request that teachers observe their screens to check that they're on the right track, which is likely to result in improved levels of engagement. It's also possible for teachers to boost students' confidence by sharing the screens of those performing well with the rest of the class.

Teachers can also use the system to temporarily lock keyboards, mice and other input devices with a single click, and enable the sharing of specific content or static imagery when moving from one learning task to the next.

To prevent distractions during independent study and breakouts there's also the facility to limit website access, with powerful 'whitelist' and 'blacklist' features ensuring that only approved sites can be visited – and if needed, pushed out to all screens within the class.

Teachers can even use LanSchool Air to track the battery status of all student devices and attend to any urgent power issues before it's too late. Screenshots can be taken in order to showcase and document examples of exceptional work, and provide insights into student progress during parent-teacher conferences.

With its superb safety features, LanSchool Air can help create a safer digital workspace for students both in school and at home, while the intuitive interface does a great job of putting its powerful functions within teachers' reach in fuss-free and time-efficient way.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Helps schools adapt quickly and successfully to new learning demands
- ✓ Can help deliver 1-to-1 programmes and support distance learning
- ✓ Provides great value for the budget-conscious
- ✓ Ticks all the boxes for teacher satisfaction, student safety and engagement
- ✓ Easy to install, scalable and helps keep students safe when online

UPGRADE IF...

You want to drive better learning outcomes, create more meaningful online experiences – whether in person, virtually or via a hybrid of the two – and simplify your classroom management tasks.

For more information, contact 020 8869 1950, email info@its-group.com or visit its-group.com

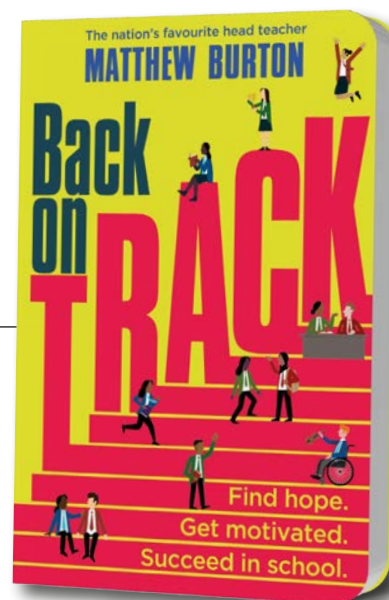
PASTORAL SUPPORT

Back on Track

A book filled with friendly advice for students struggling to maintain their confidence and levels of resilience



Scan for Back On Track School Resources!



AT A GLANCE

- A brilliantly written, motivational guide to success
- Written by Head Teacher Matthew Burton as seen on *Educating Yorkshire*
- Packed full of advice on how best to navigate the tougher elements of school
- Proven track record of success in building the confidence of young people

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES

For some students, the lived realities of their education can be harrowing. Navigating secondary school can be a serious challenge at times, with some children likely to need an extra helping hand to get back on the right path and stay there.

As the title suggests, headteacher Matthew Burton's book *Back on Track* does just that. This is a powerful, motivational text that talks directly to secondary age kids without patronising them. It's written in a way that manages to avoid any sense of cringe, and is instead likely to succeed in building up the young people it's aimed at brilliantly.

Some readers may recall that Burton previously graced our TV screens in *Educating Yorkshire* where, as a then English teacher, he was shown successfully helping a pupil, Musharaf Asghar, overcome his stutter. Watching those clips from the show now, it's plainly evident that Burton has long had an incredible gift for developing young peoples' confidence in themselves.

Back on Track comes across as a largely successful attempt at bottling that skill in book form, written as it is in a way that makes the reader feel like he's talking to them – and only them. Moreover, *Back on Track* is carefully crafted to get young people thinking about the obstacles they face in their daily lives in a logical and reasonable way.

The points Burton touches on throughout may seem intuitive, or even

obvious to us as fully grown adults, but one should never underestimate how important highlighting them can be. Indeed, helping younger people conceptualise the common challenges they face each day is key to them being able to develop resilience. Whether those obstacles are school assessments or major life changes, Burton's advice will help students get motivated again.

The book is packed full of practical advice on how to manage tough times and solve problems big and small. Readers will find plenty of useful hints and tips on beating school stress and tapping into one's potential – the effect of which is to show them that they can succeed, while encouraging them to have the confidence to try.

Burton speaks directly to those in need of some hope, a few soothing words of advice and a good old pep talk to get them going in school again – which in my experience, at least, covers a large number of learners at our school. Whatever it is that young people are worried about, this book is crammed with useful advice for meeting a range of different challenges.

