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# teach SECONDARY

Outstanding advice from the UK's top education experts 

INTERVIEW



**JOSEPH COELHO:**

*"There's a fear around poetry and form"*

## FULLY FOCUSED

The case for making hard work normal

## COMMUNITY SPIRIT

How your school can keep families warm

## RADICAL THOUGHT

What does 'critical thinking' actually mean?

## "HEY, KIDS!"

Is it wrong to want to be liked?

# Rethinking. revision

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9

SEND

Art & Design

School trips

Ofsted

Sustainability

Uniform

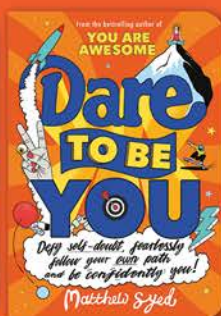
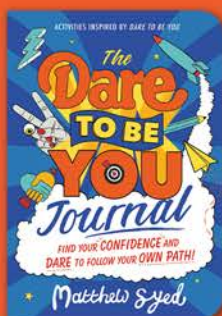
DC THOMSON



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SCAN ME



## FROM THE EDITOR

### “Welcome...”



Well, the opening paragraphs of these editorial leaders have become quite the roll call as of several months ago. Let's all welcome Kit Malthouse as the new Secretary of State for Education, who relieved James Cleverly from his summer stint – who in turn took over from Michelle Donelan, who ... let's just move on, shall we?

The rapid comings and goings at Sanctuary Buildings notwithstanding, one of the biggest stories dominating education in England of late has been the prospect of an exceptionally tough winter as the cost of living crisis starts to bite hard. As Rebecca Leek notes on p68, schools can, with some careful preparation, serve as vital sanctuaries for families facing unaffordable heating bills in the form of 'warm banks'. It's a term that still feels jarring, but perhaps one we'll be hearing with increasing frequency over the next few months.

Meanwhile, back in the classroom, page 14 sees Harley Richardson call out those who extol the virtues of teaching students critical thinking, only to then push back against any efforts from said students to deviate from the consensus view.

Elsewhere, Matt MacGuire makes an unapologetic case for normalising the notion of hard work by ridding classrooms of distractions, drilling routines and maintaining an active presence among your students' desks.

However, lest you think we're piling it on a bit thick with that emphasis on cultivating robust responses to naysayers and behavioural challenges, let's remember that it's okay to want to be liked by your students too. Albeit, as Colin Foster stresses on page 48, with a few important caveats.

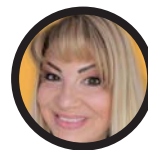
Finally, in between supplying vital warmth for your local neighbourhood and placing bets on the likelihood of the dollar being worth more than the pound come January, you'll be wanting to make sure KS4's exam preparations get off to a good start. On page 28, Claire Gadsby serves up some handy bite-size lesson activities, while on page 35, Tracey Leese warns that revision itself is a tool that must be wielded carefully if we don't want errors to become reinforced.

There's probably a lesson in there somewhere about proceeding cautiously and not doing anything rash that raises the risk of instability. But I can't imagine who that could possibly apply to...

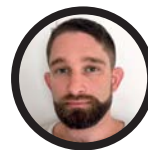
Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser  
callum.fauser@theteachco.com

## On board this issue:



Tracey Leese is an assistant headteacher



Matt MacGuire is an assistant headteacher



Rebecca Leek is CEO of the SEAMAT trust



Gordon Cairns is an English and forest school teacher



Elena Stevens is a secondary school teacher and history lead



Andy Lewis is director of RE at a school in East London

## KEEP IN TOUCH!

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

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How to show students that historical figures aren't simply 'good' or 'evil'

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What it takes to create a winning final art project





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# Explore, Discover and Remember

## at the National Memorial Arboretum

Refreshed for 2022/23, the Arboretum offers a wide range of opportunities for students and teachers alike, including ready prepared tours and workshops. Using our landscape as inspiration, the Arboretum's learning team has ensured both the National Curriculum and Ofsted Education Inspection Framework are central to the content delivered.

For further information visit [thenma.org.uk/learning](https://thenma.org.uk/learning)



### Perfect for KS3

- Heroes of the Holocaust Explorer Day
- Service and Sustainability Explorer Day (new for 2023)
- Guided Tour
- Poppy Activity

### Perfect for KS4

- Medicine in Service Explorer Day (new for 2023)
- WWI & WWII Explorer Days
- Guided Tour
- Act of Remembrance

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# The newsletter

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

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



### TOP TRUMPS

They're back! Top Trumps! You remember Top Trumps, right?

Presenting yet more evidence that everything old truly is new again, news reaches us regarding a new '#Trending' line of the venerable Top Trumps brand – they of stats-heavy trading cards fame (and no relation at all to divisive former US presidents). Back in the 1970s and 1980s, they would enliven many a school playground, as children excitedly compared the top speed and acceleration of sports cars, or the goals scored by First Division footballers.

From the online-enabled, smartphone-suffused perspective of 2022, however, it can't help but seem a little quaint, as youthful diversions go. How do you make them seem worthwhile to a youthful audience reared on the likes of Pokemon Go?

Meet them where they are, of course. Thus, #Trending Top Trumps packs feature breakdowns of noted Tik Tok trends, Spotify superstars, trainers and the like, primed for numerical battle. Whether they succeed in becoming physical objects of fascination for junior hipsters remains to be seen – but we can easily imagine a scenario where they serve as handy, pocket-sized youth culture cheat sheets for teachers...

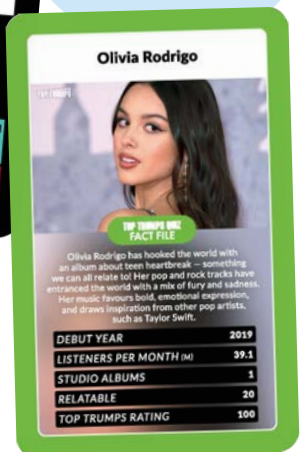


### DO SAY

**"Dua Lipa has 69 million listeners per month"**

### DON'T SAY

**'Oh yeah? Well, Chris Waddle has 62 caps'**



## BEAT THE BUDGET



### What are we talking about?

An Introduction to Human Rights

### What's the targeted age range?

KS4/5



### What's on offer?

A lesson plan that explores how citizens' freedoms are protected by law.

### How might teachers use the resource?

The lesson challenges students to consider if there may be circumstances when human rights could be restricted, and what should happen when different human rights conflict with each other. An extension activity then examines recent moves by the government to reform the Human Rights Act.

### Where are they available?

[youngcitizens.org](http://youngcitizens.org)

### DON'T QUOTE ME...

*"The prime minister made it clear during the leadership contest that she wanted to see work on grammar schools, fundamentally because there is a desire from parents in some parts of the country to have them."*

**Secretary of State for Education, Kit Malthouse**

## Think of a number...

# 15%

of secondary school teachers say they experience violence from a pupil at least once a month

40%

of teachers admit feeling unprepared to measure learning loss caused by COVID-19

Source: Survey of teachers and headteachers by Renaissance

18%

of parents and carers feel frustrated at the standard of communications between themselves and their child's school

Source: Arlington Research survey commissioned by Sangoma

## ONE FOR THE WALL

*"The pen is in our hands. A happy ending is ours to write."*

**Hilary Mantel**





## NASUWT launches legal action

The NASUWT has announced its intention to issue legal action against the government, in response to its decision to allow the use of agency workers to cover for striking workers, effectively amounting to strike breaking.

The union is of the view that the new regulations are a violation of trade union rights, which include the right to strike. Additionally, the NASUWT claims that the government's actions further violate a longstanding national and international consensus that agency workers shouldn't be used to replace striking workers, citing international conventions that include the International Labour Organisation and the Code of the World Employment Confederation – signatories to which include the Recruitment and Employment Confederation, which represents employment agencies and businesses.

According to NASUWT general secretary, Dr Patrick Roach, "The Government is seeking to prevent workers taking collective action to defend their jobs, pay and working conditions in direct contravention of its international commitments and obligations.

"Such a change will have a profound impact on supply teachers, the overwhelming majority of whom are employed and supplied to schools via employment agencies, as well as schools and school leaders. If the Government was serious about improving workers' rights, it would be focused on improving the pay and working conditions of all workers, including agency workers."

### SAVE THE DATE

## STATEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

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



### THE SPEECH:

## Bridget Phillipson addresses Labour Party Conference

**WHO?** Bridget Phillipson, Shadow Education Secretary

**WHAT?** Conference speech

**WHEN?** 28th September 2022

"We need an education system that enables every child to achieve and thrive. Our priorities will define that vision. Conference, that is why we will end the tax breaks private schools enjoy.

We will use that money to deliver the most ambitious school improvement programme for a generation. Recruiting thousands more teachers to help children excel in science and maths and thrive with access to sport, art, music, and drama. Working with brilliant teachers, leaders, support staff and unions.

We will drive up standards everywhere. We will build a modern careers advice and work experience system, so young people across our schools and colleges leave education ready for work and ready for life.

Conference, it is the simple language of priorities. The Tories put the richest first. We put children first. And we know these Tories will go on making the wrong choices. Because education, under this government is like a school maths problem.

You have five education secretaries in one year. Three of them haven't got a clue what they are doing. Two of them want a return to the 50s. What have you got left? I'll tell you.

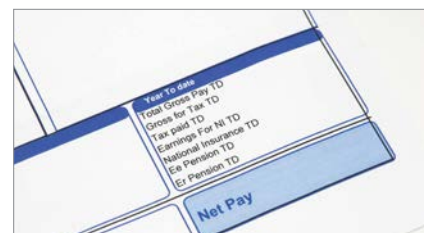
A government that is failing our children. Childcare in crisis. A recovery programme in chaos. School buildings collapsing. A skills system unfit for today, never mind tomorrow. Universities treated as a political battleground, not a public good. We will make different choices. For children and families across this country. For the world our children will inherit."

### THE LETTER:

## Joint union statement on teacher pay

**WHO?** ASCL, Community, NAHT, NASUWT and the NEU

**WHEN?** 22nd September 2022



"A new Prime Minister has taken office, but the long-established problems facing the teaching profession and education remain. Those problems will not be solved without a reversal of government policy on teacher and school leader pay. This must involve a restoration of teachers' real terms pay levels to those before the government's austerity policy began in the last decade and must also address the further impact of runaway inflation in 2022/23 and 2023/24.

There must be an urgent assessment of funding for schools in light of the effects of inflation on schools generally, and the need to fully fund pay awards for all school employees."

7-8 OCTOBER 2022 Tes SEND Show 2022 | 10 NOVEMBER 2022 The Education People Show | 29-31 MARCH 2023 Bett

### 7-8 OCTOBER 2022

**Tes SEND Show 2022**  
The Business Design Centre, London  
tessendshow.co.uk

A two-day event dedicated entirely to all matters SEND-related, with lots to interest SENCos, school leaders and educators alike. As well as the CPD-certified seminars and hands-on workshops you'd expect, there will also be an informative Parent, Carer and Teacher Forum, an extensive products/services exhibition and the self-contained SEND Leadership Summit conference, where leaders and senior staff will convene to discuss, among other things, the SEND review published by the government earlier this year.

### 10 NOVEMBER 2022

**The Education People Show**  
Kent Event Centre, Maidstone  
theeducationpeopleshow.co.uk

Formerly the EduKent EXPO & Conference, the retooled Education People Show is pitched as a free-to-attend, major networking event for school leaders and policymakers across Kent and neighbouring counties, combining inspiring keynotes with engaging workshops and an extensive exhibition of leading school and academy suppliers.

### 29-31 MARCH 2023

**Bett**  
ExCeL London  
bettshow.com

The organisers of the venerable edtech showcase are shaking things up a bit for 2023. It still promises the usual lineup of speakers, product/service exhibitors and seminars, but the big innovation is Connect @ Bett – an online meetings system enabling attendees and exhibitors to mutually schedule 15-minute onsite meetings ahead of time or during the show according to their availability.

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# Get Into Film



**LADY BIRD**  
(2017, 15, 94 MINS)

## CURRICULUM LINKS:

PSHE

Christine 'Lady Bird' McPherson is a strong-willed 17-year-old from the wrong side of the tracks in Sacramento, California, intent on leaving as soon as she graduates from her Catholic high school.

Set in the early 2000s, the film takes place during her senior year where self-styled Lady Bird experiences first love, joins the school musical and applies for college. During these formative months, Lady Bird must also contend with the tempestuous relationship she shares with her candid mother.

*Lady Bird* is an authentic, funny and moving coming of age film that shows its lead character learning how to navigate new life experiences, and the impact these have on her existing relationships.

## Discussion questions:

- How would you describe the relationship between Christine and her mother, Marion?
- What traditional teenage experiences does Lady Bird go through during the film?
- How does the film balance its comedic, dramatic and melancholic elements?

Head online to [intofilm.org](http://intofilm.org) to stream the film for free and download our fantastic film guide, containing Teacher Notes on these discussion questions and much more



## Retweets

Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?

**Tom Sherrington** @teacherhead

I reckon if every school development plan was five bullet points it would save time, be easier to communicate, make more impact and ... no fairies would die. The value of that detailed SDP document ... it's all a delusion! It's not the reason for anything good happening.

**Jessica Walmsley** @jwalms93

Phoned home for 2 notoriously tricky boys. Parent 1: 'What's he done?' Parent 2: 'I dread school calling.' Just called to say they've had an excellent 1st 2 days! 1: 'Amazing, I never get these calls' 2: 'I'm so pleased, he can have his favourite tea later' Positivity goes a long way.

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

# TEACHER TALES

True stories from the education chalkface

## It can't hear you...

One day, a teacher wanting to use the sports hall came to the PE office to ask how to turn the lights on, which were operated from a switch in the outside corridor. Always 'game for a laugh', I informed him that the lights were voice activated, and offered to show him how to operate them. A fellow PE teacher in the office realised what I was up to, and followed us to the darkened hall.

I entered with the teacher and shouted towards the top left corner, "Lights On!" As I did so, my colleague in the corridor duly flicked the switch. The teacher was amazed. I told him he'd better check to see if his voice was recognised, so he performed a few 'successful' "Lights On!" and "Lights Off!"s. Duly impressed, we left him to it.

A few days later, the PE office telephone recorded an irate voice

message from the teacher who - amid plenty of expletives - informed us he'd spent five minutes in a dark sports hall shouting, unsuccessfully, for the lights to come on. He then related how, having gone to inform the caretaker that the voice activation system had broken down, the caretaker had simply laughed, and then showed him the switch...

## Good job

Upon scoring his first and only goal in his debut appearance for the school football team, Tommy (not his real name) ran up to me, roaring "Did I do good, Sir?" "You did good," I replied, smiling at his evident joy.

Come report time, I wrote on his, "Tommy done good." Before the reports went out, the headteacher summoned me to his office, querying my poor English in Tommy's PE report. so I told him the above story. "Leave it exactly as it is," he instructed.

Later that term, at parents' evening, Tommy's parents told me that he'd been so happy with his report that he had cried.

Find more true tales and amusing anecdotes at [schoolhumour.co.uk](http://schoolhumour.co.uk)

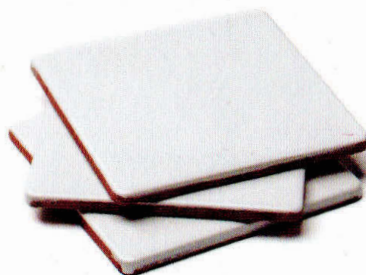
## A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

### #24 JOINT ENDEAVOUR



Explain in a drawing how you would join the objects or materials shown above. You can cut them and/or multiply them if you need to.

Label the drawing with instructions and indicate any extra materials you



would need in order to ensure that the joints are sound.

The end result doesn't have to be a product with a recognisable function; you just have to work out how you could join the parts neatly and securely.



## ASK THE EXPERT

# “Managing money is a key skill”

Russell Winnard, from the national charity Young Enterprise, explains why we must help young people become financially capable

### Why is financial education so important?

Managing money is a key skill that is essential for adult life. Providing financial education helps children develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they'll need to manage their money, make informed financial decisions and achieve their goals. Yet research tells us that just 38% of children receive some form of financial education in school, with 67% admitting they don't feel confident in planning for their financial future.

### Why is it necessary to be financially capable?

Children are increasingly exposed to money at a young age, with most accessing a smartphone by the age of 10 and using a debit card by age 11. In an increasingly cashless society, they'll face financial challenges that their parents and teachers never did. That's why we need to build financially capable young people who are ready to thrive in today's society, and who can unlock opportunities, make more sustainable financial decisions and enjoy financial and mental wellbeing.

### How can I make financial education fun and engaging?

By making conversations about money more real, relatable and practical, we can help children better engage with their learning – a view confirmed by a recent teacher survey, which found that 96% agreed that being able to apply learning using real-world contexts is important. We also recommend identifying opportunities to embed financial education within other subject lessons to help bring it to life, and using topics that will resonate with young people.



### EXPERT PROFILE

**NAME:**  
Russell Winnard

**JOB TITLE:**  
Chief operating officer, Young Enterprise

**AREA OF EXPERTISE:**  
Real-world learning

**BEST PART OF MY JOB:**  
Working with such passionate colleagues, teachers, parents and carers

### My students use social media channels to learn about money. Is this safe?

Young people are growing up in a rapidly changing financial world – one in which many are now looking to social media influencers for financial advice. While there is a great deal of valuable information out there, there is also a great deal of incorrect, and sometimes even dangerous advice. Given the risks of, for example, cryptocurrency investment opportunities, 'buy now, pay later' platforms and celebrity-endorsed scams, it's essential that young people are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate such challenges.

### Where can I find resources to help me teach financial education?

Many teachers tell us they lack the confidence, skills, knowledge, and/or time to help their students learn about money. That's why Young Enterprise offers a range of free opportunities to help you deliver fun and engaging lessons to your students. These include teacher training sessions, planning frameworks, access to quality-assured resources, lesson plans, and impactful programmes and events – all designed to help young people become financially capable.

## ASK ME ABOUT

**PUBLICATIONS** – Download the free *Your Money Matters* financial education textbook and help students learn about saving, borrowing and student finance.

**CPD** – Take part in one of our free financial education teacher training sessions to build your confidence, knowledge and skills.

**SUPPORT** – Contact our free Advisory Service for information and resources that will help you deliver financial education in your classroom

[young-enterprise.org.uk](http://young-enterprise.org.uk) / T: 020 4526 6389 / E: [advisory@y-e.org.uk](mailto:advisory@y-e.org.uk)



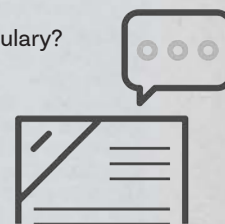
# The Vocab Clinic

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

## TRY THIS TODAY: **ACADEMIC ANNOTATIONS**

Do we ever consider the importance of annotations in developing pupils' academic vocabulary? In subjects like art, design technology, science, geography, and more, annotating diagrams, images and models proves crucial. In subjects where extended writing isn't always expected, annotations may prove even more important.

How then do we develop 'academic annotations'? Too often, writing annotations is left tacit or even ignored. Instead, we can be explicit about their potential to enhance pupils' vocabulary. In art, for instance, 'charcoal' can be enhanced to become 'Sfumato charcoal accents'. In geography, when annotating diagrams or photographs, 'waves' might become 'diffracted waves'.



Annotation

## Cracking the academic code



Writing arguments is a crucial aspect of teaching and learning in subjects across the curriculum, from English to RE. Crucially, though, research on pupils' writing indicates that they can struggle to write developed arguments, and fail to include counterarguments that challenge their own ideas.

One solution is to foreground with pupils the necessity for 'Other side arguments'. Teachers can explicitly question 'What is the 'Other side argument?'' in discussion, or embed this into planning templates or paragraph plans. Successful 'Other side arguments' will add depth and convincing details to pupils' academic writing.

## ONE FOR: **BIOLOGY STUDENTS**

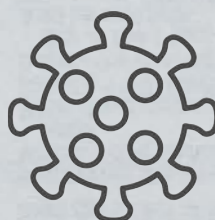
### **PATHOGEN**

**Derives from:** the Greek '*pathos*', meaning 'suffering' and '*genes*', meaning 'producer of'

**Means:** a virus, bacteria, or another microorganism that can cause disease

**Related terms:** pathology, parasite, bacteria, pathos

**Note:** 'pathos' is a classical Greek drama term, referring to a quality that evokes sadness or pity



## **DO THEY KNOW?**

Each year, an estimated 800 to 1,000 words are added to English language dictionaries

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

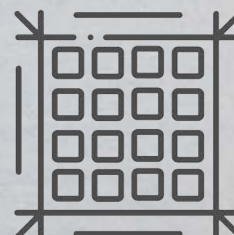
## **RESOLUTION**

**In art**

The amount of visual detail contained within an image

**In chemistry**

The process of reducing or separating something into its constituent parts or components



## One word at a time

Small words can represent big ideas and spaces. Galaxy is one such word. The word is borrowed from ancient Greek '*galaxias*', though the stem '*gála*' means 'milk' – hence the word translating directly as '*the milky circle*'. Sound familiar? It should, since the word 'galaxy' originally represented the galaxy we now know as The Milky Way.

In modern times, we're aware that the The Milky Way is over 13 billion years old, and recognise that there are likely between 100 and 200 billion other galaxies in the known universe. That the word once had such a singular focus may seem narrow to us now, but it serves as a reminder of our vocabulary's rich and varied history, and how even the seemingly biggest ideas can become even bigger over time.



Alex Quigley is a former teacher and the author of a number of books, most recently *Closing the Writing Gap*; he also works for the Education Endowment Foundation as National Content Manager



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## [ MATHS PROBLEM ]

# ADDING SURDS

**Colin Foster** looks at the different ways in which surds can be combined – some of which can be difficult for students to make sense of...

In this lesson, students contrast multiplication and addition of surds to understand how they are different but related.

## THE DIFFICULTY

Look at these statements. Are they true or false? Why?

$$\begin{array}{ll} \sqrt{12} + \sqrt{3} = \sqrt{15} & \sqrt{12} - \sqrt{3} = \sqrt{9} \\ \sqrt{12} \times \sqrt{3} = \sqrt{36} & \sqrt{12} \div \sqrt{3} = \sqrt{4} \end{array}$$

Students may need calculators to be sure.

Three of the right-hand sides are square roots of perfect squares, so students may recognise these integers ( $\sqrt{36} = 6$ ,  $\sqrt{9} = 3$ ,  $\sqrt{4} = 2$ ). The multiplication and the division are correct, but the addition and the subtraction aren't.

## THE SOLUTION

How can we be sure whether these are true or false?

We can show that  $\sqrt{12} \times \sqrt{3}$  must equal  $\sqrt{36}$ , because **squaring** each of these expressions gives us the same value:

$$\begin{aligned} (\sqrt{12} \sqrt{3})(\sqrt{12} \sqrt{3}) &\hat{=} \sqrt{36} \sqrt{36} \\ (\sqrt{12} \sqrt{12})(\sqrt{3} \sqrt{3}) &\hat{=} \sqrt{36} \sqrt{36} \\ 12 \times 3 &\hat{=} 36 \end{aligned}$$

After squaring, the left-hand side equals the right-hand side, meaning that  $\sqrt{12} \times \sqrt{3} = \sqrt{36}$ .

If we try this with the **addition**, we get a problem:

$$\begin{aligned} \sqrt{12} + \sqrt{3} &\hat{=} \sqrt{15} \\ (\sqrt{12} + \sqrt{3})^2 &\hat{=} \sqrt{15} \sqrt{15} \\ (\sqrt{12})^2 + 2\sqrt{12}\sqrt{3} + (\sqrt{3})^2 &\hat{=} \sqrt{15}\sqrt{15} \\ 12 + 2\sqrt{12}\sqrt{3} + 3 &\hat{=} 15 \end{aligned}$$

So, we can see not only that these are **not equal** but that the left-hand side in a case like this is **always** going to be bigger (because of the extra  $2\sqrt{12}\sqrt{3}$  term, which **must be positive**).

So,  $\sqrt{12} + \sqrt{3} > \sqrt{12+3}$ , **not**  $\sqrt{12} + \sqrt{3} = \sqrt{12+3}$ .

Square rooting is **sub-additive**, which means that, unless either  $a$  or  $b$  is zero,  $\sqrt{a+b} < \sqrt{a} + \sqrt{b}$ . The radical symbol  $\sqrt{\phantom{x}}$  does **not** behave like multiplication (e.g., something like  $3(a+b) \equiv 3a+3b$ ).

Square rooting is **not distributive over addition**, like multiplication is.



However, we **can** simplify  $\sqrt{12} + \sqrt{3}$ , by using what we have seen about **multiplication** of surds. The number 12 has a **square factor** (4), and so we can write  $\sqrt{12} = \sqrt{4\sqrt{3}}$ , and, because 4 is a square number,  $\sqrt{12}$  is equal to  $2\sqrt{3}$ .

So,  $\sqrt{12} + \sqrt{3} = 2\sqrt{3} + \sqrt{3} = 3\sqrt{3}$ .

(This last step is just 'counting in  $\sqrt{3}$ s' and is analogous to collecting like terms.)

Students should check this on their calculator.

We can simplify additions and subtractions of surds in this kind of way whenever there is a square number that is a factor of the number being square rooted.

**What would  $\sqrt{12} - \sqrt{3}$  be equal to?**

This time,  $\sqrt{12} - \sqrt{3} = 2\sqrt{3} - \sqrt{3} = \sqrt{3}$ . It may look strange to write  $\sqrt{12} - \sqrt{3} = \sqrt{3}$  (students may think it should be  $\sqrt{6} - \sqrt{3} = \sqrt{3}$ ), but it is correct.

## Checking for understanding

To assess students' understanding, ask them to find as many surd expressions as they can that are equal to  $3\sqrt{5}$ . For example, they could start with  $4\sqrt{5} - \sqrt{5}$  and convert this to  $\sqrt{80} - \sqrt{5}$ . There are many possibilities, and generating lots of these is an excellent way to practise using these ideas. They could try to make the  $3\sqrt{5}$  as concealed as possible and to make some that look as though they **might** be equal to  $3\sqrt{5}$  **but aren't!**



Colin Foster (@colinfoster77) is a Reader in Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics Education at Loughborough University. He has written many books and articles for mathematics teachers. [foster77.co.uk](http://foster77.co.uk), [blog.foster77.co.uk](http://blog.foster77.co.uk)

# Situation critical

Many claim to recognise the value of teaching ‘critical thinking’, but seem less inclined to welcome any ideas that actually deviate from the consensus view, observes **Harley Richardson**

**I**t’s often claimed that schools don’t do nearly enough to encourage young people to be critical thinkers.

We face numerous problems on a global scale, of which the most profound may be climate change. It’s argued that we should equip future generations to solve these issues, so it follows that we need youngsters brimming with intellectual curiosity; individuals who are able to assess evidence dispassionately, fearless about asking difficult questions, open to a range of perspectives, braced with problem-solving strategies and unwilling to accept the status quo.

I wholeheartedly agree about the need for critical thinking. I also happen to think that schools do a much better job of fostering it than they’re given credit for. My bigger concern is with the culture in which young people are being raised, and how receptive it actually is to critical thinking.

## Intellectual intolerance

If ‘critical thinking’ is being practised in the real world, then one might expect to see people holding opinions

that diverge from received wisdom. By that logic, the recent rise of cancel culture – whereby it’s become increasingly acceptable for adults to be silenced, in one way or another, because of their views – ought to concern anyone with more than a rhetorical interest in encouraging independent thought.

What use is it to promote ‘critical thinking’ in schools if, as adults, we’re unwilling to entertain unorthodox, potentially challenging views?