In normal times, *Back on Track* would be a valuable addition to your school bookshelves. Post-COVID, it's arguably an essential one. With teenage support services under significant strain, Burton's helpful guidance and advice could help shore up some of the damage done to learners' confidence over the last year and a half.

teach
SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Relatable, helpful and direct in all the right ways
- ✓ Brilliantly written and highly engaging
- ✓ Deals with the challenges students can face in an open and honest way
- ✓ A great tool for building teenagers' confidence and self-esteem

UPGRADE IF...

You're looking for a way of supporting learners in overcoming numerous challenges that can affect their lives at school outside of direct/explicit intervention. Also worth considering for learners who are looking to build their confidence.

Back on Track is published by Hachette in paperback and ebook, both priced at £8.99

EDTECH

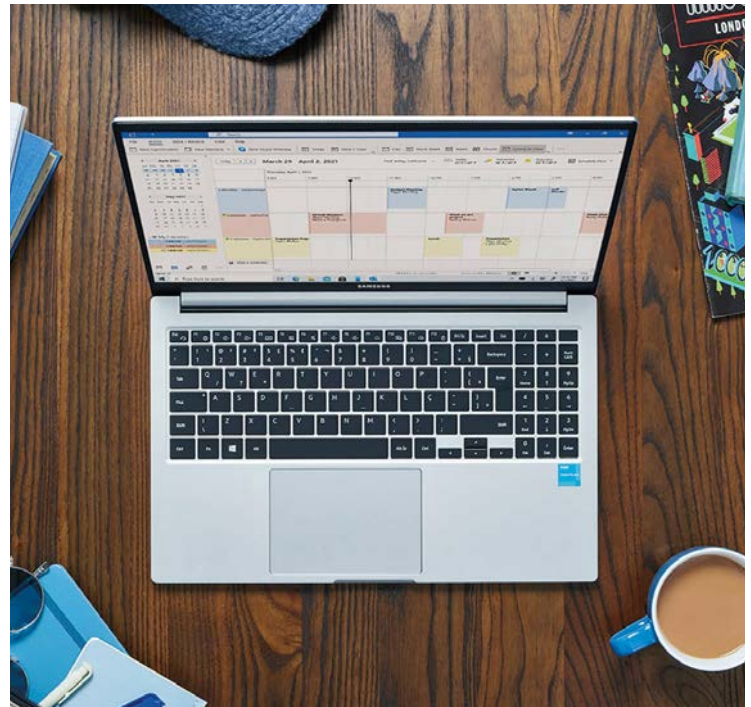
Samsung Galaxy Book

A reliable Windows laptop that's ideal for the post-pandemic blended learning now common in schools

AT A GLANCE

- A sleek, functional and stylish laptop that's perfect for educational settings
- Fast processing speeds and exceptional display
- Works seamlessly with other Samsung devices
- Designed with simplicity and functionality in mind

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES



As we've seen over the past year, learning from home can brilliantly supplement what's being taught in the classroom, assuming learners and teachers are able to work in sync – a task for which Samsung's newest Galaxy Book is ideally suited.

From the moment you pick it up, it's immediately apparent that considerable thought has gone into the Galaxy Book's design. It's a laptop that's light, yet durable and sized well for usability and transportation. The interface is smooth and intuitive, with users able to quickly acclimate themselves in just a few clicks.

The Galaxy Book range is powered by 11th generation Intel Core processors that can handle any classroom tasks you throw at them. The sleek casing is perfectly sized to suit the confines of a school bag, and the on-board battery packs plenty of stamina.

The Galaxy Book comes with Windows 10 Pro pre-installed, which gives you all the comprehensive security and tools you'll need to keep your files and data safe. There's also a hardware fingerprint scanner that can be used to unlock the device, thus ensuring that you're ready to go right off the bat.

With the growing popularity of remote learning, it's become more important than ever that teachers and students are able to stay connected throughout the day. Between its wifi and 4G compatibility, I found the Galaxy Book's robust connectivity to be a

notable positive during testing. There's nothing more frustrating than having to constantly troubleshoot the causes of intermittent internet connections while teaching, so I'm happy to report that the stability of the Galaxy Book in this regard was exceptional.

Samsung's proprietary 'Quick Share' feature allows users to easily and rapidly send media and other files between different Samsung devices with a minimum of fuss. Support for that is included here, opening up the potential for hassle-free interactive classroom experiences by using the Galaxy Book in conjunction with Samsung displays and tablet devices. A compact USB-C charger comes included in the box, though the 54Wh capacity battery ought to provide users with enough power to last a full school day under normal use.

When using technological solutions in their classrooms, teachers want peace of mind. In this respect, the technical support Samsung can offer will keep you moving in the event of any difficulties, and help you make the most of their range. In addition to the manufacturer warranty you'd expect, Samsung goes a step further by offering to pick up any faulty devices, before repairing and returning them to your school's doorstep as quickly as possible. It's these little touches that make the Galaxy Book laptop range a brilliant fit for schools.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ An exceptionally functional and versatile Windows laptop
- ✓ Designed with the needs of students and teachers in mind
- ✓ Easy to use, with comprehensive support available in the event of any difficulties
- ✓ Loaded with features out of the box and easily adaptable for different learning contexts

UPGRADE IF...

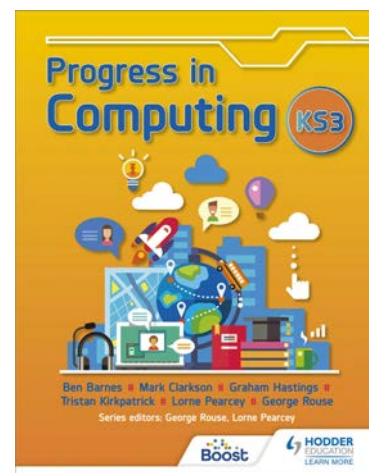
You want to boost the use of technology in your classroom, or want to support staff to help children who require specialist provision.

For more details about Samsung's bespoke pricing and volume discounts, call 0333 344 1916 or email samsungexperiences@prs-and.com



Progress in Computing for KS3

Bolster your computer science provision with this appealing package of resources, ready for both online and offline use



AT A GLANCE

- A solid base course for KS3 learners
- Designed by industry experts and teachers
- Holistic, clear coverage of KS3 National Curriculum
- Packed full of exemplars and models
- Integratable with Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES



With computing becoming increasingly popular at KS4, Hodder Education's *Progress in Computing* is the perfect course to set learners up to excel at GCSE, Cambridge Nationals, BTECs and beyond.

What's striking from the outset is the level of detail Hodder Education has paid to the design of the course. Using teachers and industry experts, *Progress in Computing* ensures that students are inspired and supported through their learning.

At its core, *Progress in Computing* focuses on building confidence and computer literacy. Through delivery of content on the underlying principles of computing, digital media and IT, learners are quickly exposed to the intricacies of technology they engage with every day. Understanding is built around linking real life experiences to technology, further embedding the importance of computing in our modern digital era.

From a planning perspective, *Progress in Computing* has it all. The link between the textbook and Hodder Education's brand new Boost platform means that teachers (and learners) are able to access the resources digitally. The lessons are comprehensive, and the resources fully editable. The *Progress in Computing* textbook is designed to work in sync with the online resources, to form a holistic learning experience.

Pedagogically, the lessons are well contained and clearly presented. Learners are encouraged to build self-efficacy and

the regular revision opportunities through KS3 mean that retention is well catered for. 'Knowledge check-ins' allow teachers to effectively track understanding, while the visually appealing summaries and key term lists mean that learners can quickly overcome any misconceptions they may have.

One of the best things about *Progress in Computing* is that elements of the course can be taught 'unplugged'. This means that from a timetabling perspective, the curriculum can be taught using machines only part of the time. In schools where computers are in short supply, the result is that learners can still have access to the knowledge and understanding required to succeed.

Computing can be a difficult subject to get one's head around, but Hodder Education has struck a good balance in terms of this resource's design. Consideration of interleaving and interweaving content is evident with the clear Progress Pathway (which also helpfully covers the KS3 National Curriculum.) Also, the Hodder pedigree is evident throughout, in that the resources contain no gimmicks – just clear, classy examples with sustained formatting that aids memory.

The online Boost platform meanwhile allows teachers to give their learning experiences more of interactive flavour if that's their preference, and if their context allows for it. The platform can also be used by teachers to gain access to a plethora of additional learning functions.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Inspiring and interesting content
- ✓ Well-formatted and carefully designed with learners in mind
- ✓ Key terms and summaries make for brilliant recap resources
- ✓ Sophisticated and detailed, offering an appropriate level of challenge for all learners

UPGRADE IF...

You're looking for a course that's ready packaged and all good to go. Also worth considering if you have a growing uptake of computing students at GCSE, Cambridge Nationals or BTECs and are looking to bolster your KS3 offer.

Find out more at hoddereducation.co.uk



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Lawson is a former secondary teacher, now serving as a foundation governor and running a tutoring service, and author of the book *The Successful (Less Stressful) Student* (Outskirts Press, £11.95); for more information, visit prep4successnow.wordpress.com or follow @johninpompano



THE LAST WORD

The summer of 'love what you do'



Grit, determination and hard work are all important to becoming a champion in your field – but so too is passion and a determination to take care of yourself, notes **John Lawon...**

The latter part of summer might have been a lacklustre one for deckchair lovers, but thankfully there were at least rays of hope, if not sun, to be had from watching the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. Like many, I cheered on the irrepressible Dame Sarah Storey OBE as she raced to claim her 17th Olympic Gold medal. Storey can now claim to being a 29-time world champion – six times in swimming, 23 in cycling – having won her first Olympic medal in Barcelona when she was aged just 14.