The long-running arguments around climate change are especially prone to the intellectual intolerance that’s come to be associated with cancel culture. While it’s entirely understandable that people are passionate about

such an important issue, it’s still disappointing to see disagreements about it that often resemble a grotesque, vicious parody of what collective critical thinking should be.

Shrill accusations, mudslinging and default assumptions of bad faith do little to illuminate the issues involved.

## Science versus policy

Teachers, however, are in a strong position to help young people step back from the melee, make sense of the noise around climate change and contribute in a more positive way.

At the root of much of today’s ill-tempered discourse is a conflation between ‘climate science’ and ‘climate policy’. Climate science describes physical mechanisms and their real-world impact, while climate policy concerns our response to rising temperatures.

We can see this conflation in action whenever someone claims that ‘*The science tells us we should do X...*’ Yes, science can tell us what *is*,

but it cannot tell us what *ought to be*, or how best to get there. That is the realm of politics, in which we are all able to participate.

Teachers can help to disentangle this intellectual mess by clearly explaining the distinction between science and policy. In doing so, they will be showing their students that the former doesn’t necessarily determine the latter – that there are a range of possibilities and options flowing from the physical state of the planet, and that it’s unlikely our imaginations have already exhausted all of them.





## Join the CONVERSATION

'Climate change on the curriculum: teaching or preaching?' is just one of over a hundred debates at this year's Battle of Ideas festival, which takes place at Church House in Westminster on Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th October. Free day passes are available for school students – for the full programme and ticket information, visit [battleofideas.org.uk](http://battleofideas.org.uk)

They might consider exploring open questions, such as whether industrial development might be the cause of, or solution to our problems. Can carbon reduction policies be reconciled with the aspirations and energy needs of the developing world? Do nuclear power and fracking have a role to play in our national energy policy?

Sadly, however, this science/policy muddle has fed into the new Natural History GCSE, announced in April 2022 as part of the government's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy (see [bit.ly/ts117-TP1](http://bit.ly/ts117-TP1)). While the DfE acknowledges there are 'different views and opinions' on how to address climate change, their proposals treat government policies such as sustainability and 'Net Zero' aspirations as axioms – assumptions on which everything

else is based.

Will students of the new GCSE be encouraged, or even allowed to apply their critical minds to said assumptions during lessons? The new subject appears to treat young people as mere executors of a government plan, with critical thinking desired only for determining the best approach to implementing it.

### Scared of ideas

Any students nursing doubts regarding the overall direction of travel will have likely found that raising any questions at all regarding climate policy is to risk being labelled a 'denier' and/or spreader of misinformation.

It's a label that's been promiscuously applied to everyone from advocates of outright junk science, to those who happen to have different ideas around how climate change can be meaningfully tackled.

It's become an all-too-tempting

means of discrediting those one disagrees with – a form of rhetorical leverage that comes at a cost to critical thinking.

Using the authority of science to write off opinions we disagree with in this way impoverishes the range of ideas to which young people are exposed. Teachers could therefore perform a valuable service by explaining the fallacy of ad hominem arguments, encouraging students to 'play the ball and not the man' and reminding them that different ideas are nothing to be scared of.

### Deeper insight

Professor Mike Hulme, author of *Why We Disagree about Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity*, has previously argued that, "Our discordant conversations about climate

**“Science can tell us what is, but it cannot tell us what ought to be, or how best to get there”**

change reveal at a deeper level all that makes for diversity, creativity and conflict within the human story – our various different attitudes to risk, technology and wellbeing; our different ethical, ideological and political beliefs; our different interpretations of the past and our competing visions of the future.” (see

[bit.ly/ts117-TP2](http://bit.ly/ts117-TP2))

In that spirit, teachers could encourage aspiring climate activists to engage, in an open-minded and critical fashion, with the ideas of mainstream environmentalists such as Rachel Carson, Naomi Oreskes and George Monbiot, as well as those of 'policy deniers' like 'sceptical environmentalist' Bjorn Lomborg, 'ecomodernist' Michael Shellenberger and 'energy humanist' Alex Epstein.

Grappling with the different outlooks and rationales of these authors would give young people a deeper insight into the issues at stake, and provide them with a stronger basis for developing their own ideas around the future of humanity and the environment.

### Risks and benefits

With protests regarding the impact of environmental policies on ordinary people proliferating in countries as diverse as France, Italy, the Netherlands, Sri Lanka and the UK, it's more important than ever that we, as adults, apply our critical thinking abilities to the problem of climate change and debate the full range of possible solutions, in good faith and with open minds.

In doing so, we would set a positive example for young people. And if we can manage that for a topic as contentious as climate change, it would demonstrate that our claims regarding the importance of critical thinking aren't just empty words.

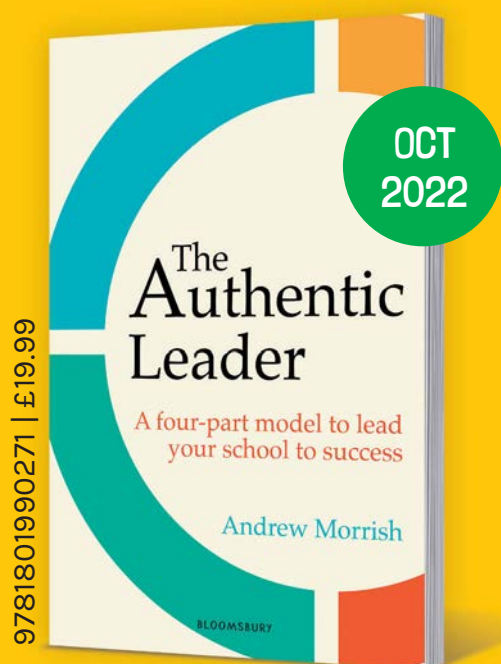


### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

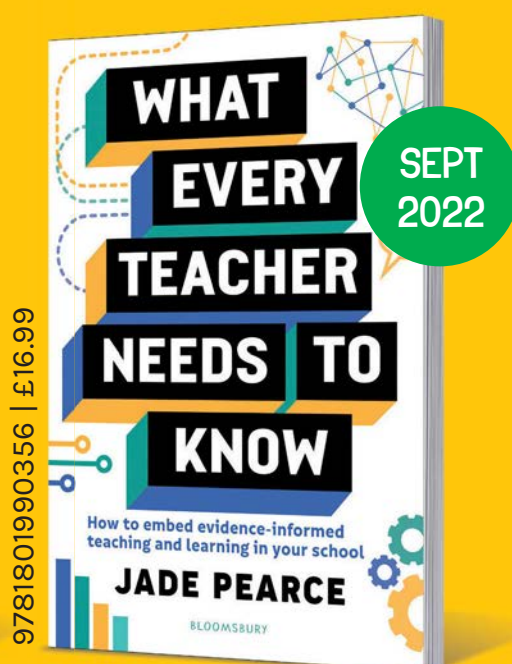
Harley Richardson works in education technology, helps organise events for the Academy of Ideas Education Forum and blogs about learning through the ages at [historyofeducation.net](http://historyofeducation.net); follow him at @harleyrich

# BOOKS TO INSPIRE YOUR TEACHING

## NEW BOOKS FOR AUTUMN 2022



Successful school leadership starts with you: who you are, what you believe in, and why you do the things you do. Andrew Morrish presents a unique four-part model to help you lead your school with purpose, authenticity, clarity and vision.

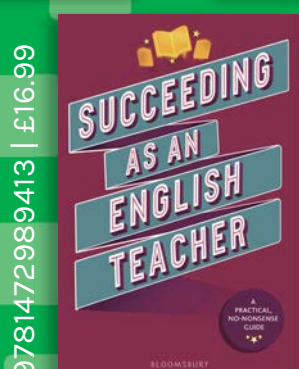
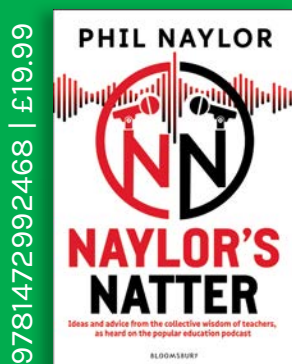
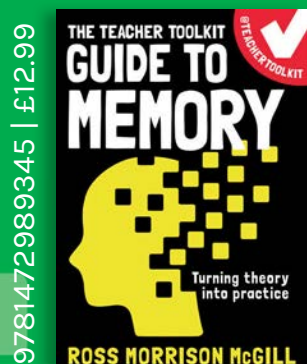


A must-have guide for both primary and secondary teachers that summarises key research papers, offers evidence-informed teaching and learning strategies, and explains how to disseminate this information across departments and schools.

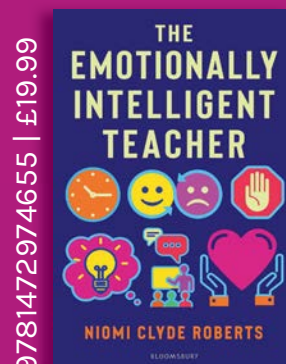
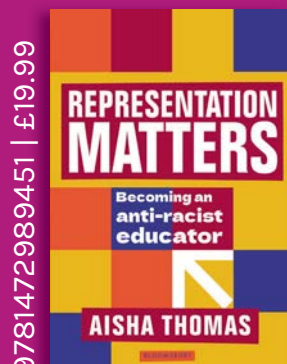


From influential Executive Headteacher Nick Hart comes *Impact*, a practical framework for improving academic and pastoral outcomes for pupils, helping them thrive and succeed.

## TRANSFORM YOUR TEACHING



## ENHANCE STUDENT & TEACHER WELLBEING





# “The stigma has to stop”

**Maria Richards** once thought the menopause to be the stuff of legends, something that happened to other people – but then came ‘The Change’...

**I**’ve worked in education for almost 30 years. So why, for the first time, am I struggling to do my job well? One word... menopause.

Not a menopausal woman? DO NOT stop reading! Even if you’re not personally a woman experiencing menopause, chances are that someone in your school is. But I’d bet you have no idea what they’re going through. I say that with conviction, as I used to see menopause as the stuff of legends – something that happened to ‘other people’ and had little or no actual impact, aside from the odd hot flush and a mood swing or two. How wrong I was...

## Swept under the carpet

I consider myself to be an intelligent, rational, well-informed woman. So how did I get to the age of 51 without knowing the real impact that menopause can have? Why are the things happening to me such a surprise? Why am I embarrassed to explain to colleagues that I’m finding things difficult, sometimes near impossible?

Why isn’t more being done?

The answer is that there’s a clear lack of education across the board – even for GPs – and an entrenched culture of sweeping the issue under the carpet and ‘just getting on’. The thing is, menopause is real. It *does* affect women in immeasurable ways, and can have a profound effect on behaviour. I know this because it’s happening to me.

It’s important to note that every woman’s journey through menopause is different, and entirely unique. Some women will sail through it, others will experience mild symptoms, but one in four women will have severe reactions to the changes going on in their bodies – of whom I’m one.

Yet if you met me, you wouldn’t know. If I ran training in your school, you’d be none the wiser. However, every day is a battle.

I’m embarrassed by my symptoms, ashamed at my inability to cope, confused about how I feel or what I think, and baffled as to where I can get help. Worst of all, I find myself hiding everything – not admitting to myself what’s going on, and not talking about it to anyone.

Well, enough is enough. The stigma, taboo and misunderstanding around menopause *has* to stop.

## Suffering in silence

There are far too many women out there (around 13 million peri- or post-menopausal women in the UK, according to the Nuffield Health Group) who could be suffering in silence. The Menopause Support CIC calculates that over 60% of menopausal women suffer symptoms that range from mild to severe. Mine cover the whole spectrum.

The mild ones are manageable; things like brittle nails, dry skin and hair, watery eyes, digestion issues, palpitations, tinnitus and weight gain.

Their effect is cumulative, however, with the result that I don’t feel ‘normal’ anymore. I’m not *me* anymore.

The more severe symptoms are relentless and much more debilitating. They include heightened anxiety; low mood and depression; uncontrollable hot flushes; problems sleeping; lack of motivation and frequent headaches,

plus an inability to concentrate, memory issues and brain fog that affects my ability to process information and articulate it. All have had a severe impact on my capacity to perform in a job I love.

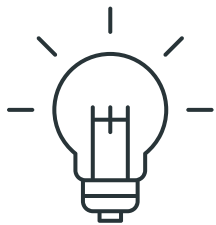
And it’s not just me. There are countless teachers, support staff and headteachers in schools trying to ‘carry on’ while being floored by symptoms – trying to get through each day and every interaction, event and Ofsted inspection while feeling like a different person, as if they’re not in control of their own body or mind. Some may not even realise that what they’re feeling could be linked to menopause.

The Fawcett Society has highlighted how, at the peak of their careers, one in 10 women leave their workplace due to their symptoms (with one in four of those in education considering leaving). Don’t let one of them be you, or one of your colleagues. Make the menopause matter in your school. Talk about it, reach out. Ensure you have a menopause policy in place to support women experiencing symptoms. Examine as much information as you can to become menopause-aware, but please – if you’re menopausal right now, don’t suffer in silence. It’s time to change ‘The Change’.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maria Richards has worked as a primary school teacher and school improvement adviser, and is currently a literacy specialist and Talk for Writing consultant.



## THE NEXT BIG THING

# CREATING THE RIGHT SAFEGUARDING CULTURE

Find out how your school can move beyond reactive safeguarding in favour of a more proactive, assertive approach

### [ THE TREND ]

The government's latest Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance (see [bit.ly/ts117-kcsie](https://bit.ly/ts117-kcsie)) came into effect on 1st September 2022. This guidance applies to all schools and colleges in England, and sets out the legal duties an establishment must follow to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in schools and colleges.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Among its recent changes and updates, the KCSIE guidance now uses the term 'creating the right safeguarding culture' throughout. We believe that a good safeguarding culture is attained when staff become unconsciously competent in their safeguarding ability, and an organisation is able to focus on proactive safeguarding.

You create the right safeguarding culture when all staff in the organisation understand these four core principles:

1. Safeguarding is the responsibility of every staff member within the organisation
2. Every staff member needs to be actively vigilant
3. All staff need to report anything they see, or any concerns to the right person
4. All staff need to understand how to handle an active disclosure

If all members of staff within the organisation – not just teaching staff – understand these four elements, they will have a good understanding of safeguarding.

### WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

When the safeguarding culture in your organisation becomes proactive, it means your staff are not simply reacting to concerns when they occur. Instead, you are making the strategic decision to proactively identify concerns and put steps in place to prevent them from occurring again.

St Benedict's Independent School has been using MyConcern safeguarding software for several years to manage all of its safeguarding concerns. Using features in MyConcern, deputy head Luke Ramsden was able to identify patterns of bullying:

"We identified that these flashpoints [of bullying] were happening in a boy's toilet that was in the centre of the school,



so we remodelled. There are now a series of separate cubicles with their own washbasin, and all those flashpoints stopped."

### WHAT'S NEXT?

When creating the right safeguarding culture within your organisation, it is vital that your staff feel comfortable with all aspects of recording and reporting safeguarding concerns or issues. KCSIE guidance suggests that all staff should have 'professional curiosity' when it comes to safeguarding, and always be vigilant, keeping an eye out for potential safeguarding issues and concerns.

This becomes part of that proactive safeguarding strategy – when all staff are aware of issues that could be affecting children and young people, and are proactively looking for ways they can better support and connect. Not just with the students, but among each other as well.



**Contact:**  
0330 6600 757  
[info@thesafeguardingcompany.com](mailto:info@thesafeguardingcompany.com)

### Discover More...

Find out more about how MyConcern can help you create the right safeguarding culture in your establishment by visiting [thesafeguardingcompany.com/myconcern](https://thesafeguardingcompany.com/myconcern). You can also join The Safeguarding Community to connect with other safeguarding leads – for more details, visit [thesafeguardingcompany.com/the-safeguarding-community](https://thesafeguardingcompany.com/the-safeguarding-community)

## GET INVOLVED

MyConcern is our Queens award-winning safeguarding system, which allows anyone responsible for the protection of children, young people and adults at risk to easily manage and record all safeguarding and wellbeing concerns. Additionally, MyConcern helps to protect those at risk by allowing early intervention, and provides safeguarding leads with peace of mind by helping them meet all of their statutory, legal and moral obligations.



# 3 things we've learnt about... TEACHERS' LIVES

Contrary to students' assumptions, teachers do have lives of their own – ones variously filled with exercise, gardening and the odd side gig...

## 1 Teachers do indeed have hobbies

Plenty of teachers regularly engage in various hobbies, leisure pursuits and even other forms of work – but which are among the most common?

Teachers come from a variety of backgrounds, translating to a wide diversity of activities. Sport is popular among the teacher crowd, with 60% saying that they regularly take part in either individual or group sports. It's most popular among PE teachers, to no one's great surprise, but in second place are humanities teachers, 67% of whom can be regularly found at their local pitch, court, pool or gym.

Interestingly, headteachers are the most green-fingered among senior teaching staff, with one in three often seen pottering around the garden. Volunteering is fairly common during the summer holidays, with almost one in 10 teachers reporting having done some volunteering during that time.

## 2 Teachers' summers aren't just holidays

59% of teachers said that at some point during the summer break, one of their non-teacher friends told them how lucky they were. A six-week holiday does seem pretty cushy, but things aren't that simple.

For one thing, it's never really a 'holiday' as such. One in four teachers told us they received at least one stressful work-related communication over the summer, with that proportion predictably higher for headteachers and senior leaders. Second, teachers don't actually spend that many weeks of summer outside school, especially when results day comes around. In 2021, three quarters of teachers reported going into school on at least one occasion over the summer holidays.

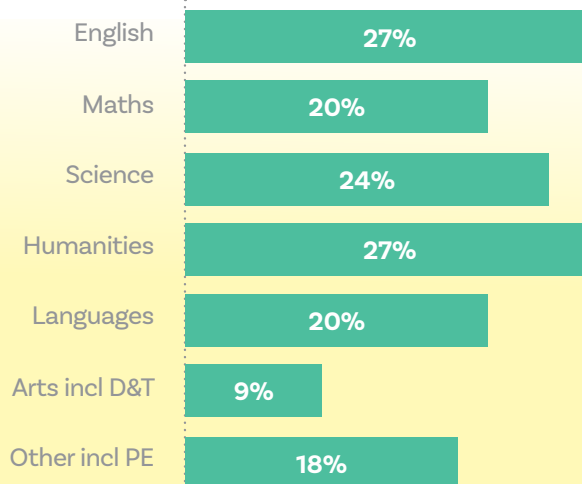
Moreover, many will take on additional work. 23% of secondary teachers across all subjects say they earn money from exam marking, while tutoring is a particularly popular among maths teachers – 27% of whom say they have been paid for personal tutoring this year.

## 3 Careers beyond the classroom

60% of teachers say they had a full-time role for three months or more before they became a teacher. What if the unthinkable happened and the teaching profession suddenly disappeared overnight? Are teachers confident they could find alternative work? 80% answer in the affirmative. As you'd expect, less experienced, early career teachers were particularly well-represented among this group.

Ah, but what would they actually do if they weren't being a teacher, though? Well, when given a completely open choice to tell us what they'd be doing if teaching was no longer an option, many go with the nearest available option by opting to try and remain within the education sphere – though a significant group would gladly work with animals instead. Or, we could always listen to (and try to spot) the small handful of teachers who profess to having ambitions of becoming a spy...

IN  
THE PAST  
YEAR, HAVE  
YOU EARNED  
ANY MONEY  
FROM EXAM  
MARKING?



Question answered by 7,084 teachers on 09/08/22 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

Yes

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- The memorable STEM lessons you can teach through school trips
- How to craft a blended learning approach that works for you
- Discover the hidden features and functions of the edtech you already use



Economic unease. A very real prospect of the lights going out. Teachers threatening strikes. The parallels between now and the late 1970s seem palpable, but don't be fooled, says Melissa Benn – the challenges we face today are of an entirely different magnitude...

# Melissa Benn



**So far this year, there have been many warnings regarding our country's potential return to the troubles of the 1970s.**

Rocketing inflation, industrial unrest and political churn have all once again taken centre stage within our politics and economy, with teachers just one of multiple groups representing workers and professionals currently contemplating strikes over what they see as risible pay offers.

Yet for all the rehashing of stale clichés concerning union militancy and an approaching 'Winter of Discontent', there are limits to what the past can teach us about this present moment – particularly when it comes to schools.

## Context is all

Most parents today won't remember the 1970s and 80s, when teachers went on strike much more regularly. Many won't have even been born.

The dominant narrative tends to represent this period as one of disruptive and often unnecessary militancy. The more considered view is that strikes have always formed part of a long, complex power struggle to improve pay and conditions across the teaching profession.

In the decades since, the once highly influential education unions have been progressively marginalised and sidelined by successive governments. For some time now, it's the perceived interests of parents, rather than teachers, that have shaped the educational priorities and policies of politicians from all parties.

But whatever else happens this autumn, it's going to be hard for the government led by Liz Truss – herself a parent of secondary age daughters – to claim that teachers walking out of schools is the result of greed, laziness or leftist ideology. Why? Because context is all.

What teachers are calling for forms just a small piece of a far larger jigsaw, composed of demands being issued by everyone from railway workers to nurses, junior doctors and barristers. The more sectors that go on strike, the harder it will become to separate 'strikers' from the 'general public'.

## Public opinion

Even after a number of one-day actions by railway workers over the summer, public opinion in early autumn has continued to be broadly sympathetic to their cause.

Bear in mind that trade unions have undergone a transformation of their own since the 1970s. Overall membership numbers may have dropped but are starting to climb again, with women now considerably better represented among both members and leaders.

It's one thing to try and characterise a picketing miner or protesting steel worker as a bully. It's quite another to paint exhausted nurses and diligent primary school teachers as insensitive, selfish figures.

## Getting the word out

Teachers' representatives have privately told me that public support for their cause is strong. As one put it,

"We get the feeling from parents, particularly younger ones, that they're very sympathetic. They recognise the powerful relationship the teacher has with their child, particularly over the pandemic."

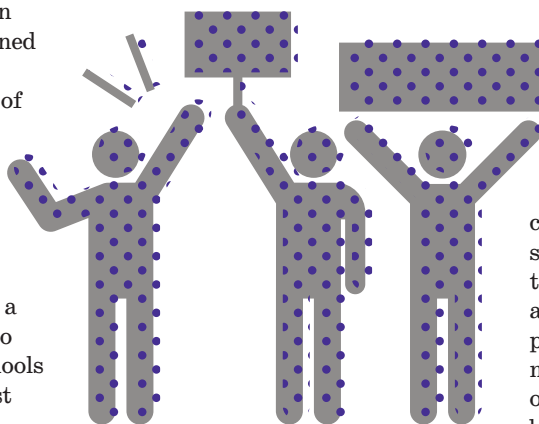
Amid the looming cost of living crisis, schools will again be in the front line, this time battling to keep their pupils well fed and warm – but perhaps the biggest change from the 1970s is how we, as a society, communicate with each other.

40 years ago, what the public knew about strikes and the reasons for them was almost entirely filtered through traditional news and broadcast media outlets. Now, there are a multitude of channels awash with diverse voices serving up tweets, memes, podcasts, Facebook groups and Instagram posts.

Consequently, headteachers now can – and do – communicate directly with parents regarding their mounting salary and utility bills, and make appeals for support. In perhaps one of the most heartbreaking vox pops of recent times, a news report showed a school lunch supervisor breaking down in tears as she described how she'd had to turn away children from the lunch counter due to them having no credit on their account.

## Peddling the line

All of this will make it very difficult for politicians to peddle the line that teachers are 'harming the economy', or that teachers' unions are 'holding the country to ransom.' Instead, the public might well conclude that unless reasonable pay settlements are reached, the opposite is true – that it's the government holding a gun to the nation's head. By not paying teachers properly, our leaders may be seen as impeding the futures of our young people, already so damaged by the disruptions of the pandemic.



# Smart Revise for computer science and business

Raise attainment by redefining revision as a continual practice throughout the course

## GETTING STARTED

As we return to a new, post-pandemic 'normal', attention will again be turning to preparation for those all-important terminal examinations. When should students start their revision? After Christmas? At February half term? At Easter? Evidence suggests that the very best practice is to establish revision as ongoing preparation throughout a course, not just at the end. After all, that's how marathon runners prepare to run a race. It takes years and months of preparation, with gradual increases in distance and performance improvements over time. Similarly, we need to apply the same approach when preparing for school exams.

## WHAT WE DID

As practising teachers, we recognised several problems our own students were experiencing as they were learning. It's common to go through the content of a course in a linear fashion. Not necessarily in the order of the specification, but certainly one topic at a time. More recently, it's been suggested that interleaving concepts, instead of blocking learning, might have a positive impact by frequently returning to previously taught material and building upon it.

This requires careful curation of the scheme of learning, as students can get lost in the journey if it doesn't match the specification and published textbooks. We found it frustrating that regardless of approach, students could sometimes forget the basics – the very foundations upon which their knowledge should develop. In computer science, for example, we might ask, 'What is the purpose of the memory address register?' – only for students to forget this days and weeks later. We thought there must be a more effective way to retain knowledge over long periods of time.

## HOW WE IMPROVED

Frequent, low stakes quizzing on all previously taught material was the answer. It's important to find time in busy lessons for knowledge recall, but that can be quite a challenge when you only have just enough time to cover the course content. This is where technology can provide a solution.

Many online quizzing tools will only create short quizzes of content from a single unit, but Smart Revise is different. It automatically interleaves and melds questions, in response to the teacher enabling topics as the course progresses. Crucially, it also creates a never-ending differentiated question playlist that is personalised for each student. Adapting over time with a focus on mastery, these question sets will change dynamically for each student in real-time as they engage with Smart Revise. Since the questions prioritise and cycle in an infinite loop, there is no fixed number of questions. Instead, students always have another question to answer, with teachers free to choose how long they wish to spend on the activity.



### Contact:

Craig Sargent and Dave Hillyard, AKA  
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[admin@craighndave.co.uk](mailto:admin@craighndave.co.uk)  
[smartrevise.craighndave.org](http://smartrevise.craighndave.org)



### THE PLACE:

Stroud High School was an early adopter; Smart Revise has now been used by over 68,000 students.



### THE CHALLENGE:

Tackling the 'forgetting curve' – a phenomenon whereby students forget what they have been taught over time, as investigated by Ebbinghaus in 1885 and later measured by Murre & Dros in 2015.

## Did we mention?

We know that frequent low stakes quizzing isn't enough to ensure success. It solves the problem of retention, but doesn't prepare students for longer answer questions. Smart Revise therefore also includes hundreds of examination-style questions with a 'Smart Advance' mode, together with command word help and a unique guided marking interface for students, which encourages them to engage with mark schemes. Additionally, there's the 'Smart Terms' function, which facilitates the Leitner system with subject-specific terminology.



# Action stations

**Adrian Lyons** offers some advice on what subject leaders and headteachers can do ahead of time to make the day of The Ofsted Call a little less frantic for all concerned...

I'm often asked to support schools in preparing for an Ofsted inspection. One piece of advice I regularly give is that interactions with Ofsted during an inspection will vary enormously between members of staff – particularly in secondary schools.

A key feature of the current inspection framework is that day one of an inspection is spent focusing largely on a small number of subject leads. Headteachers often find this difficult to handle, feeling cut out of the loop for large parts of an inspection's early stages.

## Just enough

After all, the headteacher is clearly the key player in the school, and in its Ofsted preparations – so my first 'do' is **produce a self-evaluation form (SEF)**. There's no *requirement* to have one, but if you don't, you're shooting yourself in the foot.

My first 'don't', however, is to **avoid writing an excessively long SEF**. Say just enough to explain why your school is Good or better, using the Ofsted handbook's evaluation criteria as guidance.

My second 'don't' is **don't lie**. Putting something in the SEF which isn't true, or which may have been the case three years ago, is counterproductive. Inspectors *will* find out; it's what they're good at.

## No delay

The day before an inspection, the initial contact will be made by an administrator who will ask if there's a convenient time for the lead inspector to contact the headteacher. As a lead inspector, I'd be impatiently waiting to get on with the task at hand, so my advice would be to not delay this too long.

After the lead inspector and headteacher have spoken – in a conversation that should last for around 90 minutes – the lead

inspector will need to distribute information concerning the school to their team. During the call, they'll have asked if you have an SEF you'd like to share, to which headteachers invariably say 'yes', followed by a promise to send it as soon as the call is over.

My next 'do' would therefore be to **keep your SEF regularly updated**. Because in my experience, two things could happen at this point to make me very annoyed. One would be receiving a 100-page+ SEF packed with so much detail that key messages are lost, but which I'm still expected to read. The other is being promised an SEF at midday, only to receive it some time that evening.

## Forward planning

When the inspection itself begins, those four to six subject leaders will then become the focus of day one. The questions they'll field are usually quite predictable, but with the fate of the school resting on their (possibly quite junior) shoulders, it can be easy to forget what one has planned to say.

Subject leaders shouldn't wait until their subject has been selected for a 'deep dive' before preparing what they're going to present. Instead, prepare for this well in advance, on the assumption that your subject *will* be chosen.

When the time comes, don't produce huge files of printouts. Instead, bring one side of A4 prompts detailing what you want pupils to get from studying your subject in KS3 and KS4, how you go about selecting the knowledge you want pupils to acquire and how you've chosen the order in which to teach it.

Inspectors will also want you to explain how you know that pupils have learnt said knowledge, how you can be sure that your subject teachers are delivering the curriculum consistently, and what you've done to develop and hone your colleagues' subject knowledge and awareness of subject-specific research.

My final 'do' would therefore be to **familiarise your subject team with these prompts and answers**, so that you have a consistent story to tell. My final 'don't' would be **don't try and 'wing it'** by meeting with inspectors without a prompt sheet.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adrian Lyons was one of Her Majesty's Inspectors between 2005 and 2021 and now works with MATs, teacher training providers and LAs to support education; find out more at [adrianlyonsconsulting.com](http://adrianlyonsconsulting.com)

# Creativity and COMPASSION

Andria Zafirakou makes the case for why, post-pandemic and amid the the cost of living crisis, students need more than ever the skills that only creative subjects can provide...

**T**here's always something magical about the start of a new academic year. I've now been teaching for 17 years, but still get that feeling of excitement and anticipation all teachers feel when September arrives.

When I sit at my desk staring around the space – this art room that's been my second home – I can't help but reflect on the extraordinary teaching year that's just passed. I know I'm not alone in finding it one of the most surreal years of teaching I've ever experienced – a period in which 'returning to normal' after the pandemic was much more challenging for young people than expected.

## Tip of the iceberg

Its effects on the wellbeing of our young people could be easily demonstrated, firstly by the changes in behaviour and attitudes of the many young people who have struggled to integrate back into their school community and routines.

We have also seen lasting impact in the decline of some students' communication and oracy skills – possibly due to enforced mouth covering and a resulting loss in speech confidence. It could also be attributed to the experience of online learning during lockdown, when students' opportunities to talk freely with their peers was

significantly reduced.

Yet the most significant challenge we've had to come to terms with is the knowledge that this is just the beginning – only the tip of the iceberg, with the worst yet to come.

Thousands of schools across the UK have already started to feel and see the devastating damage and effects that the cost of

**“Creative and practical subjects help students feel valued, respected and proud”**

living crisis in the UK is having on young people in our communities, which can't help but affect their wellbeing.

With families struggling to budget and survive, we can see the ripple effects starting to enter our school gates. Dirty, worn-out uniforms and emptier than usual lunch boxes are fast becoming a common and noticeable sight. So too are the more serious, yet less outwardly visible symptoms of frustration, hunger, anger, neglect, anxiety, stress, withdrawal and depression.

These are all a direct response to chaos and challenges that our young people are experiencing at home, leading to significant learning and wellbeing challenges – especially for our most vulnerable children.

## “My work is just as good”

That's why the case for practising creative and practical subjects in our schools must be made stronger than ever before. Because it's through these that we'll be able to help build the confidence, resilience, communication and self-regulation abilities our young people

engage with everyone in the room.

Nitin could control pencils and brushes well, mix and apply all media and stay focused on lesson tasks whilst carrying out a sustained piece of work. More importantly for me, he would contribute to class discussions, and produce consistently exciting work. He clearly enjoyed the experience of being in an environment where there were no right or wrong answers. If you asked him why he enjoyed his art lessons, he would simply say, “Because I'm the same as everyone, and my work is just as good.”

will need to cope with the challenges that lie ahead of them.

I can still recall how my art room once helped to transform the life of a student, Nitin (not his real name), who was 12 years old. Nitin had been diagnosed with various forms of SEND, including ADHD, dyslexia and autism, and came from a challenging home. He didn't enjoy being at school, and would often find getting through the day a colossal challenge.

He would rarely produce any written work, since he was frequently embarrassed and frustrated with his outcomes. However, in the course of his artwork, he would willingly undertake all activities, focus continuously, readily participate and happily



For many students like Nitin, creative and practical subjects help them feel valued, respected and proud of their achievements. They make them feel safe and happy. Their identity is accepted and valued, in the absence of labels and other challenges.

### Opening up space

As we enter this new academic year, schools will be expected to do whatever they can to solve the exceptional challenges caused by this current climate that confronts our local communities – with little in the way of resourcing, support or training.

To support these needs, the Dreamachine project – part of the UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK creative programme – has developed resources for science, citizenship, health and wellbeing lessons that explore how brains and minds work to support young people's development. Produced by Collective Act, their development has been led by the non-profit A New Direction alongside

UNICEF UK and the British Science Association.

The project has also been supported by insights from Professor Fiona Macpherson of the Centre for the Study of Perceptual Experience, and Professor Anil Seth – a world-leading neuroscientist and professor of cognitive and computational neuroscience at the University of Sussex.

In a conversation with the British Science Association, Anil and Fiona explained how a deeper understanding of our perception is linked to greater wellbeing, building on the concept that how things 'seem' isn't necessarily how things actually 'are'. This helps with the self-regulation we try to develop in our young people – opening up "A little space between our experience in the moment, and the conclusions we may draw from this," as Anil and Fiona put it.

Creative and practical subjects are ideal for exploring and understanding that 'space', as they help us practise various ways of tuning into what we're feeling and thinking, and the different ways we have of expressing ourselves. We can begin to create wellbeing environments in our classrooms by using calming breathing exercises to steady and clear the mind in preparation for learning. We can also use simple drawing exercises to begin freeing students' minds and start exploring creative moments.

For a glimpse of what's possible, visit Dreamachine's Creative Wellbeing Classroom activities workshop and start using the many ideas there to help you get started and suitably inspired.

### Compassion in classrooms

A better understanding of our own perceptions can help us build more compassion into our classrooms, and emphasise how we are all different and unique – and that these differences in experiences should be appreciated.

If you wish to pursue this further with your students, an exciting place to start is by exploring some of the themes and our different senses on the Life's Big Questions website ([dreamachine.world/lifes-big-questions](http://dreamachine.world/lifes-big-questions)), which begins by posing the challenge, 'Can I believe everything that I can see?'

Alongside this, however, we must continue pressuring our government to start being more strategic in the support they give to schools. Top of the list would be providing new funding and expert resources that limit the catastrophic damage currently threatening the wellbeing of our young people, society at large and the very future of our economy.

All we want is for our school graduates to be confident, skilled and creative thinkers who can problem solve and communicate, while remaining kind, healthy and happy. If this doesn't align with their strategy, then our education system really is failing to understand the needs of our young people.

What can we do in the meantime? As an art teacher, I'll continue to make my art room a space that supports students like Nitin in finding their true potential, and developing the strength and happiness that will prepare them for what's set to be a difficult future.

As William Shakespeare put it in *Henry V*, "Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more."



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andria Zafirakou is a teacher at Alperton Community School and a Global Teacher Prize winner;

For more information about Dreamachine's Life's Big Questions programme and to involve your class, visit [dreamachine.world/lifes-big-questions](http://dreamachine.world/lifes-big-questions)

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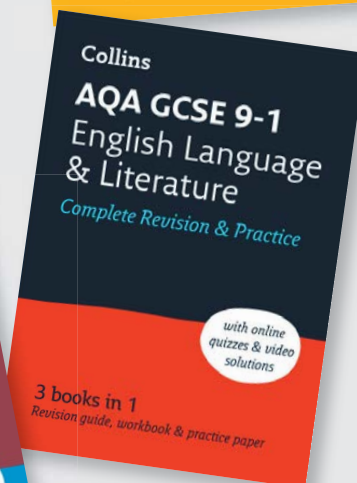
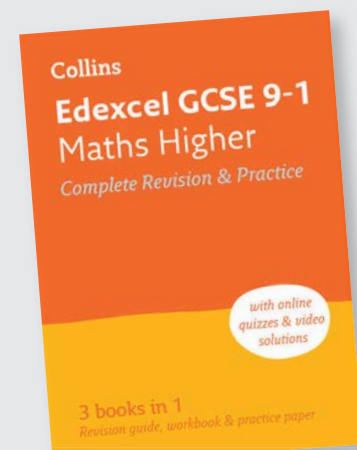
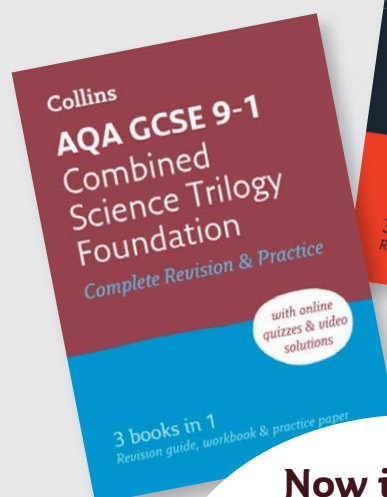
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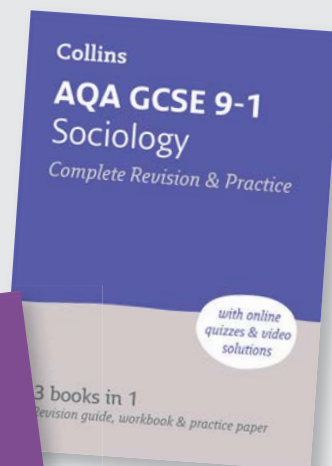
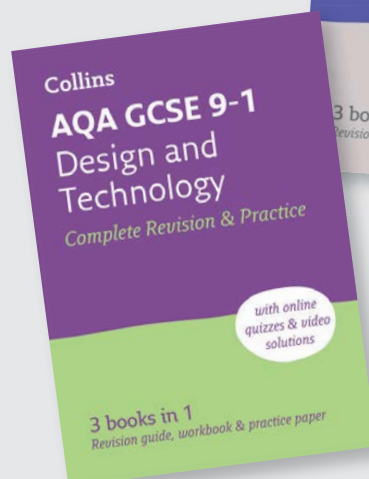


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# THE TS GUIDE TO... REVISION

What can schools do to equip students with better revision skills – and how can we tell when their revision habits might be doing more harm than good?

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Tracey Leese questions whether the time might have come to examine our assumptions around revision and re-assess its place in the learning process



## IN FIGURES:

HOW MUCH TRUST DO TEACHERS AND THE WIDER POPULATION HAVE IN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EXISTING EXAMS SYSTEM?

82%

of headteachers reported that stress and anxiety levels among students due to take their exams in summer 2022 were higher than before the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Survey of 527 headteachers by the Association of School and College Leaders

63%

of adults in England believe that the pressure faced by 12- to 16-year-olds at school is greater now than it was 10 years ago

Source: YouGov survey of 2,931 respondents

15%

of secondary teachers felt most students were able to adequately cover all original curriculum prior to the 2022 exams season; nearly a quarter (23%) believed that 80-89% had been covered

Source: 2022 annual survey of 1,788 NEU members

3

TEACHWIRE ARTICLES FROM THE ARCHIVES

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# Piece by piece

**Claire Gadsby** explains how incorporating bite-size pointers into successive lessons over a term or year can gift students with some powerful revision skills...

**W**hilst effective revision has been shown to make a difference of up to 1.5 grades to final exam results, it's fair to say that it suffers from an image problem, with the average teenager typically less than enthused by the prospect.

However, even the busiest of teachers can help to break down the challenge of revision by tackling it using short, interactive strategies in the classroom, enabling memory skills to be developed progressively. Crucially, this 'drip-feed' approach means that information is being revisited systematically, thus avoiding the common problem of students not fully engaging with revision until it's too late.

The incremental nature of this type of revision draws on key research by Professor Robert Bjork, who found that 'desirable difficulties' in learning can actually strengthen memory. Specifically, he recommends:

- Spaced practice
- Interleaving
- Testing (generally via regular, low stakes quizzing)
- Varied revision methods
- Generation (recall) rather than reading

## Stage 1 – Motivate and activate your students

When it comes to revision, there's obviously some work to do in terms of boosting pupil morale and motivation. I recommend sharing with them the following statistic – that by

the age of 16, pupils will have spent approximately 10,500 hours or 2,100 days at school. Revision is the penultimate hurdle; that one final push to help them over the finish line of the exams. It can be reassuring for students to consider that, in a very real sense, the hardest work is already done.

## “One of the key problems with revision is the sheer scale of the task”

Itemise and incentivise the process of revision by introducing a scoring system, whereby completion of distinct revision tasks earns students a set number of points. For example, use of a mind map might earn them 5 points, and the completion of a past paper 10 points.

Arrange the class into teams, set up a 'revision league table' and encourage the teams to compete to see who can place top of the league. Ask them to regularly update their scores and share their revision materials to sustain the momentum.

## Stage 2 – Quick revision activities during lessons

One of the key problems with revision is the sheer scale of the task, and the extent to which it can feel overwhelming for many students. The approaches suggested below are designed to break revision down into manageable chunks, and can

be quickly and easily incorporated into lessons.

Whilst subject teachers will often be rightly mindful of the pressure on them to cover the full extent of the curriculum, it can be reassuring to see students retaining, and indeed finessing their knowledge in the short to

potentially read aloud this 'threshold prompt', challenge them to go straight to their seat and spend 3 minutes recalling as much as they can about it. This could be done individually, or potentially in pairs using the 'word tennis' (my turn, your turn) approach.

At the end of the lesson, repeat the process as pupils leave the classroom – only this time, turn the paper over so that you're challenging pupils to recall, rather than simply read the prompt. This activity can be an effective way of

bookending a lesson with revisiting prior learning in the first 3 and final 2 minutes of the period, leaving the bulk of the lesson

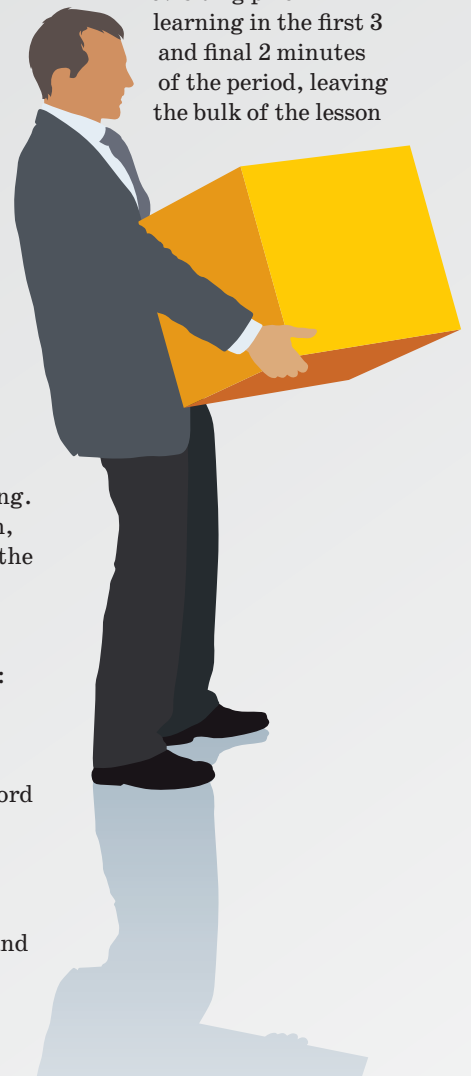
medium term, rather than setting aside a chunk of time for revision practice at the end of the course. In my opinion, spreading this out across the term or year is well worth spending the five minutes of class time here and there that it will require – because that's roughly the amount of time these strategies should take to complete.

### 1. The Threshold Challenge

This literally involves 'going over' prior learning. At the start of the lesson, place a piece of paper in the classroom doorway, on which is displayed some form of prior learning. Examples might include:

- A key term or 'trigger word'
- An anagram of a keyword or phrase
- An image
- A question

When pupils step over, and





time free for them to learn something new.

## 2. Beat your Personal Best

A simple, yet powerful strategy that's designed to improve pupils' stamina and indicate to them where they're making progress. Provide students with a blank piece of paper and a randomly chosen heading that describes a revision topic. Set a timer for 60 seconds, and then challenge them to see how many ideas and how much detail they can remember about the topic in that time. After their time runs out, ask the students to record their score and then repeat the activity later in the same lesson or later that week. This time, challenge them to beat their previous score.

## 3. Bring it back

Call up a slide or resource from a previous topic, but make it so that certain words are blanked out, as if the material has been redacted. Drop this resource into that same lesson without warning, and ask the students to provide a choral response, where they all call out what they think the missing words are.

## 4. Putting the pieces back together

Select several key images from previous topics and photocopy them, before then chopping them up to form several simple jigsaws. Place the pieces making up each jigsaw into envelopes and distribute one each to different groups in the classroom. As the groups work to reassemble their image, challenge them to:

- Recall the topic from where their image originated
- Take it in turns to each describe something they recall about the topic

## 5. Memory markers

Keep revision at the forefront of your classroom by using physical memory markers. A simple version of this might involve using colour-coded Pringles tubes (or similar) to function as mini time capsules that can be used to store summarised key information collated when a topic was initially taught. I'd recommend using a blend of trigger words, images, questions and other such material. Later, you can challenge students to:

- Recall which colour tube might relate to which topic
- Pull out a challenge and complete it – *'How much can you recall about....?'*

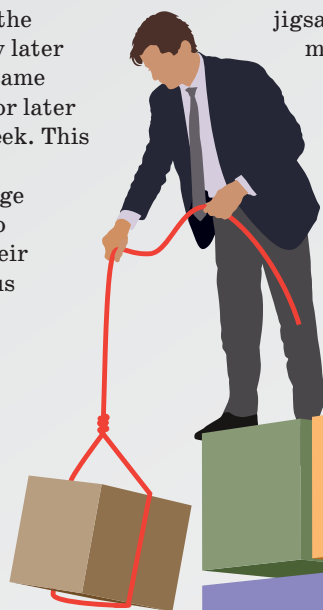
## 6. Introduce new revision tools, like the Frayer model

Research has shown that variety in revision is vital for boosting memory, though I'd argue that it's equally important for motivating pupils. An innovative strategy such as the Frayer model can be completed using existing knowledge in just 8 minutes.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claire Gadsby (@RevisionExpert) is a leading educational author, trainer and director of Radical Revision – a cutting edge revision skills programme for exam success in all subjects. For a free trial, use the QR code displayed below, or visit [radicalrevision.co.uk](http://radicalrevision.co.uk)



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# Are your students working too hard?

The problem with perfectionists is that they often don't know when to stop, explains **Natasha Devon**...

**B**ack in the mid-2000s I was drifting between jobs, trying half-heartedly to find my niche whilst battling a secret and life-dominating eating disorder.

I worked for brief periods as a legal secretary, model, waitress, shop assistant, food critic and receptionist, and also tried being a musician. I've always loved to sing, and I'm decent at it – if only within a fairly limited bluesy/jazzy range – and have always been told by teachers that I have a great musical ear.

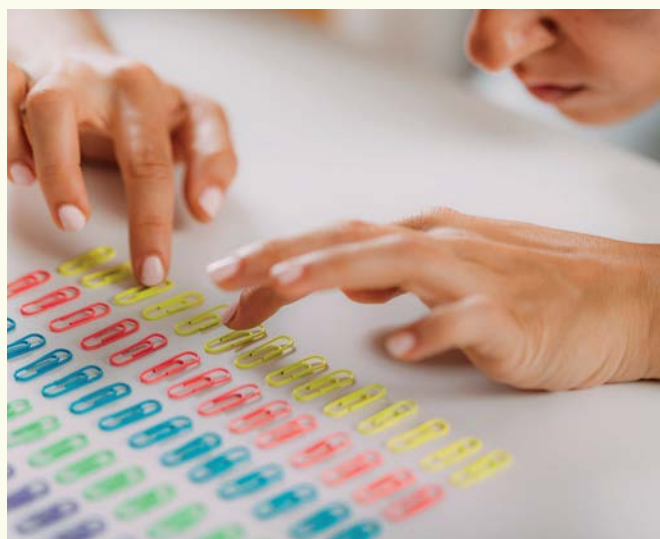
Whilst working with music producers, I noticed something. These people – whose job is to sit in windowless rooms for hours on end, fiddling with tracks using complicated tech – were textbook perfectionists. They could hear the most minuscule deviations in tone and beat, and spend forever tinkering with 20 seconds of a song, long after my own patience would have run out.

They would also, I thought, often continue interfering with a track past the point at which they had nailed it. There would be a moment when it sounded like a 'banger', yet they'd never be satisfied. Often, they'd spoil the song by adding or subtracting too much sound.

## Negative impact

I mention this because it demonstrates one of the key facets of the perfectionist mentality – the tendency to work beyond peak point.

According to Dr Thomas



Curran, one of the world's leading experts on the subject, young people today are particularly prone to perfectionism. Whilst often cited as a positive trait colloquially, perfectionism can actually have a profoundly negative effect on an individual's happiness and wellbeing, as well as their productivity and outcomes.

It's characterised by a relentlessly negative inner monologue (familiar to the kind of pupil who gets 90% on a test but can only focus on the 10% they got wrong), a perception of comparing unfavourably with peers and an overwhelming fear of failure.

Not only will perfectionists usually have low self-esteem (which in turn makes them more vulnerable to mental health issues), they will tend to avoid activities they aren't confident in. If they can't avoid said activities altogether, they'll put in minimal effort so that when

they receive a disappointing grade, they can tell themselves it doesn't matter, because they didn't try their hardest, thus impacting on their academic outcomes.

Knitting all this together, we can see that perfectionists will often overwork in what they believe to be their strongest subjects, whilst self-sabotaging in those they feel to be their weakest. They're not just missing out on the benefits of a rounded education, but also not gaining experience in how to learn from, and build upon their mistakes – a crucial life skill.

## Simple solutions

I tackle this in my new interactive workbook for young people, *Yes You Can: Ace School Without Losing Your Mind*. It's packed with simple tips, such as using the '5-minute rule' to conquer procrastination. Getting started is the hardest part, so I advise

students to trick their brain by telling themselves they'll only do something they hate for five minutes.

It can be helpful for perfectionists to plan homework and revision so they tackle subjects they're less confident in first, before moving onto those they know they can lose themselves in, almost as a reward.

For study related to a perfectionist's favourite subject, it's crucial that they schedule time to rest and regroup. Overworking is counterproductive, in that it impairs cognitive ability. Our ability to focus peaks at the beginning and end of any period of intense concentration, so it's actually better to divide a 2-hour study period into two sessions of 50 minutes – with a 20-minute break in the middle – than to work through.

It's also important for students to recognise when their work is as good as it's going to get. After all, as my experiences have taught me, whether it's an essay or any other kind of project, there's always a stage where it just doesn't need any more noise.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Natasha Devon MBE is an author, broadcaster and researcher; she also tours schools throughout the UK and beyond, delivering talks and conducting research on mental health, body image, gender and equality. *Yes You Can: Ace School Without Losing Your Mind*, is out now (Macmillan, £9.99)

# Less cramming, more thinking

Successful GCSE preparation involves demystifying the exam itself and making sure your students can apply their knowledge confidently, says Impress Education's Tamara **Budhan Caldwell**...

It's unfortunate that one of the most influential incentives the government offers to schools is that of funding. With per-pupil funding delivered on the basis of admissions, the livelihoods of staff working within those schools can depend on the GCSE grades they produce.

Naturally, this raises the question of whether pressure is being placed on schools to 'teach to the test'. It's widely accepted that this type of teaching is inappropriate and best avoided – but when the stakes surrounding exam results are so high, how can schools ensure that the quality of their classroom instruction doesn't suffer?

## Applied learning

From our experience, exam success isn't brought about by cramming or teaching to the test, but rather *demystifying the exam process* – that is, ensuring that students fully understand the exam requirements and what's expected of them.

As I hope to illustrate in the examples below, a teacher's focus should be on teaching students to apply what they have learned to the exams. By drawing on some of the best international research into pedagogical practice, students can be amply prepared for the questions that will be asked of them, effectively apply their existing knowledge when answering them and therefore demonstrate their

full potential.

The process begins with the development of critical thinking, and ends with the students being excited by what they've learnt – sometimes even to the point of actually looking forward to their exams!

As a team of former examiners, we understand how exam questions are structured, are aware of the most common mistakes students make and what examiners are ultimately looking for.

like these don't hinge on *writing more*; they're about giving students the confidence to *craft more*, and earn more marks while actually writing less.

The first important consideration for students is timing. They need to understand how marks are assigned to each part of the exam, and thus how much time they ought to spend on each section.

Our English literature question is divided into 24 marks for 'content and

## Transferable skills

One easy hack we'd suggest is to analyse Section A – a different part of the same exam that asks students to analyse high quality works of fiction – and apply some of those same skills and

**“Exam success isn't brought about by teaching to the test, but rather demystifying the exam process”**

## Time to craft

Since the majority of schools work with the AQA exam board, the first example I'm going to use is the AQA GCSE English Literature exam – Paper 1 ('Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing'), question 5. This question carries a potential 40 marks, which amounts to half the marks for the whole paper.

The question tasks students with writing 'A story, or part of a story/narrative or descriptive' either based on a photograph provided to them or, if they prefer, an idea of their own. What's important to remember is that questions

organisation', with 16 marks given for 'technical accuracy'. The recommended time to spend on this task is around 45 minutes – though given that the accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar in the students' response is allotted 24 marks, we'd recommend that students spend 35 to 40 minutes on the question itself, and leave 5 to 10 minutes for checking and proofing.

Bear in mind that examiners aren't fans of formulaic copy. They do, however, love stories that stand out from the crowd, and which include varied and inventive use of structure.

techniques to the rest of the paper, in line with our 'D.F.Z.C.R.' framework.

'D' stands for dialogue. Students will score highly for using punctuation that provokes readers' curiosity and emotion. Rather than simply describing a character, it can be more powerful to show how this person feels through what they say. A story can gain four additional marks just for being compelling, so this is





absolutely a time for them to show off!

Where possible, they should look to use some of the language features they've learned, such as pathetic fallacy, metaphor and similes. Does their story demonstrate correct use of basic punctuation (exclamation/question marks, semicolons, etc.)? Have they varied the sentence length?

The 'F' prompts students to include flashbacks in their story. Narratives that move backwards and forwards in time and switch in and out of different dialogue will score

good marks by the contrast this creates. The 'Z' meanwhile reminds students to *zoom in and out*, using an imaginative microscope to zoom in on a small detail, before then zooming out to show how that element fits into the bigger story.