When persistent ear infections forced her to quit swimming, she switched to cycling and once again became a serial champion – a monumental achievement. Storey obviously works incredibly hard, but has also spoken of placing a high premium on spending quality time with family and friends.

Not long after, we witnessed Emma Raducanu brilliantly overcome her Wimbledon setback in New York, winning 10 matches without dropping a set to secure the US Open. Just a few months ago, Emma was diligently studying A level history in Bromley; since then, she's managed to secure a place for herself in the tennis history books.

Following her stunning victory, Raducanu revealed that the key to her success had been that she simply loves playing tennis, and remains determined to have fun. In an interview she gave to UK local news, Raducanu praised an influential primary school teacher who had believed in her, as well her parents, who had apparently always 'Expected her best'.

Well, we can't all necessarily be the best ourselves – but we can all certainly try.

The pursuit of excellence

Staying with the theme, consider Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi – two of the world's greatest footballers, and both raised in low income families and communities. What gave them an edge over their rivals was that they enjoyed honing their skills. Each day saw them become slightly better than many other youngsters who lacked their passion and grit.

The takeaway here is that these sporting superstars don't love competitive sport because it's easy; rather, they love it for its challenges, well as the highs that come with achieving mastery.

Their extraordinary achievements serve to prove that the pursuit of excellence and caring for one's mental wellbeing aren't incompatible. Their stories

ably illustrate how the quest for success doesn't always have to be joyless or stressful, nor remain the preserve of other people. After all, success in any field is usually achieved by those who genuinely love what they do.

As Socrates put it, "When you want to succeed as much as a drowning man wants to breathe, you will be successful." Yes, most success stories will include a requisite chapter describing months and often years of 'hard work', which is

enough to scare most people off pursuing similar goals of their own. Yet hard work rarely harms anyone; in fact, it's a lifetime of soulless labour that tends to 'destroy' most people. The best teachers will try to steer us clear of that fate.

Stress-free success

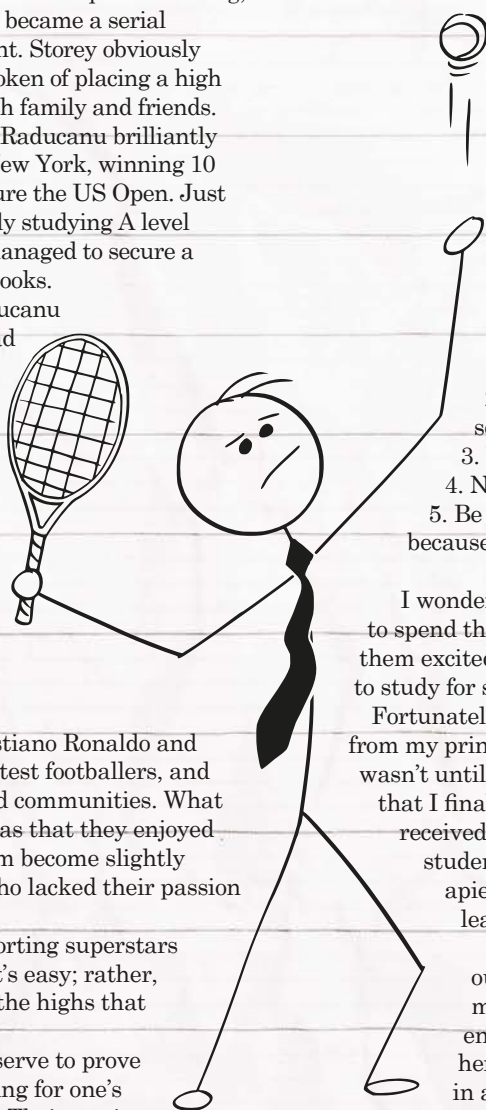
There are ultimately five steps to success in almost every walk of life, which we would do well to share with our students if we want them to become successful, lifelong learners:


1. Want it
2. Show up each day, and put your body and soul into the work needs doing
3. Work for it
4. Never give up on your dreams
5. Be ready for when Lady Luck calls – because she rarely calls twice...

I wonder how many teachers would be bold enough to spend their first week with a new class getting them excited about learning, and teaching them how to study for success without the stress.

Fortunately, I was wise enough not to seek permission from my principal – I prepared an apology instead. It wasn't until I'd established myself as an A-team teacher that I finally admitted to my subterfuge. By then, I'd received thousands of 'Learning Journals' from students (each containing more than 2,000 words apiece) saying how much they'd enjoyed learning my secrets of success.

The champions of tomorrow are sitting in our classrooms today. If we want them to maximise their talents, then we should encourage them to learn from our sporting heroes. Because as we all know, securing a job in an area you're passionate about means you'll never work another day in your life.





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Step 3: Donate £1 to help kids get the food they need to see the fun and wonder in the world.

So jumpers on, people!

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