The 'C' reminds students to include a crisis. A good story needs its main character(s) to make one or more big decisions. A writer should reveal the character's innermost thoughts in order to explain why this crisis has happened, leaving it to the reader to consider how they'd react themselves in such a situation.

Finally, the 'R' tells students to include a resolution. Every good story needs to be drawn to a close – usually with all the threads tied up, and sometimes with an unexpected twist...

### The maths question

By internalising these skills ahead of time, students can avoid cramming and teachers can prevent their

lessons from being dominated by the demands of the test. Instead, they can concentrate on giving students the tools and confidence they'll need to craft compelling stories that will impress the examiner and optimise their pass marks.

It's worth taking the time to really consider the purpose of the questions set by the examiners – that is, *to test each student's understanding of what they've already learned*. So with that in mind, how might we apply the same technique to other subjects, such as maths?

The key to helping students demystify GCSE maths is to make unfamiliar question types feel familiar. In any GCSE maths exam there will always a focus on 15 key topics. Showing students how to approach those questions in a way that will score them some quick wins can lead to a significant increase in their marks.

Decoding a maths exam doesn't just require understanding the marking scheme, but also what the questions are actually asking. We'll often remind students that one of the most important things they can do is read, read and read again. Because it's sadly all too common for teachers to hear students say, *'I was rushing and misread the*

## WHAT ABOUT SCIENCE?

- In science, students are best supported by breaking down the syllabus into accessible chunks, then linking key concepts and deepening their understanding through expert explanations and modelling.
- It's also important to make sure every student has a solid grasp of the basics. If they're unclear as to the structure of the atom, then this absence of fundamental knowledge will prevent them from gaining a full understanding of static electricity or radioactivity.
- It's also worth noting that while literacy isn't typically seen as important to science, the extended writing questions presented in exams can very much make or break a student's overall outcomes.

*question...*

By helping students develop their active reading skills, we can ensure they gain a deeper understanding of the question and check that their answer makes sense.

It's also important to remind students to 'show the examiner what you know', hence the need to write out formulae and rules demonstrate their use.

Training as a teacher, and even years of teaching experience, isn't enough on its own to prepare you for being an examiner – though if it's challenging for teachers to understand exam requirements, it's even more so for students.

Looking closely at examination requirements, and showing students how to deploy everything they've learned over the years to meet those requirements, will reduce the strain and cognitive demands placed on them in a way that optimises their pass marks.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tamara Budhan Caldwell is a former IB examiner and one of the founders of Impress Education – a company working with GCSE and A Level principle and senior examiners to help students become exam confident. To find out more, visit [impress.education](https://impress.education) or follow @examinerimpress

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# “Miss, we’ve done this before...”

**Tracey Leese** questions whether the time might have come to examine our assumptions around revision and re-assess its place in the learning process...

**W**henever we recap topics in lessons, there will always be at least one student who inevitably interjects with the stock phrase “Miss, we’ve done this before”. My usual response, with typical teacher’s wit, is “*That’s why it’s called revision – otherwise, it would just be called vision.*”

My students have yet to find this remotely amusing, but the point stands. You can’t revise something unless you know it first. But as I sit here reflecting on our first examination-based GCSE results in three years, it’s become clear to me that revision isn’t the determining factor in a students’ success.

## Dental flossing

I was always rubbish at revising. At 16, I had no awareness of how I worked best, and always struggled when sitting alone in silence with my class notes, because that’s what I thought revision was. I now know this to be the kind environment that does nothing for my efficacy levels, so it’s hardly surprising that I ended up learning Spice Girls lyrics when I should have been memorising chemical symbols.

I’d go as far to say that revision is like dental flossing. People say they do it, but often don’t – or at least not properly. Have you ever taught a student who achieved astounding

academic results and attributed their success predominately to revision? Or known students who had supply teachers all year, only to make up the lost ground by being prolific revisers?

A pedagogical approach that primarily emphasises revision is one that’s fundamentally flawed, because of how much misconception there is among students around what actually constitutes meaningful revision. Over the years I’ve lost count of how often a conscientious (and almost always female) student will present me with a beautifully highlighted lever-arch dossier of notes, only to find that they haven’t actually retained any of the details they’ve so dutifully annotated.

They have, however, sacrificed their free time and wellbeing in order to convince themselves that they’ve revised – as though racking up a full time-sheet will automatically result in a grade 9.

## Heavy lifting

Done well, revision can do much of the heavy lifting of knowledge acquisition. Done badly, it can be detrimental to student wellbeing, and allow misconceptions to take root unchallenged. In my experience, students almost always lean towards the latter.

Granted, revision can play a key role in students developing the independence and self-regulation they’ll need to succeed at KS5 and beyond. Yet it’s an ambitious curriculum and quality first teaching that will make the biggest impact on students’ grades and life chances, and no amount of revision can compensate if either are lacking.

Similarly, the extent of students’ vocabulary, cultural capital and support networks will impact far more upon their eventual attainment than their ability to revise. Like so many skills, meaningful revision has to be explicitly taught, re-taught, modelled and resourced.

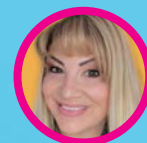
## Making connections

How much time do schools dedicate to the actual

teaching of revision? Many will facilitate externally-run workshops – of the sort where students learn how to memorise key facts about a set topic – but skilled and systematic revision involves so much more than just remembering.

It’s prioritising, translating and making connections, all whilst self-evaluating. It requires motivation, aspiration and self-discipline; skills that students don’t innately possess. Revision is skilled work that requires a degree of metacognition and self-awareness. It’s a creation of teaching and teachers, rather than learning and learners.

Ultimately, we need to invest more in, and assume less about revision, the demands of which can end up feeling like a micro-curriculum of its own. Like so many seemingly accepted pillars within education, it might be time to review, reassess, or at the very least rethink the impact that revision has on our students.



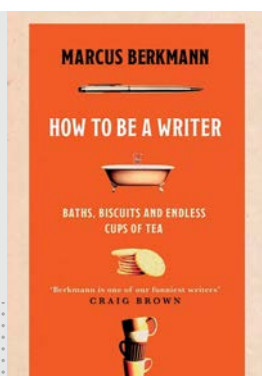
### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tracey Leese is an Assistant Headteacher at St Thomas More Catholic Academy in Longton, an advocate for women in leadership and co-author, with Christopher Barker, of *Teach Like a Queen* (Routledge, £16.99)



# Off the Shelves

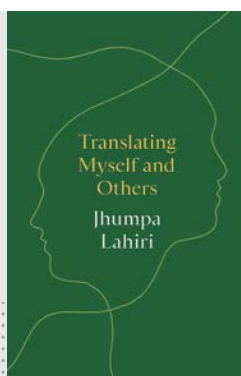
Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore



**How to be a Writer: Baths, Biscuits and Endless Cups of Tea**  
(Marcus Berkmann, Little, Brown, £16.99)

The life of a freelance writer is one of unreliable remuneration, shifting loyalties and sudden endings, as this book makes abundantly clear. Written with humour and candour, it's a welcome dose of reality amid the plethora of books and blogposts promising riches beyond measure to anyone who can wield a pen. As Berkmann makes clear, success is dependent on luck as well as talent, and can be precarious. He is, however, perhaps too dismissive of his own abilities – even the pieces he cites as bad examples of his writing are pretty good. Arguably more memoir than guide, it features no index and the chapter titles give little hint as to their contents. All the same, lend a copy to any student who romanticises about the writing life – it may not deter them, but at least their eyes will be more open...

**Reviewed by Terry Freedman**



**Translating Myself and Others**  
(Jhumpa Lahiri, Princeton University Press, £16.99)

Anyone interested in the challenges of translating literary works from one language to another will find this book fascinating. Many others have written books on a similar theme, but Lahiri – an author perhaps best known for her fiction – brings a lyricism and beauty to her insights that more prosaic texts lack. Structured as a series of essays, *Translating...* draws on mythology, Ovid and more modern writings to inform her explorations. Lahiri delves into the etymology of words, searching for equivalences between languages, making it a useful book for helping students understand how translation involves rather more than wielding a bilingual dictionary. The level of detail and depth it goes into make it not the easiest of reads – and it may prove more useful to teachers than students as a result – but it's certainly a richly rewarding one.

**Reviewed by Terry Freedman**



**Writing on the Job: Best practices for communicating in the digital age**

(Martha B. Coven, Princeton University Press, £11.99)

Heaven knows how many books there are out there about the craft of writing, but they almost invariably concern creative writing. That's fine for those wishing to weave stories and entertain their readers, but most of us write for more prosaic reasons. What's the best way of constructing an email, especially if you want the recipient to do something? As a teacher, how should you approach the writing of a slide-based presentation? This book contains the answers to those, and many other questions. As such, it covers not only some of the English Programme of Study's writing requirements, but more general ones too – older students will appreciate its advice on CVs and covering letters, for example. There's even guidance on writing for social media. Easy to read and served up in bite-sized chunks, this book is an excellent 'how to' manual for clear communication.

**Reviewed by Terry Freedman**



## ON THE RADAR

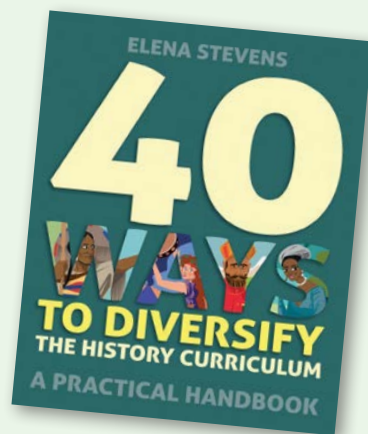
A look back at education's previous false dawns, in the hope of ushering in a new Sunday...

### 40 Ways to Diversify the History Curriculum

(Elena Stevens, Crown House Publishing, £16.99)

The question of what schools should cover in their history curriculums has acquired a potent charge of late. Events such as the murder of George Floyd and subsequent prominence given to the Black Lives Matter movement, and the removal of historical statues from cities and universities for their associations with slavery, have caused department heads to question what they're teaching and its relevance in a modern, multicultural society.

For many, the response has been to try and tell the stories of noteworthy historical figures – often women and individuals from minority ethnic and working class backgrounds – that recorded history has overlooked. That's one of Stevens' aims with this book, which contains vivid historical portraits of many inspirational people from the past, in chapters that tackle overarching themes such as Empire, British and national politics and migration. Beyond that, though, Stevens sets out the case for a more far-reaching approach to reading history in general – as demonstrated in the standout passage, 'Gertrud Scholtz-Klink and 'Fascinating Fascism', which makes compelling links between the head of the Nazi Women's League and the arguments set out by Susan Sontag in her seminal 1974 essay.



## Meet the author

### JOSEPH COELHO



Where did the inspiration for *The Boy Lost in the Maze* originally come from?

It's inspired by aspects of my own life, as a starting point for wanting to write about a boy's search for his father and explore that in verse. My two previous poetry collections dealt with Greek myths, but I wasn't that familiar with The Six Labours of Theseus. There seemed to be a synergy between both stories and the two came together.

The book's structure and use of verse comes across as quite unique – how would you describe it?

I'm split between 'verse novel and 'novel told in poems'. The part of my craft that really interests me is how different poems can be used to tell a story – how a villanelle can be used to show what a character is thinking, or how a ballade can be used to move a narrative forward. There's almost a filmic quality to verse novels, where you're taken by the hand and led through a narrative.

Are there any particular readers or groups you're hoping to reach with the book, and if so, what would you like them to take away from it?

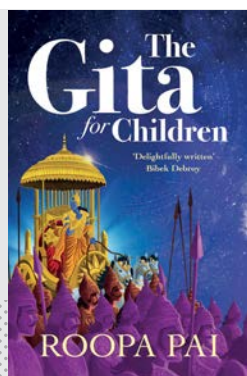
I have all readers in mind when writing, but when you're dealing with narratives that involve working class backgrounds and people of colour, my hope is that it speaks to those individuals. I know from my own upbringing what it feels like to not have your story represented.

One of the book's major themes is masculinity – how did your perspectives on that inform the story you wanted to tell and how you wanted to tell it?

There's lots of talk at the moment around toxic masculinity, which is what really struck me about Theseus' story. The fact his father wasn't around is almost brushed over – perhaps because that's quite a common occurrence in Greek myth. It can be tempting to see absent fathers as a 'modern problem', when actually it figures in tales as old as time.

I wanted to explore how toxic masculinity sets up this idea of a man as someone who goes out to conquer, and question those lazy assumptions of violence being associated with manhood. That's why I've changed the Theseus story to include interactions with the thieves, bandits and monsters he encounters so that they're not just evil entities he defeats – because life is never as simple as that.

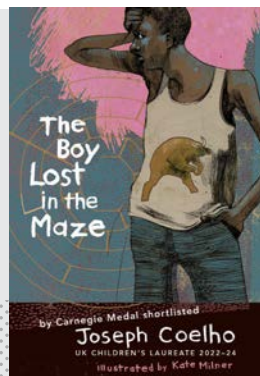
For more information, visit [thepoetryofjosephcoelho.com](http://thepoetryofjosephcoelho.com)



### The Gita: For Children

(Roopa Pai, Swift Press, £12.99)

For the uninitiated, the Bhagavad Gita (often shortened to 'Gita') is a Sanskrit poem written in India around 2,500 years ago that takes form of a sprawling dialogue between a prince, Arjuna, and his mentor and friend Krishna, as the former expresses reluctance to take up arms on the eve of a great war between him and his Pandava siblings and their Kaurava cousins. Being the foundational text of Hinduism, countless generations have found solace, inspiration and wisdom in Krishna's entreaties to Arjuna over time, but only now has an adaptation for children been published in the UK. Following a brisk, but highly informative introduction explaining the Gita's place within the much larger Mahabharata, Pai renders each of the Gita's 18 chapters in pacy, easy-to-follow prose, followed by chatty, well-informed explainers that provide much in the way of useful clarifications and context.



### The Boy Lost in the Maze

(Joseph Coelho, illustrated by Kate Milner, Otter-Barry Books, £12.99)

The retelling of Greek myths in a way that makes their rich, fantastical stories more accessible has a long history within children's literature. *The Boy Lost in the Maze* is very much within that lineage, but notably bold in its approach. The book sees Children's Laureate Coelho adapt The Six Labours of Theseus in verse using modern vernacular, while simultaneously mapping that timeless story onto a second narrative set in the present day. Our modern protagonist is Theo – a teenager who, upon finding out that the man he'd been told was his father actually isn't, embarks on an eventful quest to track down his real dad. The interweaving of both narratives is skillfully done, teasing out the parallels between the two via a series of poems that combine the complexities of a carefully crafted collection and the pacy immediacy of a modern detective tale.

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# Heading into the DIGITAL AGE

Tight school budgets and the pace of tech advancement mean you need a school digital strategy, says **Sue Birchall**...

**M**any schools approach digital and ICT innovation with caution – partly because of the financial commitments involved, but also due to lack of experience in what’s a fast-changing industry.

Support from external experts is abundant, but there’s no doubting that ‘going down the wrong path’ is an expensive error to make. School business professionals like me are often the voice of caution, citing value for money, sustainability and renewal concerns amongst the reasons for taking a moment to pause and think carefully.

However, there is no denying that our young people are increasingly exposed to the latest ICT and all that entails in their day-to-day lives, and that as educators, we need to be in tune with this.

Government policy in 2019 highlighted the need for schools and colleges to embed technology effectively, and pledged to support them in the effective adoption and use of edtech, outlining both the opportunities and barriers.

The DfE then commissioned CooperGibson Research (CGR) to conduct a study to establish the state and usage of technology across schools in England (available at [tinyurl.com/SchoolsTechnologysurvey](https://tinyurl.com/SchoolsTechnologysurvey)), which produced some

interesting findings – more on which later.

## Fit for purpose

In the past two years, schools have been challenged by circumstances to take a big leap into the world of ICT, which has since become essential for the continued delivery of teaching and learning.

This quickly highlighted how our students have hugely varying levels of access to ICT, with the government stepping in to try and provide laptops and

it comes to developing ICT within their settings.

## The digital unknown

The key question is this: is there desire within schools and academies to look at how we can develop our ICT – not just as means of delivering the curriculum, but also in order to expose our students to the vast range of new technologies now available?

Is there also a need to look at upgrading our school systems – including offering remote access for staff, with all the security and

available at school level are often barely sufficient to even cover the upgrades and replacements identified as being needed in our existing ICT development plans, therefore providing little capacity for the purchase of new technologies that might form part of more ambitious initiatives.

This, then, requires a funding strategy which at present isn’t supported by financial investment on the part of government.

The 21-22 CooperGibson Research survey identified this, along with the need for more central support and guidance on

**“Stepping into an edtech transformation is pointless if those who deliver it cannot access improvements through a lack of basic skills”**

internet connections to those without. After all, you can’t launch a new digital initiative without the appropriate equipment to support it.

The same is true when it comes to children’s and staff’s knowledge of ICT. You can only introduce a technological transformation if the people who are supposed to deliver it have the necessary basic skills.

This was pointed out by CooperGibson Research, whose report found that the education sector is still in need of significant support with the fundamentals when

accessibility features this would require – now that our experiences of the pandemic have highlighted the benefits of flexible working?

In both cases I believe the answer is ‘yes’. It may well be time for us to venture into the digital unknown, but not without caution.

## Balancing spending

Firstly, there is a balance required here. Education institutions aren’t cash rich, and aspirations of this nature will need careful planning if they’re to be sustained beyond initial implementation.

The funds we have





planning, procurement, training and sustainability. It's clear that academies and newly built schools are a few steps ahead, at least in terms of their digital infrastructure and planning.

The question then has to be whether we simply sit back and wait for a central digital plan, or whether we start to plan locally, so that we can overcome the increasing digital divide between education and the wider world.

### Where to start?

As with all projects, we need to begin with a business planning model. Starting with your aims and purpose, you need to decide what this looks like for your setting.

We all know that every school is different – not just within phases but also in locality, cohorts and environment. That's not to say you should be limited in your aims; all students need to be exposed to a

variety of learning opportunities. Who knows, you may well be educating the next Elon Musk...

The next step would be to match these aims to your school or academy development planning. Any innovations should support your school's vision for the future, and will need to be incorporated into whole school planning.

In my school, we have an ICT development plan which – according to the report from the 21-22 survey – isn't as common as you might think. If you don't have something similar in place, I would suggest that ICT planning ought to sit alongside the budget, and that SIP / ADP would assist in avoiding any costly purchasing mistakes.

### Bang for your buck

As with all purchases within school, we must be aware of value for money in terms of the anticipated outcomes. Technology that supports school operations does, generally speaking, help to generate savings thanks to

increased efficiencies, which in turn will typically free up funding for other initiatives. But that's only the case if the purchase is timely, and adds value to your core purpose.

Financial planning is imperative for all ICT purchases, and especially around any new projects. Aside from the initial purchase, sustainability must be considered; your planning should incorporate both immediate and long-term costs, such as any money that will be needed for repair and eventually replacements. This becomes especially pertinent once new innovations are embedded into the school's practice.

### Managing risk

Risk management also needs to be part of your business planning. We're all aware of the current, and sometimes sudden increases in school running costs, so you need to consider and include alternative planning to take such unexpected expenses into account.

For instance, should you have spare devices on hand

in the event of any becoming damaged? Is it worth taking out insurance? What would be the impact to a school's systems in the event of a breakdown, or loss of service?

Also, be aware that if you're purchasing new technologies, the likelihood is they will be upgraded, improved or replaced at a fairly rapid rate, and that you need to plan for this.

There are always risks for schools when it comes to investing in new technologies, but without doubt, it's a risk worth taking. We're charged with educating our young people and readying them to take part in the wider world – and ICT is a huge part of that.



**ABOUT  
THE AUTHOR**

Sue Birchall is Director of Business and Outreach at The Malling School



# Putting the effort in

**Matt MacGuire** runs through the ways in which teachers can cut through students' propensity for restlessness and normalise the idea that lessons should involve hard work...

**A**t the end of term, especially before the Christmas break or the summer holidays, schools can experience a terrible plague. If not prevented, it spreads like wildfire, destroying learning as it goes. It's the ruiner of rigour, the negater of knowledge. It's *'the fun lesson'*.

*"Are we having a 'fun' lesson today?"*

This question is a test. What the student is really asking is, *"Have you given up yet?"* They want to know if they can start the holidays now. They sense their chance to normalise DVDs, games and end of term treats. They'll play teachers off against each other – *"We watched Home Alone in English – are we watching a DVD in your lesson?"*

I hope your school takes a firm line on this and ensures that proper lessons are followed until the end of term.

## Carrying the calf

The tendency of many students to 'slack off' as the end of term approaches raises a related question. What does the culture of effort in your school consist of throughout the year? How is it manifested in your classroom?

I'm fond of the story of Milo of Croton – a famous wrestler in the days of ancient Greece. It's said that as part of his strength training regimen, Milo would lift and carry a fully grown bull on his shoulders. Milo achieved this degree of strength, we're told, by

carrying a newborn calf on his shoulders, and then carrying the same animal every day as it grew to maturity. As the calf grew, the task became incrementally more taxing every day and Milo's muscles grew accordingly.

I want my students to learn like Milo of Croton. I want them to be in the zone of proximal development, where the 'calf' – their learning – isn't so light that it's easy to carry, but also not so heavy that it can't be lifted.

## Classroom climate

This means having to monitor the ability of your class as closely as possible. Not by marking every piece

experience difficulty in the process.

To do this, we must normalise the idea of working hard in class. Not just through careful setting of difficulty, but also by maintaining a suitable classroom climate. If a student starts misbehaving from the very beginning of a lesson – by talking, or not taking off their outside coat, for example – their attitude will rapidly spread to the rest of class. It must be challenged and addressed immediately.

An excellent way of starting lessons with purpose is to employ a 'Do Now' activity. This is a five-minute task that's already set up and waiting

'Do Now' activities get lessons off to a prompt and purposeful start, and can also be employed for valuable recall practice.

## Multiple beginnings

Another way of normalising hard work is by ensuring that transitions between learning activities are completed with minimal fuss and distraction. Every transition consists of an end, followed by a new start. In that sense, it's like beginning the lesson again – and because of that necessary pause, every transition is as prone to student disruption and avoidance tactics as the start of the lesson.

If the opportunity presents itself, students may well seize upon any undirected time during transitions for off-task discussion or similar behaviours which can quickly spread. If students can't

**"Every transition between tasks is as prone to disruption and avoidance tactics as the start of the lesson"**

of student work and differentiating every lesson for every student – that's absurd, and to expect it of teachers is as idiotic as it is immoral.

Instead, I've been taught by colleagues to adopt a more sensible and sustainable approach to checking what my students can do and what they need to work on. I need to gauge how far they are on their journey towards mastery of any given skill, so that I know what level of scaffolded support will be required across the class. My aim is for everyone to experience success – but also

for the students when they arrive. They complete the task in silence, without teacher support (so the task must be carefully set). When this routine is set and enforced, teachers convey the clear message that *every moment in this lesson counts*. We'll be working hard, and not wasting any time.



move on to the next task for practical reasons – such as waiting for worksheets to be handed out – the likelihood of this happening will only increase.

In the best classrooms, these opportunities for disruption are actively prevented by the drilling of clear and efficient transition routines. Exercise books can be handed out to a class of 30 in well under a minute, accompanied by silence. Taking out new equipment shouldn't prompt any discussion. Achieving silent and efficient transitions requires teachers to hold the line, every time.

### Active presence

Academic hard work creates a productive pressure that can result in mental exertion, which students will naturally want to relieve if and when they get the chance. That's not to say that periods of mental rest in lessons are inappropriate, but these should only ever be instigated by the teacher, not the

students themselves. Low level disruption during transitions mustn't be allowed to dictate the pace of the lesson.

For students to work hard, they also need to perceive that their hard work will be recognised and valued, and that apathy, disengagement and poor effort on their part won't be tolerated.

This means teachers need to be an active presence within the classroom at all times. Sitting at a desk while students work is lazy. Worse than that, it models laziness for the class and implies a lack of interest in both students' work and the students themselves.

Instead, teachers should be up and circulating around the classroom, looking over the shoulders of every student while they work and offering quiet, personal and specific praise where it's warranted – *"Great work today, George"*; *"Fantastic details, Amelia"*; *"Well done for finishing that task – it was tricky..."*

That kind of positive atmosphere can't be fostered from behind your desk. You

need to be amongst the students, on their side and rooting for them to be successful.

### Corrective coaching

Of course, moving between desks, walking behind the back row and peering at every exercise book you pass will also help you identify and immediately address any symptoms of disruption, distraction or apathy.

Your proximity alone will be enough to discourage much low-level disruption that might have otherwise gone unchecked. When catching the start of an off-topic conversation, or a whisper during a silent activity, you'll be close enough to tap the desk, give a meaningful look to restore focus and cut the disruption off before it takes hold.

Finally, circulating around the classroom presents your best opportunity for spotting misconceptions, errors and poor presentation. When you give instant feedback during the working process itself, students benefit hugely. Corrective coaching can redirect students and ensure any errors aren't compounded or repeated as the lesson progresses.

Circulating around the class delivers a simple and clear message – *'I am watching you, and I want to see you succeed, so I won't settle for less than your best.'*

If you want your students to expend their best efforts when they're in your class, consider the lesson from their perspective. Make it the kind of lesson that makes them *want* to do their best. Sharpen your subject knowledge so that you can inspire them. Work with departmental colleagues to make your curriculum the best it can be. Ensure your delivery is engaging, and take the time to review your teaching methods.

Be on your students' team, because they're far more likely to put in their best effort when they work *with* you, rather than *for* you.



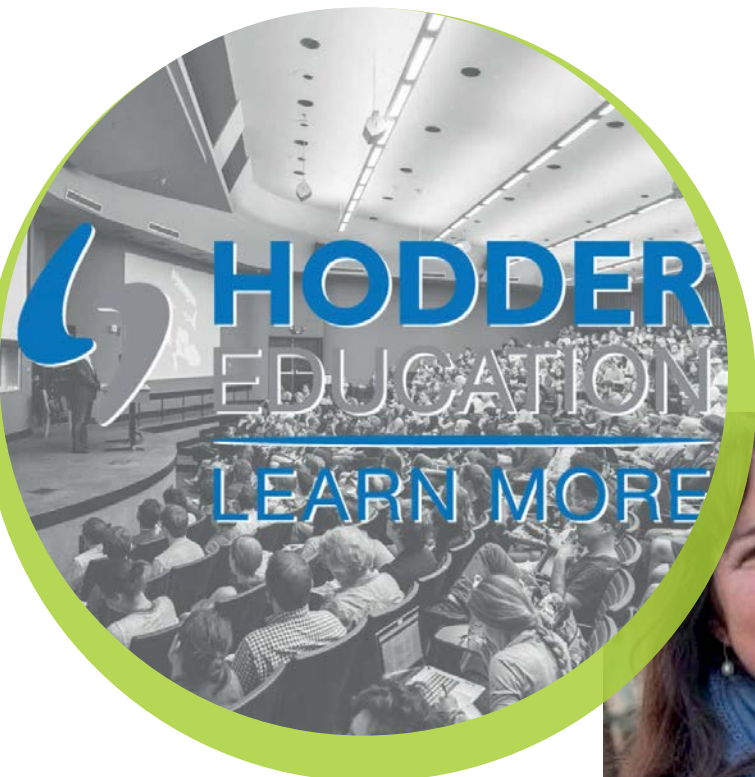
#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt MacGuire (@MacGrammar) is an assistant headteacher; this article is based on a post originally published at his blog, Ten Rules for Teaching (tenrulesforteaching.com)



# THE WOW FACTOR

This year sees Hodder Education once again hosting a conference that no aspiring criminology student will want to miss...



The No. 1 criminology conference for A-level students is back. At The 2022 Criminology Student Conference, we'll be bringing together experienced criminologists to delve into ethnographic research, the criminal justice process and infamous murder cases, alongside detailed examinations of the life and crimes of Noel 'Razor' Smith and the Mafia Princess.

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[events@hoddereducation.co.uk](mailto:events@hoddereducation.co.uk)

## MEET THE LINEUP

It's a different world since we last held this conference in 2019, but we are extremely excited to welcome you and your students back to hear from our panel of leading criminologists exploring contemporary themes, as well as spotlight interviews with Noel 'Razor' Smith and Marisa 'The Mafia Princess' Merico.

## ONCE UPON A CRIME....

Taking place at the end of November 2022 in London, Nottingham and Manchester, the conference is perfect for all students interested in studying criminology at undergraduate level, as well as all current Level 3 criminology and A-level law, sociology and psychology students.

## A CRIME TO MISS

We're offering one FREE teacher place for every 10 students booked on, though students can attend on their own if permitted by their centre. Student and teacher places are priced at £24 (incl. VAT) – we can put you in touch with nearby schools that are also attending to share transport and help reduce your carbon footprint.

## BOOK NOW, CONFIRM LATER

We recommend provisionally booking the maximum number of places you may require, giving you the time to gauge interest, complete paperwork and organise transport. To secure your seats, simply contact us four weeks before the event to confirm the exact number attending.



# Training for Change

Embedding sustainability in leadership CPD planning can pay dividends for staff, schools and the planet, suggests **Gary Wilkie**

One of the challenges of sustainability is sustaining its focus. I was taught about the risks of the hole in the ozone layer whilst at school over 40 years ago, and many of the 'green initiatives' we see today have been around for a while.

As a Trust, our vision is to ensure we are making a long-term, meaningful impact on the world through our pupils. With this in mind, we want to ensure any work we do on sustainability has a significant lifespan. To achieve this, addressing sustainability and climate change must be a golden thread running through our organisation.

Our core belief is that the more understanding our teachers and leaders have about the world, the better equipped they will be to prepare our children and young people for it. This is why, when developing our CPD journey for staff, we wanted sustainability to form an integral part of the process – ensuring we are making lasting changes, and planning for the future.

Our goal is to embed sustainability into leadership training, so that those aspiring to move to middle or senior leadership positions will be able to view all decisions through a lens of championing

sustainability, instead of it being an afterthought.

## Sustainability champions

A central part of our efforts towards this aim is identifying aspiring leaders as sustainability champions within their schools. This gives our staff the support and challenge required to become successful leaders, whilst working on creating and implementing sustainability initiatives

working towards six milestones across the year. These build on different aspects of being a leader, framed in the context of furthering their chosen environmental initiative. In this way, aspiring leaders are given the opportunity to hone leadership skills and oversee the creation of a large-scale project from start to finish.

To achieve each milestone, champions advance through three key

designed to appropriately reflect the communities they serve. Initiatives have included the introduction of an eco-warriors programme for interested pupils, an Eco Day to raise awareness of the importance of sustainability and schools repurposing their outdoor areas into green learning spaces.

Once the year ends, champions are then encouraged to work closely with future champions to build on these projects year-on-year, instead of starting from scratch and losing momentum.

We are extremely proud of our first two cohorts of CSR champions, who have implemented meaningful change into school life already. They have shown true leadership skills and expressed renewed commitment to making sustainability a key priority at their schools.

We have found it incredibly rewarding to provide our teachers with the opportunity to take ownership of the initiatives they introduce, whilst also involving our pupils in inspiring a sense of collective responsibility and pride over the environment.

Most importantly, the programme has given staff a depth of knowledge and set of skills that will form part of their ongoing decision making, enabling them to have a positive impact upon the world throughout the rest of their career.

***“The more understanding our teachers and leaders have about the world, the better equipped they will be to prepare our children and young people for it”***

tailored to the environment and context of the school and area they work in.

To create a bespoke offer, we work with CSR experts Wider Purpose, whose programme provides participants with domain-specific knowledge, and coaching and mentoring to support their journey as significant changemakers.

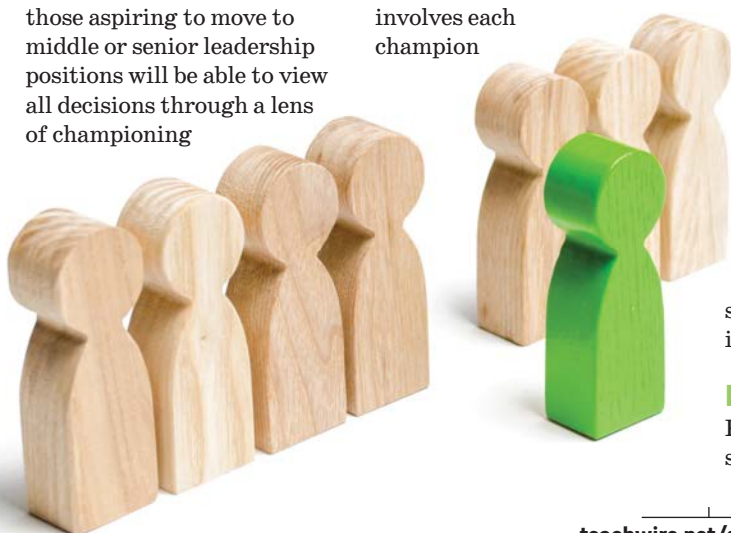
The programme involves each champion

stages. The first is a collective meeting where participants from all schools come together to discuss ideas, set out aims and brainstorm how to overcome potential challenges. It's an excellent opportunity to meet other aspiring leaders from across the Trust and create a network of support they can draw upon in future.

They then receive one-to-one coaching sessions that enable them to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in order to develop and refine leadership skillsets. The final stage is to implement the next step of their initiative – from selecting an idea to implementing a project.

## Real impact

Projects have varied between schools, since they're



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**  
Gary Wilkie is CEO of The Learning in Harmony Trust

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# IS IT WRONG TO WANT TO BE LIKED?

Seeking approval from students is only a problem if we go about it in the wrong way, maintains **Colin Foster**...

**T**o the experienced teacher, there's nothing is more cringeworthy than seeing a younger colleague trying to be 'mates' with their students. It might seem like a natural thing to try and do, but it's a trap that benefits neither teacher nor students, however well-intentioned it might be.

Attempts at forced humour and slang will likely come across as awkward and embarrassing to 'old hands', though it should be noted that the young teachers in question are still attempting to build bridges. The reason they're doing it is to try and be approachable and accessible to their students, and ultimately have a positive influence on their students' lives, which is difficult to argue with – but might there be a way of achieving these ends more effectively? Is it always wrong for teachers to want to be liked?

## A natural impulse

At some level, almost everybody wants to be liked. Only sociopaths have no interest at all in what other people think of them, nor any desire to please anyone else. Given that it's a caring profession, teaching isn't exactly replete with sociopaths. Indeed, one would hope that those entering the profession do so at least partly because they have some degree of liking for

young people, and wish to form positive, professional relationships with them.

While teaching involves interacting with all kinds of people – colleagues, senior managers, parents, etc. – teachers will typically spend the largest portion of their working day 'alone' in rooms full of students. In this sense, it would be surprising if teachers didn't, at least on some level, want to be liked.

advised to simply not concern themselves with whether their students like them or not.

Instead, they should be as indifferent to this as they can possibly be, because it risks placing entirely the wrong focus on the job they do. The teacher is a professional who, just like doctors, police officers, elected representatives, business leaders or any other professionals, may not

feel about you. The kind of advice outlined above will merely serve to make the most caring teachers feel guilty for caring, and perhaps push some of them out of the profession altogether.

I believe a much better solution can be had from applying the insights of Nobel-prizewinning psychologist, Daniel Kahneman\*, who draws contrasts between the two categories of

***“It's impossible to care for someone without any concern for how they might feel about you”***

But often, this very natural, human feature is portrayed as a problem – a professional character flaw, even. Teachers, particularly those at the start of their careers, will often told that if they're at all concerned with being liked, they'll be less effective at their job.

The reasoning goes that 'wanting to be liked' makes a teacher more reluctant to push their students to excel academically, and less likely to challenge them when their behaviour falls short – neither of which are ultimately in the students' best interests. Moreover, worrying about being popular leads to low standards and expectations, so consequently, teachers are

always be popular among those affected by their decisions. They will often have to make choices that satisfy some higher, longer-term purpose, rather than merely pleasing the people around them in the moment.

## Experiencing and remembering

And yet, I see this line of reasoning as an unworkable, and ultimately counterproductive approach, since it demands that teachers suppress their emotions in a job that's often emotionally demanding. It's impossible to truly care for someone in a strictly unidirectional manner without any concern for how they might



experiencing self' and 'the remembering self'. The

experiencing self is what you experience at the time, *in the moment*, whereas the remembering self is how you *think back on an experience*, from some unspecified point in the future. What's important is that these two 'selves' frequently aren't the same, and can often have quite different – perhaps even diametrically opposing – aims.

Applying this to the problem of wanting to be liked, we

could try focusing on the students you teach now as they will be some time in the future – say, five or so years from now. When they think back on their school days, you as their teacher and the circumstances of today, this week or this year, *how will they feel about it then?* Will they like you then?

Sometimes, students who have left school will pop back in to say hello to their 'old' teachers. Imagine if such a student were to say, *'I actually never liked you when you taught me, because you were always saying I could do better, and you were always pushing me to improve my work and picking me up on things when I wasn't trying. And that was really annoying. But I'm really glad you did, because I learned a lot in the end.'*

### Future perspective

In this case, the former student's experiencing self didn't like the teacher, but the remembering self did. Students are like adults, perhaps even more so, in that they don't always possess the maturity required to discern what's in

their best interests – but that doesn't have to mean we should actively not concern ourselves with what they think or want.

Instead, we can mentally fast forward to their future selves, and do our best to try and listen to what they might wish to say to us from the future.

Of course, this mustn't become an excuse for ignoring everything that happens in the here and now, in the hope that it will be 'worth it' for some unspecified future life (*'No pain, no gain'*). It matters that students get to feel safe and cared for at school, and enjoy their schooldays. It matters that their teachers feel able to present as human and approachable people who can be turned to in a crisis.

However, even when such situations present themselves, it still makes sense to sometimes think of the students we're teaching now in terms of the people they will be as future adults, however hard that may seem at times. We should try and ask ourselves from time to time what we think they might have to say about us then, from that future perspective.

Perhaps wanting their future selves to think highly of us might help us to recalibrate what's best for them in the here and now.

\*Kahneman, D., & Riis, J. (2005) 'Living, and thinking about it: Two perspectives on life' from F.A. Huppert, N. Baylis, & B. Keverne (eds.), *The science of well-being* Oxford University Press



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colin Foster (@colinfoster77) is a Reader in Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics Education at Loughborough University, and has written numerous books and articles for mathematics teachers; for more information, visit [foster77.co.uk](http://foster77.co.uk)

'the



# 4 REASONS TO TRY... Operation Ocelot with Steve Backshall

Why the campaign by the World Land Trust (WLT) Patron, where pupils go outdoors to save the rainforest, is the perfect way for schools to make a difference

## 1 SAVING A NATURAL PARADISE

Operation Ocelot will help WLT partner REGUA protect some of the last 7% of Brazil's Atlantic Forest from logging and hunting. This is one of the world's top five biodiversity hotspots and the home of hundreds of species from ocelots to tapirs, toucans, sloths and more.



## 3 PROTECT HABITATS FOR GOOD

As students discover the outdoors back home, they discover their power to protect nature abroad. Through Operation Ocelot, they join a global movement of fellow young conservationists funding reserves packed with life (and carbon) that REGUA will then safeguard and patrol – for good.

## 4 TEACHER AWARDS

As Steve himself puts it: "If you're a teacher, this is something relatable for your students to engage with – to look at a place they can see every day, like their school, and know that they are saving the same size area of rainforest full of ocelots, toucans, sloths and more."



### Contact:

[worldlandtrust.org](http://worldlandtrust.org)  
Calculate your target, download educational material or send your questions to Steve Backshall

## 2 A FUN, OUTDOORS PURSUIT

The Operation Ocelot process is simple: teachers take students outdoors to measure playgrounds or any other space; you use WLT's online calculator to work out how much you need to raise to protect the same size area in Brazil; and you then work, as a team, to raise your target.

## At a glance

- Nature's protection is one of the most impactful actions for our climate, UN scientists confirmed recently
- Through Operation Ocelot, your students will help to safeguard one of Earth's most biodiverse places
- This project will support them to learn about curriculum subjects like species, ecosystems and environmental challenges



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# Course corrections

It's easy to see spot issues with students' knowledge and essay-writing skills, but harder to diagnose where things went wrong. That's where whole class feedback can help, says **Tom Needham**...

**P**erhaps the most useful aspect of whole class feedback is how it can inform future teaching.

In an ideal world, feedback on extended writing shouldn't require extensive remedial work or lengthy commentary, since by the time students are asked to apply specific components to longer pieces, they should already have reached a state of accuracy and fluency. Errors, problems and misconceptions will have been ironed out during the earlier stages of instruction, in more restrictive practice activities.

If, after having read an essay, there are so many problems that you don't know where to start (poor sentence construction, misunderstandings around the content, lack of paragraphing) this may be a giant warning that there are serious issues with your long-term planning or sequencing.

While it could just be a case of a student not trying hard enough, it's far more likely to be an issue with the teaching.

## Telling versus teaching

Did you spend enough time on the components? Did students practise enough beforehand? Have students been taught and asked to apply specific things in gradually wider and freer contexts? Did you gradually build up complexity from paragraphs, to sections to whole essays? Did you spend enough time on building knowledge before asking them to write?

For essays is riddled with problems, writing extensive feedback is a waste of time. If your students can't do something, telling them *'You need to write better sentences'* or *'Your paragraphing needs some work'* isn't going to magically turn them into coherent writers.

Students don't need to be told what they cannot do; they need to be taught how to do it.

Looking through student work and noting down omissions, problems and common errors as you go can be extremely useful. It may draw your attention to wider sequencing and teaching issues that need addressing and help you realise what you need to teach next. An effective and carefully sequenced curriculum will teach students everything they need to know in order to succeed at GCSE and beyond. The components of their final performance – in the case of English, largely essay writing – will be sequenced and taught so that students gradually develop their expertise.

Yet despite our best efforts at sequencing instruction, students often exhibit a range of problems with their work. When completing whole class feedback, it can therefore be useful to sort issues into 'tell' or 'teach'. Sometimes you just need to tell students something they have forgotten; at other times (perhaps more commonly), you need to teach them how to do something. There's a difference between chronic and complacent errors, and we should react accordingly.

## Highest utility components

Future teaching and practice should be focused on the highest utility components; those bits of knowledge and skills that are transferable, and which students can use in future essays, units, years or Key Stages. Examples of this might include vocabulary, analytical components or essay planning.

We can fix problems in either of two ways – the first of which is

through retrieval practice across multiple lessons. Spelling errors or basic knowledge problems can typically be fixed through retrieval practice questions, ideally repeated over a number of lessons to aid retention. If students can't spell 'Shakespeare' or 'Priestley' (so common!), turn it into a quiz question.

This would also be a good time to pick up on mistakes students have made when answering past papers, or important quotes they might have forgotten. If students have written the wrong thing in response to a particular GCSE question, asking them to repeatedly list the four things that make up a good answer might help.

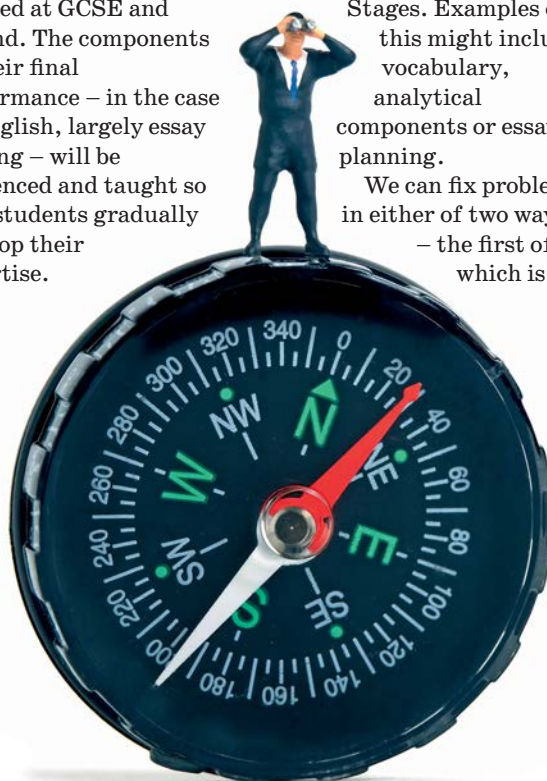
The second way of dealing with problems is via distributed practice across multiple lessons.

Asking students to correct the errors within a single piece of work you have marked probably won't result in much long-term improvement. For real, lasting improvement, students will require distributed practice across many, many lessons.

Your initial instruction should involve lots of worked examples before students engage in guided, and then independent practice, so that they become fluent and able to apply what you've taught them to the widest possible range of tasks.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Needham (@Tom\_Needham\_) is an English teacher, head of department and literacy lead; this article is based on a post originally published at his personal blog; for more information, visit [tomneedhamteach.wordpress.com](http://tomneedhamteach.wordpress.com)



# WRITE THIS WAY

Excellent model essays should be a source of inspiration, not intimidation, insist **Becky Jones** and **Laura Webb**...

**W**e've all been there. The class are ready for their assessment, and you have everything in place, ready for them to succeed.

Their knowledge of the text is secure, they know what methods the writer has used, the context the text exists in and how to write a paragraph. It's been a successful term, and certainly, the students seem prepared. The assessment finishes, you look through their books... and your heart sinks.

The responses lack quality and quantity, and in no way represent the learning that you felt confident had happened in the classroom.

This is a situation which many teachers will be familiar with and one we have faced often, at many stages of our careers. I once watched a trainee teacher deliver a lovely series of lessons on creative writing, exposing students to excellent prose, teaching them how to vary sentence structure and embedding vocabulary throughout the lessons.

When they completed their mini-assessment, he was horrified: each student had written just a few lines. I asked him if they knew how to use paragraphs, and the penny dropped when he realised – he had only ever shown them short examples. The students were dutifully mimicking the successful exemplars he had shared

with them; the problem was that these were just a couple of sentences long.

## High expectations

The most powerful tool in GCSE English Literature is to show our students great quality essays that truly demonstrate the excellence we are aiming for. We are firm believers that high expectations of students are paramount to student success in their final exams; this is true of behaviour and attitudes to learning, oracy and discussion, revision, study habits – every component

different when put into practice. Whatever your department's analytical acronym of choice may be (PETER, PEE, PEA, PEMEW, SIR, etc), until the students know exactly how the 'P' in PETER needs to look in reality, then it will stay as little more than a 'P' in their minds.

Most students will be able to tell you that they start with a point, and then they add their evidence. But until they know how to write that point effectively, and add that evidence to support

knowledge they have and apply it to the task at hand.

## Clear success criteria

In any classroom practice, if we don't give students clear success criteria to work towards, we can expect variable results which may, or may not, meet our expectations of a given task.

***“High expectations of students are paramount to student success in their final exams”***

that makes up an excellent learning experience.

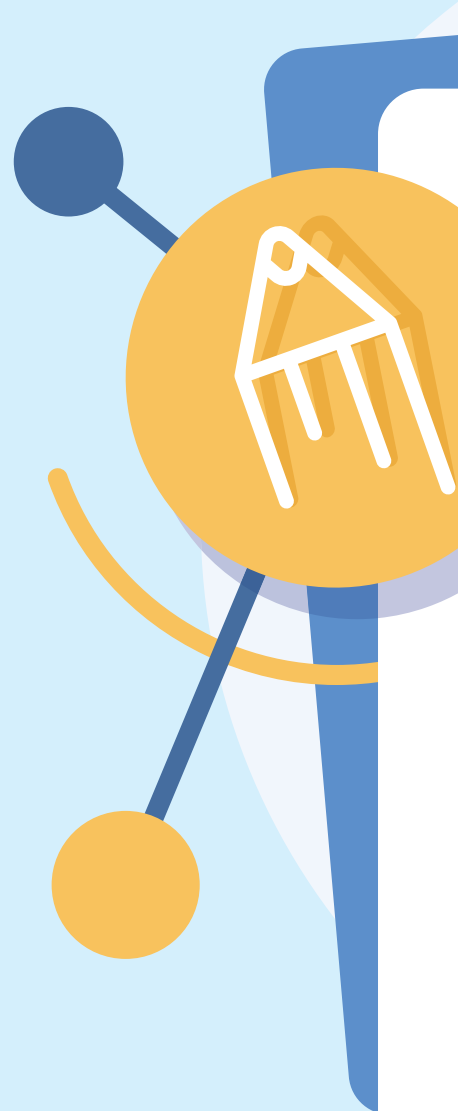
But we often see that with model essays, teachers don't show students the full extent of what's truly possible. Perhaps it's a fear of over-pitching the lesson, scaring the students, flaunting your own abilities or simply not having the time to write a high-level response. However, the truth is that you will never ensure your learners achieve excellence unless they see what excellence looks like.

As with most things in education – and life itself – instructions on the page of a textbook or the whiteboard look very

said point without it feeling awkward or contrived, then the acronym has little value.

We would argue that having the acronym is akin to having a recipe – until you begin to put the ingredients together, you have little more than a neat stack of different food types. How many times have we Googled the final image of a completed recipe so we can see where we're heading, before we've truly been able to start?

It's exactly the same with models for students – without seeing an example of the finished article, they won't know how to transfer the





As such, when using model essays we will often give students specific elements to look for. This helps to eliminate the potential for students to read through the essay, but do nothing helpful with it. We encourage learners to select key ideas and phrases, and perhaps also methods, that they think they could write about in their own work – and then we actively look for these

elements when giving feedback as they start to compose their responses.

Whilst this may at first appear as if we are asking students to learn snippets of essays and simply regurgitate them, this isn't the case. What we are doing is exposing them to high quality writing that shows them the standard that they are aiming for, and asking them to transpose elements of what they have been

## 7 THINGS GOOD MODEL ESSAYS SHOULD DO

1. Exemplify the standard required for different grade ranges in line with exam board criteria.
2. Show students how to include the evidence that they have chosen (embedding and introducing quotations).
3. Include elements where all of the assessment objectives have been used so that students can begin to identify where these elements are within the writing and understand how they have been included so that they can emulate the style.
4. Use challenging vocabulary and phrasing (suitable to the ability level).
5. Have a balance of ideas that have been explicitly taught within lessons and include some different/more obscure ideas that pupils can grasp on to.
6. Show how an argument can be used and returned to throughout a response.
7. Make considered use of the extract (if provided) and the whole text, to show students how to utilise each successfully

shown into their own work.

There is never a time where we would ask students to learn an essay and re-write it. Rather, we are equipping them with the tools to craft their own individual responses to questions, with clear success criteria being followed, so that they can use the knowledge and skills they have been taught within the classroom to their utmost – leading to the excellence to which we want them all to aspire.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This article is extracted from the introduction to *Essays for Excellence*, by Becky Jones and Laura Webb (£16, John Catt) – a collection of model GCSE English literature essays to support students and teachers in achieving success. Texts covered include *Macbeth*, *An Inspector Calls*, *A Christmas Carol* and comparative poetry

# “You don’t need to travel far for adventure...”

Nick McCavish explains why this time of year is perfect for acquainting your students with the thrills and excitement of the great outdoors



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

Conway Centres: Anglesey is the perfect location for young people to come together and make life-long memories. Located within 169 acres of National Trust land, and within close proximity to all of North Wales’ hotspots, adventure is never far away...

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### Why should schools consider Conway Centres: Anglesey for a residential?

Situated in beautiful natural surroundings, we are ideally placed for young people to be instantly immersed in all that the great outdoors has to offer. Where else can young people explore stunning coastlines, discover renowned glacial valleys and visit one of the largest mountains in the UK – all from staying at just one place? There’s no need for passports when adventure is on your doorstep...

### Great, when should we visit?

We’ll let you in on a secret – at Conway Centres, autumn and winter is our favourite time of year! We’re open all year round for young people to enjoy life-changing experiences, and while a winter or autumn residential



brings more challenging weather, what better way is there to encourage young people to thrive in the natural environment? Young people always leave our centres having learnt something new; by visiting in the autumn or winter months, you will fully reap the benefits for the rest of the academic year.

### What are the benefits of a residential at Conway Centres?

When young people visit, they take away far more than just fantastic



**ABOUT NICK:**  
Nick McCavish is Head of Centres, overseeing Conway Centres’ four residential sites



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memories. Our residential visits offer young people diverse, high quality experiences that can enhance their classroom learning and open up opportunities they may not receive otherwise. Whether you choose to bring your Y7s for a transition to secondary course, your Y10s for a geography exploration residential or your Y12s to prepare for their A Levels, all our programmes have clear learning outcomes.

### What else do schools love about Conway Centres?

Each time schools visit they’re welcomed back by the same familiar faces. They tell us that our staff are a significant highlight of their stay, being supportive, friendly, and professional. No child gets left behind; we employ only the top tier of highly qualified, experienced staff who are industry leaders in outdoor education. From competing in sailing championships to ice climbing down frozen cliffs, our staff live and breathe adventure!

## What’s the difference?

- + No need to buy or renew your passports – adventure is never far away when you visit us!
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# CPD with substance

Too much CPD amounts to little more than tinkering with routines, says **Ed Carlin** – when it should be a tool for further uncovering a teacher's professional gifts...

**B**ig Ed? He's fine. He does the football and he's on a couple of the school development groups. I'll meet with him tomorrow and we can quickly sign off his CPD sheets...

Imagine a school culture so lacklustre that CPD meetings are annual events, wherein a faculty head lists some examples of extracurricular contributions by a member of staff, before making reference to a few generic targets for the year ahead. Targets which, more often than not, involve improvements to lesson planning, getting involved in school development groups and organising resources for Y11 assessments.

## Reigniting the passion

Surely, we can do better than this? We need to address the reality that for many schools, CPD remains a tickbox exercise – something to get out

of the way so we can 'get back to the real work'.

Too often, when I speak with teachers about their experiences of CPD, I'm told that it's fairly one-sided. They may have once felt committed to the idea of developing their practice, but over the years, seen it become a meaningless, rushed process they've had to complete just to evidence that they've fulfilled whatever their contractual hours demanded of them at the time.

CPD should be so much more. It ought to be the means by which we reignite our passion for the job. Teachers up and down the country should be supported and encouraged to access whatever opportunities are out there to become the best they can be. How then, might

we improve the culture of schools where CPD has become a mandatory, yet lifeless exercise?

## Genuine interest

I'd suggest it's all about relationships. In order to bring about excellent CPD, we must look to develop healthy CPD relationships between teachers and their associated leaders. Faculty heads must commit to taking a genuine interest in the development of their staff – one that goes beyond the needs of the faculty improvement plan, or even the school improvement plan.

Healthy CPD relationships can be identified by the level of passion and purpose shown by a teacher when embarking on a particular aspect of development, and the level of support and challenge offered by said teacher's faculty head.

To define what 'meaningful' CPD is, let's first look at what it *isn't*:

- Reading but not implementing any of the learning/ideas
- A revising of procedures, such as photocopying, tidying, filing, etc.
- Having discussions with colleagues that produce no meaningful outcomes
- Simply 'learning for learning's sake'

The above may, at first, seem like attempts to engage with some form of professional development, but scratch below the surface and you'll find that at best, they're just 'add-ons' to the standards and expectations of the job spec. Too often, however, this is what you'll discover when

going through the records of annual CPD meetings that have actually taken place.

## Purposeful process

To truly claim that it has a meaningful and purposeful approach to CPD, a school should offer something more along the following lines:

- Strategies for improving performance in assessments
- Development training to improve teaching, learning and understanding of assessment standards
- Professional engagement with learning theory, with evidence of implementation
- Development in terms of both departmental and school-wide priorities

Start to unpack any of these, and you'll be closer to a culture where CPD is an ongoing, organic and purposeful process; a culture where every teacher has opportunities to mould their ambitions and passions into better learning, better experiences and better outcomes.

Coaching and mentoring should actively support and contribute to the acquisition of new skills. Only then can teachers develop as creative, innovative, resourceful, confident and reflective practitioners.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ed Carlin is a deputy headteacher at a Scottish secondary school, having worked in education for 15 years and held teaching roles at schools in Northern Ireland and England

# 5 REASONS TO TRY... NST Travel Group



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

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and travel app, 'My Tour Manager', which gives you an overview of your school trip information and helps keep you on track with admin. You'll be able to download free templates for your risk assessments, access your trip paperwork and personalised tour checklist details, what you need to do and by when – all online and in one place. Whilst away, you'll

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# School visits revisited

**Daniel Harvey** presents a refresher for teachers keen to organise their next school trip – because for most, it'll have been quite a while since the last one...

**T**he novelty of a seemingly-normal new school year has seen staffroom chatter turn tentatively to the topic of planning trips outside the classroom. Even – whisper it – proper school visits abroad...

Yet while many of us have become rather good at online teaching and overseeing hybrid lessons over these past two years, our trip-planning expertise has taken something of a backseat. So if you're needing a timely refresher on how to plan the perfect, stress-free school trip, read on...

## Learning and enrichment

The first thing to note is that all varieties of school trip – from simple afternoon jaunts to take in the local art gallery, right up to the 5-day Barcelona extravaganza – are popular with students. Very popular. Discussions among teacher friends indicate that while most of them could barely remember a specific classroom lesson when they were at school, they could all speak with genuine enthusiasm about school visits they'd been on. The question we should therefore be asking is how we can recreate that same joy for our pupils – who surely deserve it all the more, following the tribulations of the pandemic.

School visits broadly fall into one of two categories – those that are an integral part of your curriculum (e.g. geography fieldwork),



and trips which offer enrichment opportunities that complement classroom work by giving students different perspectives or boosting their engagement.

Meet with your school trip co-ordinator to ensure you're clear as to the charging policy for any given trip, and the numbers needed to make it financially viable. You don't want to announce it, only to then withdraw it due to a cash crisis. Your school trip co-ordinator should also be able to guide you through the process of securing approval for the trip. Some schools require approval from governors; at others, the headteacher or delegated school visit co-ordinator may have the final say.

## Coming up with the perfect plan

Non-negotiable in getting any school visit off to a great start is thorough planning. Use the school calendar to make sure that your proposed school trip is well timed to avoid parents' evenings, exams or any clashes with other

trips taking place at the same time.

Having secured a date, lock it down in the school diary and start getting quotes for transport, admission, accommodation (if needed) and so forth. Your school or trust will already have a list of suppliers and service providers – such as coach companies – they use regularly. You don't have to go with the cheapest quote, but you'll need to justify your reasons for not doing so. Perhaps a more expensive supplier will be better placed to ensure the trip is successful for students with SEND?

## Allowing time to take it all in

Now comes the fun bit – actually planning the visit itself. Here, however, I would suggest caution. Think back to when you were new to the profession – did you ever over-plan your lessons, to the point that the bell would ring with the 'best bits' yet to be covered?

This can easily happen with any school visit. Okay,

so you've devised a great itinerary that takes in the Tower of London, the Houses of Parliament and the British Museum in the morning, followed by the Natural History Museum after lunch. What could possibly go wrong? Well, like many a military strategist before you, you may find that taking London takes time...

Groups of students travel more slowly than you'll be used to. They need comfort breaks, somewhere to eat their lunch and supervised road crossings, so don't go planning too many activities in a single day – otherwise, you'll end up rushing from one stop to the next without getting to enjoy any of them. Give your students time to absorb what they're seeing, and they'll benefit from it all the more.

Finally, launch your school visit to your chosen group only. If you're inviting multiple classes, have them find out at the same time, if possible, and be ready to answer lots of questions.

If you can be certain of one thing, it's that a well-planned school trip will benefit teachers and students alike for far longer than the time investment demanded by said planning.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniel Harvey is a GCSE and A Level science teacher and lead on behaviour, pastoral and school culture for an inner city academy

# Speaking up

**Dr Marcella McCarthy** points out the risks of letting student voice languish, and explains why strengthening it is one of the best things schools can do...

**S**ince 2014, the DfE has stated that schools are obliged 'To provide opportunities for pupils to be consulted on matters affecting them or contribute to decision-making in the school'.

What does this look like in real life? The questions Ofsted highlights in its 'Pupil Voice' questionnaire are disarmingly bland. Options to rate for accuracy include *'I enjoy school'*, *'Teachers help me to do my best'*, *'My teachers give me work that challenges me'*, and *'I enjoy learning at this school'*. Questions about bullying are limited to asking if bullying is dealt with well by staff, and whether students feel safe.

Student councils are the norm in many schools, but their focus is often as uninspiring as Ofsted's questions. It's rare for them to be consulted at a strategic level, and they're often seen by students themselves as not worth bothering with, because of their lack of impact.

## What changed with lockdown

The student council at the Royal Latin School (RLS) in Buckingham was no exception. Meetings weren't frequent – perhaps once a term – typically lasted less than an hour over lunchtime and would be attended by fewer than 20 on average, from a school of 1,350 pupils. Discussions would often touch on the quality of the school's canteen food.

When the practicalities of organising online learning while supporting the most vulnerable suddenly

assumed priority, we anticipated that student voice might become a less pressing area. How wrong we were!

As UK schools closed for months at a time and exams were cancelled, innovation and creativity blossomed. Initially over-cautious ourselves, we created lesson materials that students could access online, but no 'live' lessons. Safeguarding concerns meant we were anxious regarding protocol, at a time when our staff expertise was still developing. But when we surveyed students for their thoughts on our teaching, they had plenty of suggestions.

By the time of the second lockdown, student feedback had caused us to seriously raise our game. Online lessons became the norm, and our teachers – only recently introduced to Chromebooks and cloud-based infrastructure – quickly became confident in looking for new ways to teach, often sharing expertise with each other.

## Responding to 'Black Lives Matter'

In recent years we've seen an explosion of activism among children and teenagers. From climate change campaigners, to protests that 'Black Lives Matter' and those joining silent vigils for Sarah Everard, young people have told us that the adult world and its adult presuppositions, aren't working.

The murder of George Floyd in May 2020 was an issue that affected our students deeply. Had we been in school, we might

have held assemblies about it, or discussed it in form time. Teachers would have been in charge. As it was, we watched as momentum built around an anti-racist movement that would clearly have huge implications for schools and felt helpless.

Online networking with students saved us. We formed a virtual working party in a Google Classroom where students and staff could share links to articles and film recommendations, discussing frankly their concerns regarding the dangers of the school, like all schools, having an implicitly racist culture. Current and former students spoke via video about micro-aggressions they had experienced themselves, both in school and throughout wider society. We then came up with a strategic plan moving forwards, and built this into our School Development Plan.

## What changed with lockdown

We learned a lot from this virtual working party, including that the well-meaning assumptions of our teaching staff were often wrong. That showing certain films, or teaching certain books had caused some students distress. That it *did* matter if you got names wrong, or avoided using them because you were

unclear as to their pronunciation; and that commenting on hairstyles could cause students to experience agonies of self-consciousness.

We heard from students whose parents had advised





them not to call out racism in case it interfered with how they were seen by others. We discovered the discomfort of students glanced at by peers in class at every reference to a Black person in a text. We unearthed details concerning a bully in the lunch queue no one had reported, because they were too embarrassed to repeat said bully's racist jibe.

Upon returning to school in January 2021 for an INSET day, all staff were shown a video presentation created by the students on the working party which conveyed their experiences, and explained why anti-racism ought to be a school priority. Feedback from staff variously described it as *'Outstanding'*, *'Thought-provoking, insightful and helpful'*, and noted that *'It has made me think hard about how I teach'*.

## Responding to 'Everyone's Invited'

When the 'Everyone's Invited' website first went live, our safeguarding team searched through it to see if we could find any references to our school and found one, which alleged an out-of-school assault by students from a local university some years previously. The student concerned hadn't felt able to report the assault to staff at either institution. Our response was to put in place an anonymous reporting mechanism, which soon encouraged a group of girls to tell us about specific issues they had experienced, up to and including sexual assault in school. This soon became

the basis of our networking action concerning peer-on-peer abuse.

The resulting network cut across year groups, friendship groups and form groups, enabling serious discussion at a level we hadn't seen before. Initial social media contact between a small group of students soon developed into a survey owned and run by students, whereby girls

were invited to contribute their experiences anonymously, in the knowledge that their testimonies would be shared with school staff.

When the girls who had taken ownership of this initial network met with us to discuss what had emerged, we found we had a great deal of testimony to work with – including incidents girls had originally thought would be deemed 'trivial', or which they were worried would be judged on the basis of initial online flirting with someone who then pushed boundaries.

Discovering that others of different ages had shared similar experiences meant that some young women felt more able to disclose details of what had happened to them without the cloak of anonymity, enabling us to take crucial safeguarding actions, connect incidents and investigate them.

We also put in place extra training for all staff regarding peer-on-peer sexual abuse.

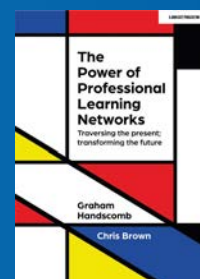
## Tangible excitement

Having adopted the model of a school governing body, our school council now has five subcommittees, each named after the school's 'LATIN' teaching and learning philosophy -

Leadership, Aspiration, Teamwork, Innovation, and Nurturing. Year groups meet first as a unit in each committee, and then with older years to exchange ideas before the subcommittees take proposals to full council.

Experienced sixth formers chair these meetings with a structured system of agendas and minutes, all shared on the student council Google Classroom. These meetings take place every couple of weeks, and there's a tangible sense of excitement to them. The canteen is still discussed occasionally, but larger issues now tend to dominate – how to create a stronger and more enabling culture; how best to celebrate diversity in school; how to transform the future curriculum.

The council has never been so popular. Students are asking to join the working parties and collaborate with teachers. Student council itself has grown from under 20 students to over a hundred and is still getting bigger. Working more closely with out students has led to a stronger focus on student wellbeing and engagement, which we plan to build into our school's permanent changes as we continue to navigate the post-pandemic world.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Marcella McCarthy is a university lecturer and former headteacher; this article is based on an edited extract of her essay 'Networking inside and out – using student voice to improve professional practice', which appears in the book *The Power of Professional Learning Networks*, edited by Graham Handscomb and Chris Brown (John Catt, £15)

**“School councils are often seen by students as not worth bothering with, because of their lack of impact”**



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# FOCUS ON: HUMANITIES

What factors affect the teaching of RE in schools with a religious character? Do modern readings of historical figures lack nuance.exe? Find out in this issue's close-up on those subjects with people, places and culture at their heart...

**What content should we be teaching, and how should we be teaching it, when it comes to humanities subjects?**

## THE AGENDA:

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Andy Lewis considers how the study of other religions and worldviews can be sensitively and productively approached within faith schools

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Many students will finish their geography journey before they start KS4 – so what do we really want them to know by then, asks Jo Coles...

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Elena Stevens takes issue with the tendency among students to lionise or demonise historical figures, and how this can lead to an oversimplified view of the past...



# Respect, courage & SINCERITY

**Andy Lewis** considers how the study of other religions and worldviews can be sensitively and productively approached within faith schools

**F**aith schools', or schools with a religious character as they're formally known, have the option to teach their own curriculum for RE, in keeping with their designated religion. That's in contrast to community schools and academies, which usually adopt their Locally Agreed Syllabus.

It's a complex system, but setting aside the debate of whether such schools should have a place within the current education landscape, there's another area that merits discussion. For many, the prospect of students learning a distinct RE curriculum within faith schools is an unacceptable state of affairs, yet it's happening right now – so what is the experience actually like in practice?

## Ongoing debate

It's worth noting that there's still much debate within the wider RE community about the aims and purpose of the subject itself. There remains even considerable disagreement over what the subject should actually be called!

Recently, some progress has been made on working towards a National Entitlement (since RE isn't part of the National Curriculum, but legally required to be taught) and a 'Worldviews' approach, which presents a new way of tackling the subject and the issues contained within it.

Yet it would be a mistake to think that schools with

a religious character exist outside of these developments, and are still simply teaching the subject as they always have – as an otherwise bygone form of religious instruction – without getting involved in such debates.

The Church of England, for example, has published its own Statement of Entitlement, produced a resource (for use in all schools) titled 'Understanding Christianity' and has recently been promoting an approach

new document, given how it reflects much of the latest thinking on curriculum and education more widely. For instance, progress is now defined in the new Catholic School Inspections framework as *'knowing more, remembering more and doing more.'*

## 'A grammar of dialogue'

To summarise my own view of what 'Catholic RE' should be, I'd look to paraphrase the 2012 RECD – *"Academic for all, catechesis for some"*.

**"We must be careful to approach RE in a way that isn't exclusive or inappropriate"**

it calls 'Balanced RE' – the latter of which seeks to give equal weighting to the three disciplines of theology, philosophy and human/social sciences (see [bit.ly/ts117-re1](http://bit.ly/ts117-re1)). These resources and approaches have been adopted by many, including a number of LAs.

Likewise, the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales are soon to publish their new Religious Education Directory (RED), which will deliver a fully updated curriculum for EYFS to KS5, replacing the last version published in 2012 as the RECD. It's clear that a considerable amount of work has gone into the

providing a 'grammar of dialogue' – a profound and meaningful way to relate to others (see [bit.ly/ts117-re2](http://bit.ly/ts117-re2)). Pope Francis has since expanded on the idea, proposing three broad principles to help facilitate it: **respect** for one's identity and that of others; **courage** to accept differences; and **sincerity** of intentions.

This cuts to the heart of what RE in Catholic schools aims to do – which is first and foremost to understand the Catholic faith. In the process of doing this, however, the intention is for students to also find a means of entering into dialogue with others who don't necessarily share the same worldview. This provides a way for students to explore deep questions concerning their own existence, while simultaneously discovering ways of expressing themselves and their own beliefs, and understanding why the responses of others may be different to their own.

## Authentic teaching

The latest RED treats the subject as having a 'narrative heart', reflecting the recent work of, among others, psychology professor Dan Willingham and the education academic Christine Counsel – as well as the prior insights of GK Chesterton.

It also proposes dedicating a section of the curriculum each year to 'Dialogue and Encounter' which is where the principal study of other faiths and worldviews is to be found. Not that these are

My personal faith was confirmed to me during my study of theology at university, as it was the academic tradition of the Church that really drew me into a relationship with God. To this day, I love grappling with philosophy, and I also love biblical studies. 'Catechesis', on the other hand, refers to religious instruction – and when only 63% of the students in Catholic schools actually identify as Catholics, we must be careful to approach RE in a way that isn't exclusive or inappropriate for those of other faiths or worldviews.

The Church suggests that as schools, we need to be



entirely new ideas – as far back as 1964, ‘Ecclesiam Suam’ saw Pope St Paul VI outline how Catholics might enter into dialogue by understanding their own faith first, and then reaching out to others.

The new curriculum deliberately offers a degree of flexibility that will, for example, allow for the study of diverse Christian traditions to better reflect schools’ student intake, and by actively offering a choice of when and how to cover other faiths and worldviews.

It states that at minimum, Judaism, Islam and a Dharmic pathway should be studied over the course of KS3 – yet crucially, unlike the rest of the curriculum, it doesn’t prescribe any specific content. I see that as a recognition that the teaching of such faiths within schools should be authentic.

### Depth of study

Following the introduction of the option to study a second religion at GCSE, there have been some accusations that a form of ‘Christian Judaism’ has been spotted in exam papers and students’ responses. In a recent training session, however, it was emphasised that *‘the Judaism should be Jewish, the Buddhism Buddhist’*, and so on.

For those concerned that the RED proposes devoting just one section out of six to other faiths and worldviews, it’s worth remembering that Catholic schools must dedicate at least 10% of their curriculum time to RE, and will therefore sometimes have as much as three times the curriculum space for RE compared to other schools. This therefore allows for a

similar depth of study into other faiths and worldviews as might be seen in other schools – particularly given the likely overlap in terms of the resources and textbooks used for those parts of the course.

I’d argue that good RE teaching within Catholic schools share much with good RE teaching elsewhere. The three principles of respect, courage and sincerity shared by Pope Francis can, and indeed should be practised

in all RE classrooms. To me, every young person deserves to experience these things in a very real sense, in order to help them understand the complex and diverse world they find themselves within.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Lewis is director of RE at St Bonaventure’s, East London and the author of *100 Ideas for Secondary Teachers: Outstanding RE Lessons* (Bloomsbury, £14.99); follow him at @andylewis\_re or visit [mrlewisre.co.uk](http://mrlewisre.co.uk)

## READING THE RED

The new ‘Religious Education Directory’ (2022) will replace two previous versions of the ‘Religious Education Curriculum Directory’ (1996, 2012). These documents brought Catholic RE into keeping with developments elsewhere in wider RE, by introducing levels for assessment purposes in 2006 and setting out clear and rigorous curriculum content. Previously, the RECD wasn’t set out like other curriculum documents, with the result that how to go about implementing it was left open to interpretation – largely by publishers.

The new RED, due for publication in October 2022, has been worked on by academics, Diocese advisors and teachers, following extensive consultation led by the Association for the Teachers of Catholic RE. From the outset, it will be more readily accessible by teachers and schools, containing as it does clear content and outcomes, together with narrative and spiralled content. Publishers are expected to start releasing textbooks informed by the RED from early 2023.

# “Global history broadens horizons”

Laura Aitken-Burt explains the importance of teaching global history to your students, and how you can integrate this into your KS3 curriculum



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

The second edition of the Key Stage 3 *Knowing History* series from Collins gives all pupils access to a rich and ambitious knowledge-based curriculum that helps them think critically and deeply about the past – now with five new global history units in each book.

### Why is it crucial that all students learn about global history?

History should be about broadening horizons, widening perspectives and providing context to help us understand others and better understand ourselves. For centuries, history has been taught from a national perspective, as focusing on the achievements of one country over another was seen to bind the citizens of new nation-states under a shared historical narrative.

But learning history this way leads to narrow understandings of the world. By focusing so much on Europe, huge parts of the global population have had the pasts of their ancestors, at least implicitly, deemed as secondary. We need students of the globalised 21st century to have a wider knowledge base about the history beyond the country they live in.

### Why is now the right time to start teaching global history?

No country has ever existed in a vacuum – there have always been interactions that transgress modern borders – but many history teachers have faced a lack of age-appropriate resources and written materials. Some histories might be harder to research than others due to lack of surviving source material, but we must also explore, discuss and analyse the silences in the record.

### I want to teach more global history but I'm not sure where to start...

The KS3 curriculum's flexibility



makes it a good place to start teaching global history, compared to the current specification constraints affecting exam year groups. There will be some students not taking GCSE history, so what are they going to understand about the world by the end of their KS3 journey? British or European history should be just one part of a larger global story.

### How does *Knowing History* support students to think critically and deeply about the past?

The new second editions of



#### ABOUT LAURA:

Laura Aitken-Burt is a classics, history and politics teacher based in London, as well as a practising archaeologist

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*Knowing History* present simple, chronological narratives relating to a range of world history topics for the first time. The topics chosen and depth of the narrative will give students and teachers the foundations of world cultures they may not have formally studied before.

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# The geography students need at KS3

Many students will finish their geography journey before they start KS4 – so what do we really want them to know by then, asks **Jo Coles...**

**N**aturally, in our hearts we all wish every student would take geography further – but for whatever reason, many will leave their geographical education experience at the end of KS3.

We have such a small amount of time in which to inspire our pupils and get them to love the subject as much as we do, be geographically curious, and learn essential topics, concepts, processes, skills, ‘geocapabilities’, etc. How can we possibly reduce, constrain and curtail such a rich and rewarding discipline?

## Making a stand

As teachers, it’s our responsibility and privilege to make these decisions for our students. Yes, we may

have statutory orders, but they’re skeletal, not prescriptive or restrictive. All curriculum-making involves decisions, which we must justify, and power struggles as to what ‘makes the cut’.

We cannot possibly include it all, but we must not say ‘anything goes’. We have to make a stand for what we believe will ultimately be the most beneficial, so that if learners do stop their geographical education at KS3, we’ll still have done our utmost to give them the very best foundational understanding.

What do you feel is essential, integral or vital? What would you feel embarrassed for students to not know and understand? I’ve had this conversation many times and had some interesting answers...

## Core concepts

While I feel curricula should be moulded to individual contexts, I do believe there are some core concepts underpinning geography which everyone should know. My personal ‘top five’, in no particular order, would be:

### 1. Development

Why development is uneven and factors controlling it, because this underpins most geography. For example, in order to fully understand the impact of hazards and their mitigation, or migration crises, global trade and so forth, we must first understand development, which

interlinks with demographics, economics, politics and other important areas.

Through this we can teach the crucial skills of resource analysis, extrapolation, bias-checking, decision-making and critical thought, and begin to develop a better understanding of real places.

### 2. The ability to ‘read’ landscapes

Whether physical or human, and with it the ability to interpret, analyse, assess, describe and understand landscapes and locations through whatever means (such as via a geographic information system, map skills, image analysis, sketching or literature).

### 3. Interdependence and sustainability

Awareness that we are just one tiny, near-insignificant part of this planet, yet also its consumer and custodian. This ties into understanding resource use, climate change, future scenarios, conservation and related issues. An important part of our remit is to empower learners so that they can understand present and future problems, consider potential solutions and not just believe everything they see in the news!

### 4. Local knowledge

An understanding of where you are, and the factors influencing your local area and its uniqueness. How has it been moulded by geology, geomorphology and society? How does it compare to elsewhere? This can help students build a better understanding of context,

culture, demographics and settlement choices.

### 5. Population pressures

Included in this is learning around patterns, problems, urban change and migration, as well as the challenging of misconceptions – for example, the widely-held assumption that ‘All migration is bad.’

## Hard decisions

It’s tough to narrow down. I love geography, and want all students to understand so much – hazards, coasts, weather, regions, power struggles and more besides. Our aim should be to foster curiosity while building specific knowledge; far from being opposed, the two are actually inextricable.

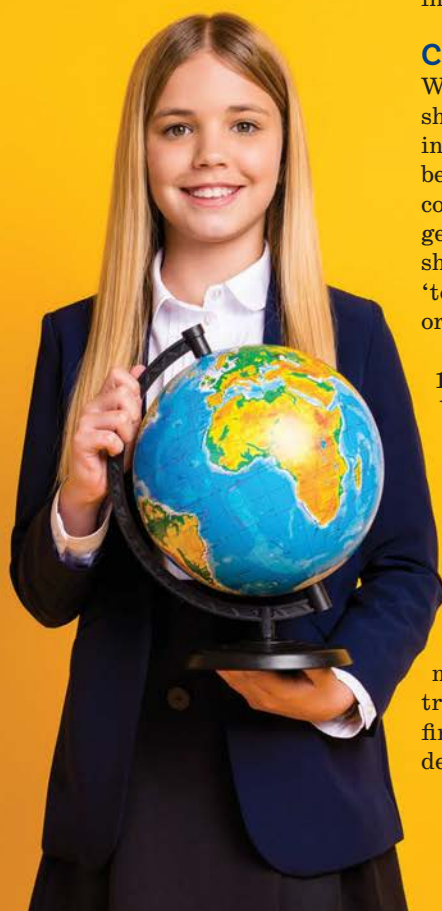
In essence, we could perhaps summarise the above with a quote from my mum – “To know where you are (in all senses), where you want to go and how to get there” – whether the ‘there’ is a physical space, or a metaphorical destination like a plastic-free world.

Geography, according to Professor Iain Stewart, is “The only subject that has the bandwidth to create the interdisciplinary scientists and decision-makers that we need.” So we need to choose what makes the cut very carefully.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jo Coles is an experienced teacher, head of department, and assistant head teacher; geographer, RGS Fellow and Chartered Geography Teacher, GA consultant and author



# Love them or HATE THEM

**Elena Stevens** takes issue with the tendency among students to lionise or demonise historical figures, and how this can lead to an oversimplified view of the past...

Perhaps inspired by their experiences of social media, young people seem obsessed with binary notions of 'good' and 'bad'. Many students appear to be convinced that historical figures can only ever be one or the other, and enthusiastically devise hierarchies of 'good/evil', 'hero/anti-hero' and 'success/failure' – often on the basis of some gruesome atrocity or outstanding accomplishment.

Essentially, students want to know whether the individuals they're studying ought to be admired or vilified. Was General Haig the 'butcher' or 'hero' of the Somme? Should Churchill's achievements as Prime Minister be celebrated, or his murky imperialism condemned? Was Boudicca a great warrior queen, or the brains behind a brutal ethnic cleansing?

## Binary lenses

This dichotomising approach is problematic for a number of reasons. Not only does it flatten much of the complexity that makes history interesting and relevant to us today, but it speaks to a wider tendency amongst young people to view the world through over-simplified, binary lenses.

One of the best ways of challenging these ideas is to offer a more holistic view of people from the past, while also encouraging students to explore the experiences of individuals – both well-

known and ideally also lesser-known – who they've been aware of throughout their lives, rather than simply focusing on the moments for which they are best known.

Take 'Nelson's mistress', for example. Emma Hamilton was one of the 18th century's

most famous women, but a quick Google search gives the impression that Hamilton is a significant figure only by virtue of her affair with 'naval hero' Lord Nelson.

In actual fact, Hamilton was an actress, dancer, artist's model and the originator of the 'attitudes'

– a performance style in which she imitated ancient Greek statues for her classically-obsessed audiences.

Her story might not fit traditional narratives of historical significance, but I believe it's important to give students the chance to





## “By taking a step back, we can see that no one individual can be deemed simply ‘good/bad’”

encounter and consider different aspects of social and cultural history, particularly when exam specifications are so heavily weighted towards political and military history.

### More nuance

I would encourage students to chart the ups and downs of Hamilton’s life, in order to help them understand in a more nuanced way someone who was a complex individual, as well as 18th century life and culture more generally.

Students could study the letters a young Emma Hamilton sent to Charles Greville, which reveal an endearing infatuation with the older artist. They might then read excerpts from the diaries of William Hamilton (her antiquarian husband) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, both of whom waxed lyrical about her ‘attitude’ performances.

Finally, students might consider the rather condescending approach taken by contemporary media, with caricaturists of the time portraying Hamilton as idle, overweight and undeserving of her advanced social position.

Charting the highs and lows of Hamilton’s biography lets students view the broader sweep of this individual’s life, while noting the various influences that acted upon it. Posing questions like ‘*At what points in Hamilton’s life did she achieve greatest success?*’, ‘*Why were things so bad for Hamilton at x point?*’ and perhaps even ‘*When do you feel most sympathy with Hamilton?*’ can help students better appreciate that ordinary lives are characterised by

constant fluctuation.

By taking a step back, we can see that no one individual can be deemed simply ‘good/bad’ or a ‘success/failure’.

### The mother of Caribbean carnival

Of course, there are numerous other case studies for which a similar approach might be appropriate; the key is to ensure that there’s sufficient source material around which to build a full historical enquiry.

Claudia Jones, the ‘mother of Caribbean carnival’, is one such individual who fits the bill. Jones endured significant discrimination as a Trinidadian-born immigrant, before she channelled her frustrations into the campaign for Black rights and representation and eventually established the Notting Hill Carnival in 1959. Her story can be helpful for illustrating the stop-start nature of Black British activism during the mid-20th century.

Similarly, the life of political dissident Aruna Asaf Ali exemplifies the complicated trajectory of the Indian independence movement. French diplomat and cross-dresser, the Chevalier d’Éon, helps us build a more rounded picture of life in pre-revolutionary France. Like those of Hamilton and Jones, these life stories are complex and fundamentally unpredictable, fitting neither the narrative of triumph or disaster.

### Can we... humanise Hitler?

When taking this approach, however, we must avoid building such enquiries around individuals for

whom there are no redeeming features. It’s useful to identify the ups and downs in the personal histories of people like Hamilton and Jones, because doing so affords valuable opportunities to emphasise the fleeting nature of perceived successes and failures.

Conversely, it wouldn’t be appropriate to identify evidence of ‘success’ or ‘good’ in the lives of, say, Hitler or Stalin – nor indeed to encourage students to find justification in wider narratives for such individuals’ abhorrent behaviour.

Every year, my students come across photographs of a dashing young Stalin while reading about his penchant for Westerns, and find out that Hitler’s beloved mother died when he was just 18. From these discoveries, some begin to build a case for Stalin having been less than purely evil, or Hitler deserving sympathy for ‘the things he went through’. This is not the intended outcome of my approach!

I remain confident, though, that by taking a more holistic approach to the study of individuals in the past, we can go some way towards ‘humanising’ the history that we deliver to our students. Exposing young people to these kinds of stories will ultimately encourage them to develop a more complex, nuanced understanding of history.

It will also (hopefully!) serve to challenge some of the problematic dichotomies to which young people cling when it comes to the analysis of human character.

## HISTORY, HUMANISED

Three lesson activities that can lend a personal dimension to your studies of notable historical individuals...

### 1 The living graph

Students plot episodes from an individual’s life onto a graph with a ‘y’ axis ranging from ‘happy/successful’ at the top to ‘unhappy/unsuccessful’ at the bottom, and a chronological ‘x’ axis increasing in years from left to right. This allows students to chart the person’s highs and lows over time and analyse the impact of wider contemporary events on their life.

### 2. Decision-maker

Students consider how they themselves might have responded to the choices faced by those in the past. Present students with a series of dilemmas faced by historical figures and offer various options for dealing with them. How closely do the students’ decisions match those of the individual(s) in question? What factors would they have had to take into account when making their decisions, and how did things change as a result?

### 3. Counterfactual history

Students consider how the experiences of those in the past might have differed if they had taken a different course of action. Speculate about alternative ‘endings’, reflecting on the possible long-term impact of these imagined realities.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elena Stevens is a secondary school teacher and history lead; her new book, *40 Ways to Diversify the History Curriculum: A practical handbook* is available now (Crown House Publishing, £16.99)

# Give a warm WELCOME

Ahead of what promises to be tough winter for disadvantaged families, **Rebecca Leek** examines the practicalities of turning your school into a vital centre for local support

**A**longside the work I do in education, I'm a proud trustee for Suffolk Libraries. One need only observe the work they did during lockdown to appreciate just how much libraries have been quietly supporting communities in numerous ways, becoming beacons of light for those needing sustenance amid difficult times.

Now it seems that difficult times are ahead of us again. With household bills set to soar this winter, just as many of us anxiously turn our heating back on, it's hard to know how much we'll all be affected. A survey taken by the Trussell Trust in August this year found that many adults reported missing meals 'to keep up with essential costs' – and that was in *summer*. The worst is yet to come.

## Honourable endeavour

Sadly, those in the most vulnerable circumstances will likely be affected most of all. Families on prepayment meters and those already in debt will face the terrifying prospect of 'top-up' money being needed to service debts before anything else. You may well be aware of the impact this will have on some of your school's families. You might even be facing such a predicament yourself.

Right on cue, libraries are stepping up again. If you've yet to hear the term 'warm banks', trust me – you'll soon be hearing it a lot. In the same way that food banks exist to give people access to essential

foods for free, warm banks are conceived as freely accessible spaces where people can go to get warm.

It's an honourable endeavour, but one that's come in for some criticism. A cursory scroll through a few Twitter threads will soon reveal people pointing out that this development isn't something to be celebrated – that it feels awkward to laud something many feel shouldn't be necessary in the first place.

## “Opening up parts of your school for community use is no mean feat”

To be clear, I'm decidedly unhappy that so many are currently living in fear of their escalating bills. I'm not a supporter of enforced austerity, nor do I believe Westminster is genuinely doing all it can. I am, however, interested in developments that could result in overturning the status quo.

At times like this, we can look to the permaculture principle of 'turning problems into solutions', and the notion that challenges can be tackled through creativity and looking at things from a different perspective – however regrettable those challenges may be.

## Change your approach

There are numerous places of worship, social clubs, libraries and school halls that stand empty for many hours each week. When one carries out a facilities

or financial review in a school, the low occupancy rates of its spaces is something that often comes up. Governors will commonly query the possibility of letting these spaces out more often during revenue discussions. With finances continuing to be tight, it seems an opportune time to consider how we might change our approach with respect to making school spaces available for communal use.

providing support to local families? If so, share the relevant details.

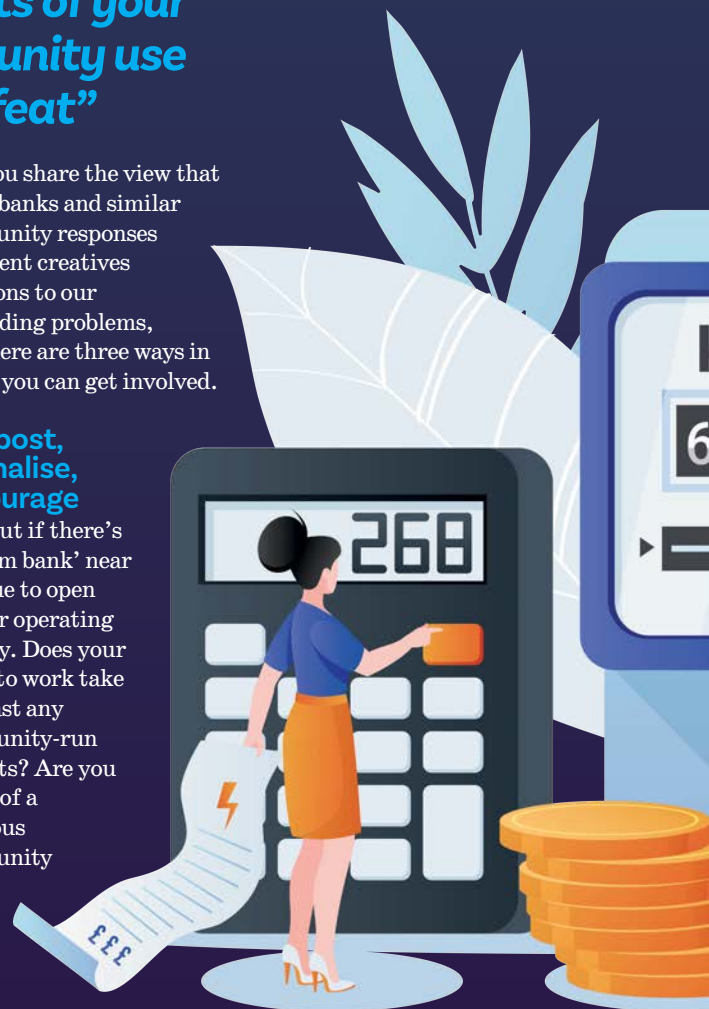
Some may opine that those most in need of such spaces often won't make use of them. Well, why not use them yourself? Libraries, for one, are fantastic. I've taken to sometimes basing myself in our town library on 'working from home' days, as the environment helps me stay focused and resist the urge to procrastinate.

If we can normalise the use of these brilliant places, then

If you share the view that warm banks and similar community responses represent creative solutions to our impending problems, then here are three ways in which you can get involved.

## Signpost, normalise, encourage

Find out if there's a 'warm bank' near you due to open soon or operating already. Does your route to work take you past any community-run projects? Are you aware of a religious community that's





more people may feel empowered to cross the threshold. It's mutually beneficial too, since the more people there are using libraries, the more likely it is that they'll continue to attract funding.

### Engage and help

Have you considered helping out as a volunteer? You'll not only benefit personally from the warmth and hospitality (enabling you to leave your own heating off for an extra hour or two), but there's evidence to suggest that you'll get a warm feeling inside too.

A study published by the University of East Anglia in 2020 showed that the practice of volunteering is inextricably linked with

enhanced wellbeing. Some large corporations like PricewaterhouseCoopers even incorporate volunteering days into their staff perks and wellbeing strategies.

Locate your local library or Church and ask if you can help. There may also be a way of incorporating some opportunities for your students too, be it work experience or enlisting their practical help on a project.

### Do something at your school

Opening up parts of your school for community use is no mean feat. Who will manage your now public-facing facilities? Who'll assume oversight of your health and safety obligations?

With the right vision and sufficient will, however, these issues are surmountable. It's simply a case of working through the necessary considerations

before presenting your proposal to the school's SLT or governors.

What areas in your school have the potential to be repurposed for community use? You may already have a cosy library on-site – perhaps even one situated close to a kitchenette.

Give careful thought to matters of access, timings, security and manpower. What kind of rota will you need? Can you get any other staff members on board? How good are your relations with the school's site manager? Make sure they're not being left out of the loop.

### Reach out

Are there any local groups or connections who could get involved in what you're doing? You may well find that a nearby Scouts group, local councillor or even allotment group will be pleased to be asked, with each grouping able to contribute their own sets of skills and ideas.

I've found that young people often enjoy cooking. Could you potentially create a community 'soup kitchen' that functions as a communal 'bring and share' service,

while also teaching your students how to prepare meals for larger groups? That's one life skill that's definitely worth having...

While we're on the topic, make sure you *talk*

## THE PRINCIPLES OF PERMACULTURE

Permaculture is an approach that originates from sustainable agriculture and growing methods. It's a framework which seeks to identify self-sustaining solutions and systems that can potentially benefit all individuals, while working in harmony with the planet.

'Turning problems into solutions' is one of 12 fundamental permaculture principles, alongside others that include 'using and valuing diversity' and 'producing no waste'.

to your students. Let them have some ownership over what you're planning. If they have younger siblings at a nearby primary, could you potentially establish an intergenerational reading club where younger children are read to by older children?

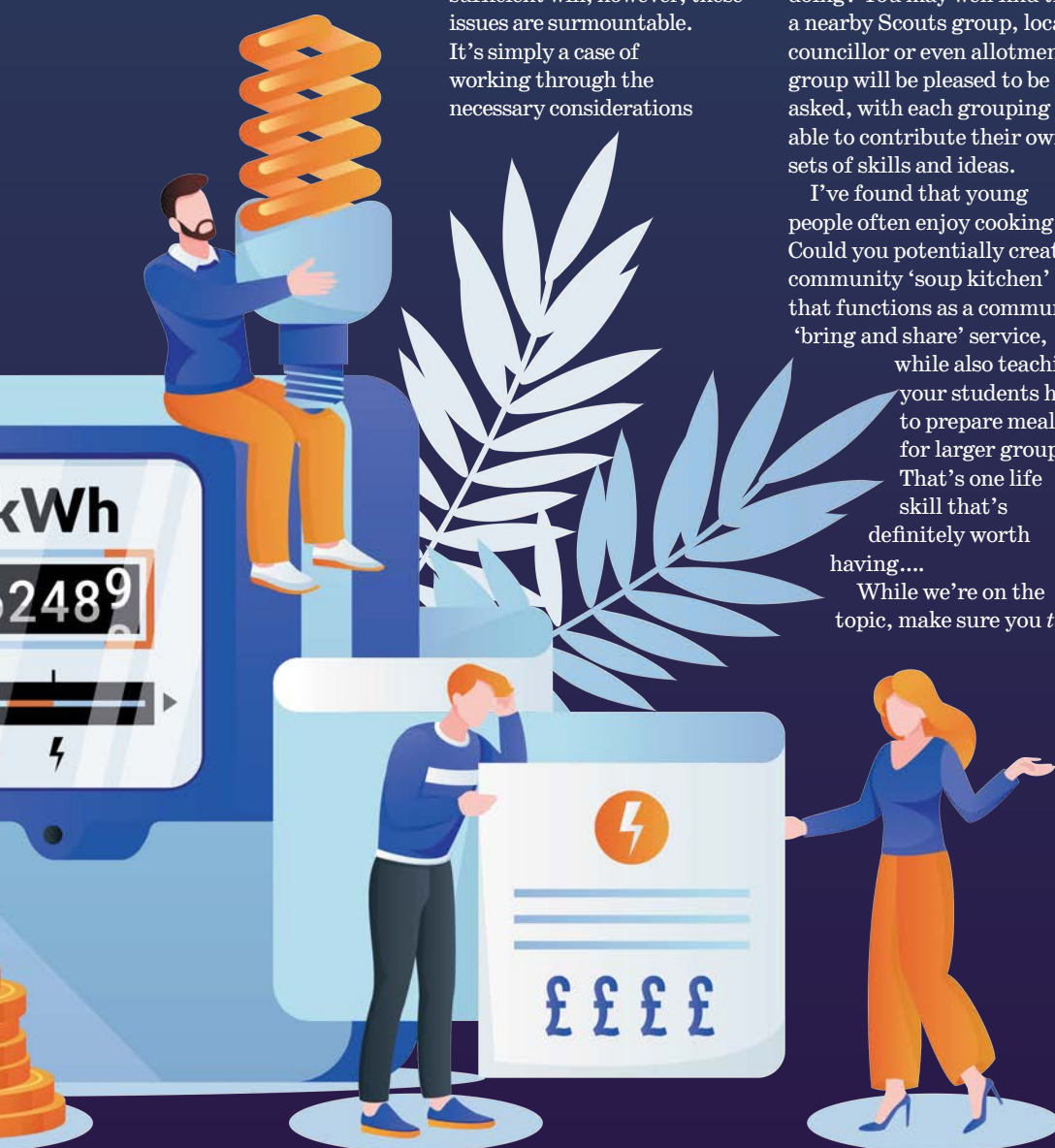
Finally, don't forget safeguarding – a crucial area that should never be overlooked. Speak to your DSL and work through the relevant risk assessments carefully. Don't see this process as a barrier to realising your ambitions, but rather an intrinsic part of your project planning.

The opportunities really are endless, though the most effective solutions will be different depending on the specific school and local community. Turning a spare room into a municipal living area or similar could help strengthen your links with the local community and go on to become something very special indeed.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rebecca Leek has been a secondary and primary classroom teacher, head of department, SENCo and headteacher; she is currently the CEO of SEAMAT – a trust of three schools in South Essex



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# First, do no harm

Supporting students' mental health is vital, says **Gordon Cairns** – but it's not a task for enthusiastic amateurs...

In the pursuit of historical discovery, well-meaning amateur archaeologists in the 19th century took their picks and dug deep into the artefact-rich soil of Greece, Egypt and Afghanistan, uncovering treasures hidden from the world for millennia and bringing ancient history to life. Unfortunately, in doing so, their scattergun, destructive methods obliterated much more evidence about how the ancients lived than they uncovered, making their modern-day counterparts despair.

I couldn't help thinking about those well-intentioned yet bumbling diggers when I read a recent report which not only suggests that whole class mindfulness lessons are, at best, merely somewhat effective in the short-term but more worryingly, could

even exacerbate existing mental health issues among young people.

## Lessons learnt

The 'My Resilience in Adolescence' trial was based on five cluster studies involving over 8,000 students and hundreds of teachers across more than 80 schools that undertook mindfulness training. This involved delivering lessons on how to pay attention and how to understand and manage feelings and behaviour, with a view to boosting resilience, while promoting good mental health.

To non-professionals this might seem an excellent use of resources. In reality, the report found evidence that this approach to developing resilience is weak.

While short-term benefits may arise for some (younger children or those with

current or developing mental health issues), such lessons should be avoided. What's more, the process studied in the trial required a significant resource and time commitment, involving teachers learning mindfulness themselves, then receiving training in how to deliver it to a whole class in 10 lessons of up to 50 minutes.

## Unintended consequences

Writing in a recent issue of *The New Scientist* about universal mental health interventions in the classroom, psychologist, author and adolescent mental health specialist Lucy Foulkes isn't surprised by such outcomes. "They sound excellent on paper, but the trouble is, they doesn't work well in reality. Research shows that when universal lessons do reduce mental health symptoms, the effect is small. On average, teenagers who receive these classes score only slightly lower on measurements of anxiety or depression than those who don't."

Dr Foulkes believes there's an inherent structural weakness at the core of universal mental health lessons: "The whole premise of these classes is that students should notice their negative thoughts and feelings, label them and carry out exercises to try and accept or change them. But it can be really difficult to change how you think and feel, especially without one-to-one support."

She adds, "School mental health lessons may be inadvertently teaching teenagers to ruminate on negative thoughts and

feelings without giving them any real ability to manage these experiences, which could increase their distress."

## A better way

This can only add to the sense of frustration felt by many teachers at the rising mental health crisis amongst teenagers, especially with outside support apparently not forthcoming.

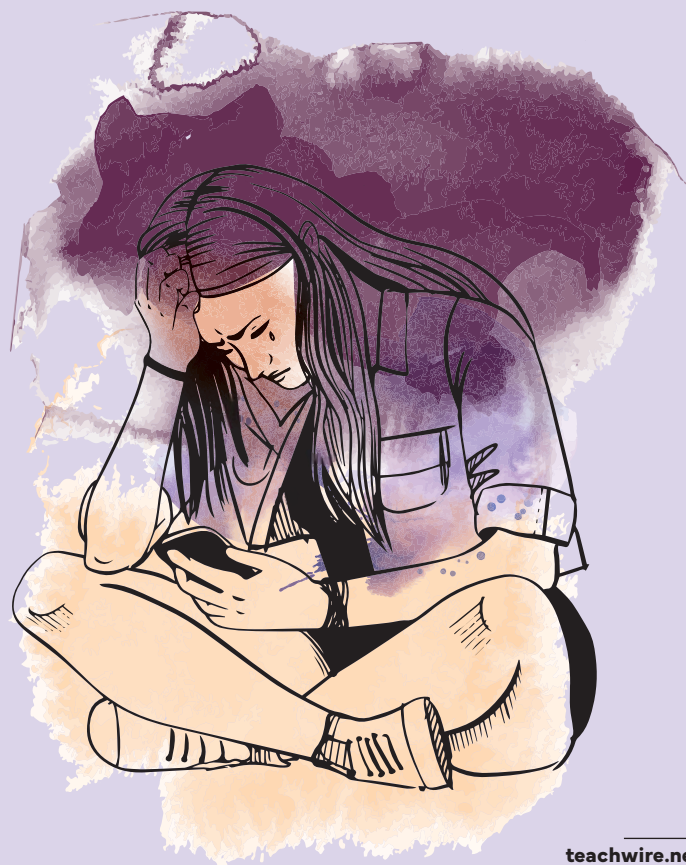
However, Dr Foulkes does offer some solutions that may be more fruitful. First, she suggests focusing additional funds and effort into one-to-one interventions, using people actually trained in offering mental health support. Whilst accepting this is often a complex and expensive process, she advocates for more action to be taken on reducing the issues causing teenagers to become vulnerable in the first place, such as bullying or financial insecurity.

Teachers should take heart. While we can flag up teenagers who are struggling with their mental health to the appropriate parties, it's not for us to solve complex problems we haven't been trained in, beyond signposting. Let's not be the well-meaning amateurs who destroyed Homer's Troy when they should have been trying to preserve it.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gordon Cairns is an English and forest school teacher who works in a unit for secondary pupils with ASD; he also writes about education, society, cycling and football for a number of publications



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1

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2

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3

## STEM support

Have you started thinking about British Science Week 2023? It may not kick off until 10th-19th March next year, but it's time to get excited and start planning! The Week is a 10-day celebration of STEM run by the British Science Association (BSA) – a charity



whose work includes encouraging and supporting STEM education.

It's never been more important to break down stereotypes about who can do science, and celebrating the Week is a great opportunity to reach students on this topic. The BSA provides Kick Start grants for schools in challenging circumstances to fund STEM activities during British Science Week, with eligible schools able to apply for grants ranging from £150 to £700! Find all the information you need at [bsa.sc/Kick-Start-Grant-BSW](http://bsa.sc/Kick-Start-Grant-BSW)

4

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5

## Safeguarding connections

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The Safeguarding Community has three different rooms: a 'Staff Room' for day-to-day communications, an 'International Room' and a 'Safe Room', in which anonymous questions can be posted. We understand that safeguarding can often be a challenging and lonely job. We believe this community will be beneficial to the mental health and wellbeing of those involved with safeguarding, giving them a much-needed safe space in which to connect with others who understand what they're feeling. For more details, visit [thesafeguardingcompany.com](http://thesafeguardingcompany.com)





6

### Rapid sanitisation

LapSafe® offers an extensive range of mobile storage and charging trolleys – the safest available on today's market.

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### A bigger bite

KS3 teachers – we've got you! BBC Bitesize continues to support teachers and students with new and updated KS3 guides in English, maths, biology, chemistry, physics, history and geography.

All-new courses include video, quizzes and infographics for greater interactivity and engagement, supporting progress from Y7 through to Y9 with step-by-step and structured content. The content is perfect for homework and classroom tests, not just end of year revision.

Also recently launched are two new interactive games for history (History Detectives) and science (Atomic Labs, pictured), with new games for geography and maths coming soon. For more information, [bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://bbc.co.uk/bitesize) and click on the 'Secondary' button.



8



### Culture in the classroom

MyLearning is a hub website that hosts FREE learning resources created by cultural organisations from across England. We work with museums, galleries and archives to bring together high quality resources in one easy-to-use website. MyLearning's mission is to get wonderful objects, and all the fabulous stories they hold, out of museum stores and archives and into classrooms.

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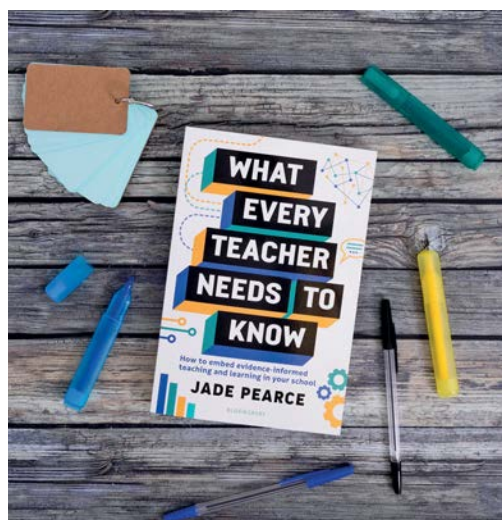
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### Essential teaching knowledge

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# THE BIGGER PICTURE

From initial research to the final piece, a successful art project needs to impress at every stage of the journey, says **Hannah Day**

**A**s art teachers, we're all familiar with the arc of a project. More often than not, we start with artist research and finish with an artwork, or collection of pieces that shows the student's journey from initial investigation to a personal conclusion.

With these two elements regularly bookending a project, then, the pressure on them to hold the work together is paramount. Here's some ideas to make sure they do just that.

## Consider influences

First, let's get rid of the idea that students always need to look at 'artists'. Yes, they normally do (it makes sense), but I prefer to use the term 'influences'. For us, this switch in language led to a new openness in seeing how varied artistic traditions, not at first obviously related, could inform one another.

British artist Polly Morgan points out the need to not 'restrict yourself to your own medium'. It's just as possible to be inspired by a filmmaker, fashion designer, writer or friend than another artist." Her contemporary, Isaac Julien, has much the same idea: "I have a magpie attitude to inspiration. It's about taking all the little everyday things and observing them with a critical eye; building up a scrapbook which you can draw on."

To help our students develop an understanding of breadth, we have a 10-point independent learning list, into which we encourage them to dip each week. This may or may not feed back directly into their work, but helps them develop a much

more rounded understanding of the arts.

## What matters?

Next, let's consider structure. It's important to understand that we're not here to create historical documents. Biographical information is useful only if it informs our understanding. For example, we don't need to know how many children a person had, but we may want to know what their relationships were like if their work is directly related to the experience of family life.

Added to that, the cost of artwork is irrelevant. The fact that someone may have paid several millions for a piece is not an indicator of its value – not in artistic or cultural terms, anyway.

Each artist has a range of interests, experiences and perspectives. From this, we want to know the aim of their art practice. Let's take for example Käthe Kollwitz, a German, born in Kaliningrad, who lived from 1867 to 1945. These are

war and in belonging. But can we find evidence?

Here is where quotes from the artist can be helpful. The MoMA website starts its section on Kollwitz with her quote "I felt that I have no right to withdraw from the responsibility of being an advocate. It is my duty to voice the sufferings of men."

So now we know where and when she lived. We know what was happening socially and politically at the time, and that her aim for her work was to make clear the suffering experienced.

## Finding the evidence

Research undertaken, let's now start to observe. Here is where the formal elements come in. Look at her colours, use of line, compositions. Do they, as she lays out they should, tell of man's suffering? Do students believe she has achieved what she set out to do? Why? Is it through her use of visual isolation, the individual surrounded by the white space of the paper?

**"Any real investigation of an influence must be deeply practical, too"**

useful facts. They tell us she lived in a place and time when the world was at war. Her city of birth was a strange geographical example of detachment; a part of Russia, separated from its motherland by Poland and Lithuania. As such, we can guess she was interested in the effects of

Perhaps the fracturedness with which she used a pencil; the intense focus on the human face?

Linking facts, quotes and observations steeped in an understanding of the formal elements is needed to ensure a written piece has the depth required to show true engagement with the work.

This understanding becomes the diving board for the student's own work. Once they know 'what', 'how' and 'why', they can apply this to their own piece. What causes them anguish? What do they want to portray so others can see? What marks will they make to convey the urgency they feel? This is why we research: not to copy, but to give ourselves an understanding and language for our own artwork's aims.







## WRITING CHECKLIST

Five pointers for better written analysis...

1. Remove any biographical information that's not relevant.
2. Watch out for commonly used weak words and provide students with alternatives. The 'Better Words' download sheet (available via [bit.ly/ts117-art](http://bit.ly/ts117-art)) can help you get started.
3. Find quotes from respected art critics. Include them and explain what they mean. Many media outlets charge for their online content, but *The Guardian* and the BBC's arts coverage can be accessed for free.
4. Make sure students explain any tricky terminology they use and any key ideas for art movements they mention.
5. Consider adjusting writing guides for different art practices. Some points of focus will vary according to the medium.

and experimental work is complete.

In reality, the only difference between the final piece and the rest of the submission is how it consolidates the journey. The body of work that precedes it is there to help students find interesting connections and surprising new pathways that can then be narrowed down. Any particular approaches used in a final piece need to be evidenced in that preceding work.

I will end with this: that while I believe, as do those I have spoken to, that exam boards and moderators have favorite styles or types of outcomes, the student's strengths and interests must win out. When I was once asked at interview to name a favorite artist, my answer was simple – that it didn't matter. It was finding the creative influences that were right for the students that should be my aim. I stand by that, and hope that all art teachers would, too.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hannah Day is head of art, media and film at Ludlow College; this article was produced with additional information provided by Lucy Wilding, head of art at Lacon Child School, Shropshire

### DOWNLOAD

Model AO1 presentations and several art and design writing resources to accompany this article from

[bit.ly/ts117-art](http://bit.ly/ts117-art)



In fact, the assessment objectives do not state that all research must be written. Any real investigation of an influence must be deeply practical, too. In order for students to develop ideas through investigation or show an understanding of critical sources, their creative response is central.

### Final pieces

Yes, AO1 focuses on research, but this research

should permeate all the way through to A04. A final piece on its own is worth nothing. It might feel like the Big Daddy; but we all know that the bulk of the marks come from AO1-3, and that unless the outcome sits firmly within the preceding investigations, it has little value.

The assessment criteria asks for a 'purposeful and meaningful response'. In order for any pieces that

come at the end to achieve this, they must be a response to the work in the sketchbook, showing development from initial ideas, and a

refinement of both thought and practice. One of the challenges I face is when students propose a final piece, rather than an area of investigation right from the start. So, in order to keep projects open – to ensure experimentation and exploration is genuine – we remove any specific final piece planning. Instead, we focus on an arena of interest, laying down specifics only when initial investigative

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our upcoming competition, their voices can be heard.

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\*Survey conducted by *The Day* in 2022 among 1,115 respondents, comprising a mix of primary/secondary teachers and other education professionals

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A 20-minute activity can fit manageably into a busy day – for example, when students are arriving at registration or after break/lunchtime.



# “All children deserve to go to a “good” school”

**Peter Hughes** shares a few reservations regarding Liz Truss’ pledge to oversee the creation of new grammar schools...

Our efforts as an education community – and indeed, as a country – shouldn’t be focused on how we can help those who are already gifted. They should be focussed on making sure every student gets the education that they deserve, regardless of background.

The introduction of more grammar schools across England will likely see most places allocated to the middle classes, much as they are now. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils – children classified as receiving Pupil Premium – accessing grammar schools actually fell from 8.48% in 2017, to 8.31% in 2019. We risk ending up with a hugely divided system, whereby those children most in need of support from teachers find themselves on the wrong side of that divide.

## Type versus leadership

We would essentially be telling some of poorest children in society, at the age of just 11, that they’re not as capable as their wealthier friends (who will likely have received additional private tutoring to pass the admissions test). Should children be

given a piece of paper at such a critical age in their education that effectively says ‘*You’re not good enough*’? Absolutely not!

I’ve seen schools of all types do an excellent job at giving their pupils a great education, and also bad schools of every form you could name. We all have our own views on how the system should be structured. Some favour LA schools, others prefer academisation. Then there are those wishing to see more selective grammar schools, and a return to comprehensive/secondary moderns being the default.

Yet the type of school a child attends actually has comparatively little impact on their ability to succeed. What matters most is the quality of leadership at any given school, and the standard of teaching and learning taking place in classrooms.

I speak from first-hand experience – not just as the CEO of Mossbourne Federation, but also from having seen the schools using ProgressTeaching – a teaching improvement platform I created to raise the quality of teaching and learning across my schools. When a school focuses on teaching and learning and supports great leadership, outcomes drastically improve.

## Four challenges

There are four key challenges under the current education system we must address:

1. Making sure we have enough good leaders and robust leadership programmes
2. That we identify talent from all areas of our community early on and nurture it
3. Ensuring that classrooms play host to good quality teaching and learning
4. That we have in place an inspection regime that focuses on the above three areas

Everyone’s education is directly affected by their background, yet we must be careful not to label children and assume they ‘won’t do well’ based purely on their parents’ socioeconomic status.

Yes, the latter can indicate that a child might need more support from teachers, and suggest their journey through school might be more challenging at times – but it doesn’t mean their potential is capped. They simply need some extra support and exposure to programmes which can help give them that boost they’ll need to achieve their dreams.

It’s our responsibility as teachers to make sure all children get the best from us in the classroom. As leaders, it’s our job to see that every pupil gets the same opportunities as their peers, regardless of background, and find ways of enhancing pupils’ experiences beyond what they can do themselves.

At Mossbourne, we have a rowing programme – a sport most of our pupils will, in all likelihood, never access again later in life. But it brings with it incredible opportunities, such as the potential to gain scholarships to US colleges and experience what still remains a fairly elitist sport. We also have an architecture programme and a medical bursary programme – two further fields of study typically closed off to most, unless you happen to already know someone in either sector.

We must devise as many opportunities as we can for all children to succeed. That is where our focus should be; not on the intricacies of how we structure our schools.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Hughes is the CEO of the Mossbourne Federation trust and a trustee of the headteacher-led charity, The Elephant Group; for more information, visit [mossbourne.org](http://mossbourne.org)



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CLASSROOM VOICE

# “The stud glinted mischievously...”

**Paul Buckland** reflects on how the process of maintaining uniform standards can occasionally result in the emergence of some unexpected allies...

**T**he problem with principles is that you have to stand up for them. As a headteacher, you're often reliant on the support of colleagues to do this – but it's also possible to receive assistance from unexpected quarters...

It was a Monday morning near the start of the spring term when the head of Y11 knocked and stuck her head round my door. “Have you got a minute?”

I somehow suspected the matter would take a little longer. “Morning – what can I do for you?”

“I've got a problem with Charlie and Laura. Their tutor has sent them to me, as they both have nose studs in today and are refusing to remove them...”

## DIVIDE AND RULE

Uniform was one of my red lines. Staff and students knew I was a stickler for dress code. Getting the mindset for learning right had always been vital for me, and in my view, the correct wearing of uniform made this mindset plain to see.

Shirts being tucked in were indicative of students having the right mindset. The presence of facial piercings indicated the precise opposite. Though on reflection, it was rare for Charlie or Laura to demonstrate an appropriate learning mindset at the best of times...

“You'd better send them to see me, then,” I smiled, already thinking of what my opening gambit would be.

The head of year smiled in return. “They're both outside.”

Charlie's eyelashes entered my office, closely followed by Charlie. Divide and rule seemed to be the order

of the day. The offending stud glinted mischievously in the light as Charlie glowered at me. She was ready. The encounter with her head of year had just been a warm-up for the main event.

“It won't come out.”

I hadn't said a word. Lines had been drawn.

“Why did you have it put in, when you know the rules?”

A shrug. “Loads of people have got 'em, and you don't make them take 'em out.”

“I'm not aware of any others, apart from Laura. If they're drawn to my attention, they will be dealt with in the same way. It's going to have to come out.”

“It'll heal over and cost me mum £50.”

A discussion then ensued concerning the extent of Charlie's impressive healing powers, how removing the offending item at 8.50am and re-inserting it at 3.45pm wasn't beyond the realms of possibility, and was in fact likely to prove a successful compromise.

Charlie wasn't for budging, so I reached for the phone.

## HALF-HEARTED RESISTANCE

One home call later, and a talk about likely next steps – including the setting up of a desk in the internal support room until the uniform rules were applied – brought Charlie's mother onside, which eventually persuaded Charlie herself.

Returning the phone to its cradle, I sought to push home my advantage. The stud was removed amid much convincing wincing on Charlie's part whilst I made sympathetic noises. I

decided to let her leave the office before admitting Laura, hoping that the sight of Charlie emerging piercing-free would take the wind out of her sails.

And so it proved. With Charlie having cracked, Laura proved to be a walkover. Putting up only minimal, half-hearted resistance, with no phone call needed, she knew the game was up. That was that, then – a successful start to the week, with a potential conflict averted.

However, within an hour of leaving my office, Charlie and Laura reappeared, this time of their own volition. My heart sank a little at first, but I was quickly relieved to see there was no nose stud in sight. Maybe the approach had worked after all?

Charlie thrust a piece of folded paper into my hand. “Here,” she said. I opened it up to see a list of names – all friends and acquaintances of my visitors.

“Okay Charlie, what is this?”

“It's a list of the people with nose studs in school. You said you'd sort it if you knew who they were. So there you go.”

Clearly, I'd been somewhat premature in my confidence that order was being preserved. Unexpected allies, indeed...

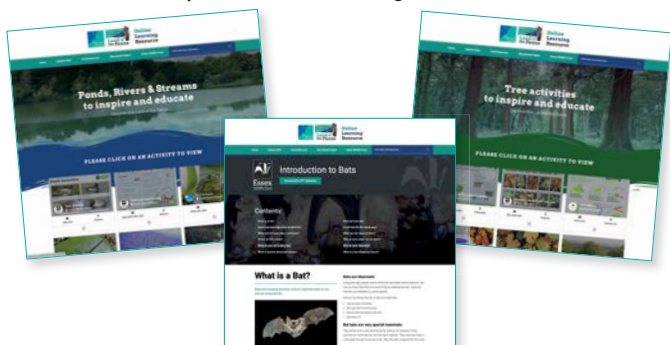


## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Buckland is a recently retired secondary headteacher; for more information, visit [bit.ly/ts117-PB](http://bit.ly/ts117-PB)



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# LEARNING LAB

## IN THIS ISSUE

- + The applications of gamification
- + Why you can't afford to take challenging behaviour personally
- + An easy way of finding out whether your school's IT provision measures up to the DfE's 'digitally mature' benchmarks
- + A short guide to when and how enforced silence should be deployed in lessons
- + The NFER looks at where schools fare better in terms of teacher retention out of England or Wales
- + The Children's Society's latest 'Good Childhood Report' tells us about the state of young people's happiness and wellbeing in 2022
- + Signpost your students to a free course of bibliotherapy with the help of The Reading Agency
- + Reframing behaviour in the classroom – the second part of our illustrated explainer on how to best tackle some familiar behavioural bugbears

## CONTRIBUTORS

### MATTHEW GOULDSON

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Behaviour management consultant and speaker

### ADAM RICHES

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### ZEPH BENNETT

PE teacher and school achievement leader



Thinking about ...

## WRITING CHALLENGES

Encouraging young people to write creatively can often be a challenge. You can spend time encouraging them to explore themes, ideas and sentence starters, sometimes to the point that it feels as if you're writing for them – but then I came across a competition that got us all, students and staff, excited and wanting to put pens to paper!

The competition, 'My Twist on a Tale', came with an enticing prize for students, which always helps – getting their own story published and seeing their name in print, which turned out to be a huge motivator. With 'originality' being one of the competition's key requirements, we proceeded to explore some fine examples of writing – including a few class favourites situated outside the curriculum – and our students' creativity began to flow.

One of our Y7 students pushed his creativity to its limits with a weird and wacky piece which, right up until the final line, seemed outrageously bizarre. To our delight, he was eventually picked as the North West winner – you can read his entry yourself via [bit.ly/ts117-LL1](https://bit.ly/ts117-LL1).

Some believe that forcing young people to read a wide range of

different material will help their students' writing, but in practice, we've found this to be daunting. Competitions, however – similar to other avenues like writing articles for newspapers or newsletters – provide opportunities for students to find the joy in writing, by giving them the freedom to write and shape their own content.

The My Twist on a Tale competition returns this year, with a focus on representation, and will be asking students to put those they feel are being left out in today's literature on the page. We'll once again be encouraging our own students to let their imaginations flow, explore topics close to their hearts – be it ethnicity, relationships, gender, poverty or anything else – and channel these into their own stories.

Competitions can be a powerful tool for restoring enthusiasm to the classroom, or creating more enticing homework activities. Taking interest in your young people, and giving due consideration to their passions and beliefs can really unlock their learning. When they understand who they are and what motivates them, the resulting engagement can take them very far indeed...



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matthew Gouldson is an English teacher at The Mosslands School in the Wirral; for more information about this year's 'My Twist on a Tale: Represent!' competition, visit [go.pearson.com/Represent](https://go.pearson.com/Represent)

## DO YOU WANT TO PLAY A GAME?



Gamification is the process of applying concepts from gaming into teaching to better engage students. Video games have long been a prominent form of entertainment for all ages, but the features that make them so enjoyable can be applied to learning environments too.

Video game design draws on many aspects and practices that can be used to engage students. These include complex environments that require decision making and problem solving to successfully navigate, and scenarios that encourage experimentation and risk-taking that result in a range of different outcomes. Some games also make extensive use of story and narrative, which can be beneficial for maintaining engagement as students become invested in characters and thematic developments.

Integrating a gamified environment for learning into academic structures

can provide students who might otherwise struggle with traditional teaching methods with an alternative option they can more readily engage with. A 2019 study by researchers in Finland and Greece found that some students attending a learning environment that blended traditional learning with play saw marked increases in their academic performance and outcomes (see [bit.ly/ts117-LL2](https://bit.ly/ts117-LL2)).

As technology continues to evolve, it seems almost inevitable that more ways of integrating gamification strategies into education will emerge over time. Given the prevalence of technology and software in the lives of today's younger generations, we can expect them to take to these new methods of learning with more ease than any generation preceding them.

If, as seems likely, the concept of 'gamified learning' continues to evolve and become more widely accepted, the

technologies that underpin it will similarly start to incorporate a range of emerging technologies. Virtual reality already has a presence in many classrooms, but the advent of the much-discussed metaverse could have the potential to vastly expand its scope and possible applications. Virtual classrooms could transport students to digital recreations of famous landscapes and scenes from history, for example, making for a hugely immersive and engaging form of learning.

Of course, there's no guarantee that every student will necessarily benefit from gamified approaches to learning. It's more than likely that there will some for whom it doesn't work at all. What gamification can do, however, is present an alternative to traditional teaching methods, ensuring that no one need feel left behind, and can progress at their own individual pace.

## DO THIS

### DEPERSONALISE IT

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

Never allow yourself to feel hurt, angry, let down, dismayed, betrayed or disappointed by anything a student does, or fails to do.

Remember that the student is a child. Maybe a young child, or perhaps an older teenager, but a child either way. They're still under development, still a work in progress. They're, well – still very much in the process of *growing up*.

So don't take it personally – especially if what the student has said or done was meant to be taken personally. All that reflects is their level of maturity. That's it.

Even if you do feel genuinely hurt, angry or troubled as a direct consequence of something a student has either done or failed to do, don't let it influence you. Consume those emotions. Keep them firmly to yourself. Put a lid on your feelings.

By all means, give yourself some brief thinking time if you feel you need it. A little cognitive breathing space might be helpful, but whatever you do, don't react in a personal manner to the student's actions. Because if you do, you'll almost certainly make the situation worse....

**Robin Launder is a behaviour management consultant and speaker; find more tips in his weekly Better Behaviour online course – see [behaviourbuddy.co.uk](https://behaviourbuddy.co.uk) for details**

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# 42%

of 16-18-year-olds state that if more inclusive language were used in their careers advice, they would be more likely to consider pursuing a trade career as their future profession

Source: National Censuswide survey commissioned by Rated People, completed with 2,001 UK adults and 501 16 to 18-year-olds

A Northampton-based IT service provider, Simply IT, has launched what it describes as a 'free digital readiness scorecard' aimed at schools. Intended for use by school business leaders and senior staff, it's designed to assess a school's existing technology, connectivity and network provision, and assess whether it successfully meets the digital and technology standards published by the DfE in March this year (see [bit.ly/ts117-LL3](https://bit.ly/ts117-LL3)).

According to DfE figures, fewer than 30% of schools in England are what the department deems as 'digitally mature'. The test promises to provide users with a personalised score within several minutes, following completion of a concise questionnaire consisting of 16 queries.

As Simply IT's managing director, Steffan Barreau, explains, "New government standards are all well and good, but there's little help for school business leaders in how to take action. One of the very first things they need is to understand where they stand today, before they can see what needs to be achieved. We often perform full School IT audits, but that takes a little time to organise. We created the scorecard to give a free, fast, and simple self-assessment of how a school is performing against the standards."

School staff interested in trying the scorecard for themselves should visit [schooldigitalscorecard.scoreapp.com](https://schooldigitalscorecard.scoreapp.com)

## YOUR GUIDE TO ...

### SILENCE

Traditionally, silence has been (incorrectly) seen as an indicator of focus. We all know that silence may mean compliance, but we also know that silence doesn't necessarily mean engagement. That said, silence has its place in the classroom, so long it's managed effectively.

#### 1. Understand silence

If we think about the use of silence from a cognitive load perspective, it seems obvious that reducing auditory distractions should, theoretically, reduce extraneous load. For some students this may be the case, but for others, the opportunity to call upon their peers or teacher is diminished when working silently. There are times where silent work is effective – for example, when applying a concept or skill individually, or as a part of independent practice – but it's important to remember that silence doesn't guarantee students can concentrate better.

#### 2. Uphold expectations

If you have planned a silent phase in a lesson, ensure you uphold that expectation. It's important that learners know silence means silence. The first and most crucial step here is to use clear, unambiguous language. Don't just say 'Quiet!'

or 'No talking!'. Use the term 'Silence!' and if necessary, explain precisely what you mean by that. Students will habitually respond to the routine once they establish the association with the linguistic marker, so make it easy for them to be successful by keeping your expectations high.

Visual indicators that allow you to communicate with learners using minimal voice are also helpful during silent tasks. This may be a symbol on the board, or the word 'silent' in bold. You must also model the silence yourself. Don't talk to other members of staff unnecessarily, and if you're talking to students, keep it to a minimum. Noise breeds noise.

#### 3. Use it sparingly

Silence should be used sparingly during learning. Realistically, if students were to be silent for hours on end, they'll start to detach from their learning. The collaborative aspects of learning are important for building schema and understanding perspectives other than your own; too much silence can profoundly affect a learner's experience of your subject. It's also worth remembering that silence has an important place in the classroom, but that we can't let students hide behind it.



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

# 134%

The increase in referrals to CAMHS between 2019/20 and 2020/21

Source: Barnardo's

## Need to know

A recent study by the National Foundation for Educational Research has sought to compare teacher retention rates between England and Wales. Two decades on from Wales assuming post-devolution powers over its education policy, researchers set out to measure the subsequent divergence in policy between both countries – characterised in some quarters as being in Wales' favour, with respect to its focus on curriculum development and school accountability system.

The study found that the leaving rate among secondary school teachers was 0.6 percentage points higher in England compared to Wales. There was also a difference of 0.6 percentage points between both countries in the retention of primary teachers, except this time England was the one found to have fewer teachers leaving.

Other findings include the detail that teachers possessing 20 or more years of teaching experience were more likely to stay on in Wales, and that Welsh teachers work fewer hours per week, on average – though the researchers noted that teachers in both countries reported long working hours overall, and would prefer to work shorter hours if they could.



## RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT THE GOOD CHILDHOOD REPORT 2022

**The Children's Society's latest 'Good Childhood Report' makes for a sobering read. The charity's annual examination of young people's wellbeing seems to indicate that the lasting effects of the pandemic and impending threat of the cost of living crisis are further compounding a continued decline in children's overall levels of happiness.**

The headline figures include the finding that 6% of 10- to 15-year-olds in the UK are unhappy with their lives, and that an estimated 562,000 of that same age group are unhappy with their experiences of school (the latter figure having been sourced from the Understanding Society longitudinal survey conducted by the University of Essex).

Predictably, concerns regarding the cost of living crisis loom large in many households, with 85% of parents and carers surveyed in 2022 expressing fears of how their families will be affected over the coming year. That's on the back of a third of parents and carers reporting that they have already struggled to meet the costs of school trips and uniform over the year just gone, according to The Children's Society's own 2022 national household survey of 2,000 10- to 17-year-olds, parents and carers across the UK.

Elsewhere, the report finds that girls are significantly more unhappy with their appearance than boys, with 18% of 10- to 15-year-old girls – equivalent to around 411,000 – feeling negative towards their

looks compared to 10% of boys (based on the aforementioned Understanding Society survey).

The unprecedented restrictions introduced in response to COVID-19 may have been lifted, but the pandemic has, as one would expect, cast a long shadow. The report highlights how 11% of 10- to 17-year-olds admit to having not coped well with the pandemic-era changes, noting that a combination of lost learning and this year's return of formal, in-person exams with their attendant pressures may be exerting a detrimental effect on children's wellbeing.

The Children's Society's chief executive, Mark Russell, said of the findings: "Right now, the negative effects of the cost of living crisis, the disruption of the pandemic to young people's education, and the ongoing decline in children's happiness are on a collision course. School is a vital setting to influence children's wellbeing, but they need more support, as the reality of what's facing children and the lack of a holistic response is a national scandal.

"We need a faster roll-out of mental health support teams in schools, alongside early support hubs in every local community, and there needs to be more support for children whose families are struggling to make ends meet with free school meals available to all children on Universal Credit. There is nowhere to hide from the ensuing wellbeing catastrophe unless urgent action is taken."





On the radar

## Literary support

To coincide with this year's World Mental Health Day, literacy charity The Reading Agency is launching a quality assured reading list of book titles aimed at helping teens better understand and manage their health and wellbeing needs.

The 'Reading Well for teens' collection will launch on 10th October, and be available to borrow from public libraries across England and Wales.

The charity intends for the 27-strong list – plus an accompanying series of digital resources covering anxiety, depression, body

image, bereavement and other related areas – to be recommended by schools, medical and social care professionals, with the books able to be borrowed from public libraries either physically or electronically.

According to Karen Napier, CEO at The Reading Agency, "This list of quality-assured titles will support existing services and provide young people across the country with reading material which helps them to feel better."

We are delighted that they'll be available in public libraries, which are non-stigmatising spaces for young

people to feel welcome and explore these great reads."

Professor Neil Frude, a consultant clinical psychologist and founder of the 'books on prescription' previously used in Wales, in turn noted that "The new Reading Well booklist for teens includes books that are clinically assured in the information they give and offer vital support on a range of mental health issues. The scheme will provide highly effective guidance for many young people who need such help."

## TRENDING

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

### UP, UP AND AWAY

The Royal Aeronautical Society has launched an ambitious engineering competition aimed at 11- to 19-year-old learners. The Falcon 2 Programme will see entrants competing for the chance to design, develop and help build an inclusive portable flight simulator, which it's hoped will then tour SEND schools and public events from 2024.

[bit.ly/ts116-LLT1](https://bit.ly/ts116-LLT1)

### WICKED PLANS

The producers of the stage musical *Wicked* have unveiled 'Wicked Active Learning' - an online teaching and learning resource that includes a range of free lesson plans spanning English, drama and EFL. Other contents include a 20-page education trip planning guide and a selection of anti-bullying resources produced in partnership with the Anti-Bullying Alliance.

[bit.ly/ts116-LLT2](https://bit.ly/ts116-LLT2)

## TEACHER WALKTHROUGH

### REFRAMING BEHAVIOUR IN THE CLASSROOM

PART 2 OF AN ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER, BASED ON A TWITTER THREAD FROM @IANWHITE21, ON HOW WE CAN APPROACH PERENNIAL BEHAVIOUR ISSUES USING A MORE MEASURED RESPONSE

1



#### DRIFT

A common problem is allowing expectations to drift over time. Individual students are allowed to shout out, routines become sloppy, relationships remain underdeveloped. One way to arrest this is to narrate things consistently: 'Remember, we always <insert expectation>'

2



#### ONE-TO-ONES

It's rarely advisable to have long one-to-one conversations with students about their behaviour during lessons. Most students will want this, as it brings more attention to them and their actions. Don't let the whole class suffer!

3



#### NEGATIVITY

Allowing general negativity to enter class interactions is a common problem. Stop yourself and reset the class, if necessary. The overall tone of the classroom should be positive – even if you feel the opposite!

4



#### GRUDGES

It's a perfectly natural error to hold grudges. Students are accountable for their actions, but we are the adults. Our job is to leave clean slates as much as we can following any actions, so ham up the positivity with the students you really need to win over.

5



#### COUNTDOWNS

Without them, adults tend to keep talking for longer than they should. Narrate what you want to see between time intervals – 'Tools down in 5; return to seats in 4; prepare your desk in 3; silence in 2; eyes on me in 1... and we're ready..'

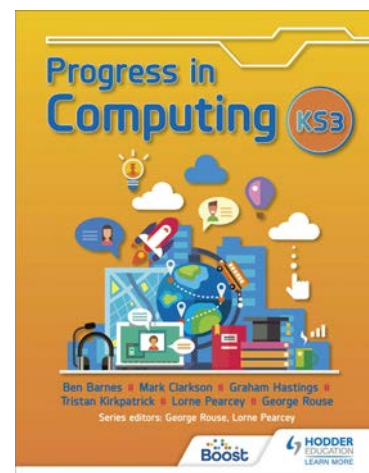
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Got a great learning idea? Email [editor@teachsecondary.com](mailto:editor@teachsecondary.com) or tweet us at [@teachsecondary](https://twitter.com/teachsecondary)



# 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](https://hoddereducation.co.uk)



## ARTS &amp; HUMANITIES

# MyLearning

A free online information hub offering National Curriculum-linked resources produced by arts, culture, heritage and education specialists



## AT A GLANCE

- Managed by Leeds Museums and Galleries
- Features a wide range of resources spanning Key Stages 1 to 4
- The diverse selection of topics covers most subject areas
- All content produced by educators and checked by experts
- Includes over 250 learning stories, from more than 70 different organisations

## REVIEW BY MIKE DAVIES



Do you remember when the internet was still young? If not, it was an interesting time. Back in the far off, distant 1990s it was (rightly) heralded as bringing about a revolution in knowledge sharing.

Fast-forward a decade or two, however, and you now need a range of skills, shrewd judgement and often simple luck in order to pick your way through the endless piles of online dross. And even when you think you've found something interesting, there's less certainty than ever over whether the material's creators can be trusted.

How wonderful, then, that teachers can now turn to MyLearning. Managed by Leeds Museums and Galleries, part of Leeds City Council, MyLearning is an online information resource designed to make the wonderful objects held in the city's museums and further afield available to classrooms nationwide, along with the fascinating stories they have to tell.

Users of the site gain instant access to a wealth of reliable, age-appropriate information without spending a penny, and without having to run the gauntlet of advertisements. And as you'd hope, there's a sensible filtering system in place, helping teachers navigate straight to KS3 or KS4 content, depending on their needs.

The learning resources featured on the site are accompanied by a mix of teacher notes, primary sources and activity ideas. I

particularly like how the background information and stories presented tend to be somewhat off the beaten path, rather than well-worn tales that most of us will already be familiar with.

For example, to my shame I hadn't previously encountered George Africanus, a former slave turned Nottingham-based entrepreneur, before exploring MyLearning. I soon found myself completely absorbed in his life story, and thinking how I might be able to draw on it for a citizenship lesson.

Browsing elsewhere, I already knew a bit about penal reform in the UK, but was nevertheless fascinated to find examples of prisoner badges and read about the details they provided about the lives of convicts within the prison system of nearly 200 years ago. MyLearning really helped to bring these very human stories to life.

Whether you're searching for a quick visual stimulus or a more substantial lesson resource, MyLearning is well worth a look. Registered users also get to access additional bells and whistles, such as the ability to create Pinterest-esque 'Work Boards' that can be reused and shared with students and colleagues alike.

In an ideal world, all our museums and galleries would be connected in this way. Hopefully MyLearning will serve as an inspiring example to others – but for now, there's plenty here for teachers to discover and immerse themselves in.

# teach SECONDARY

## VERDICT

- ✓ A fascinating selection of different artefacts
- ✓ Helpful supporting materials
- ✓ Easy to navigate
- ✓ Celebrates diversity
- ✓ Helps teachers rediscover the joy of chancing upon unexpected discoveries

## VISIT IF...

...you need to freshen up your lessons right across the curriculum with often little-known, yet touchingly human stories that speak to our rich history and heritage.

## SAFEGUARDING

## Mentor

The complete package for any leaders wanting to improve the readiness and capability of their school's safeguarding provision

## AT A GLANCE

- Practical advice and learning for safeguarding leads
- Combines advanced technology and sophisticated practice to produce successful outcomes
- Developed by staff with backgrounds in policing, council administration, social care and education
- Staff get to choose between on-demand, self-guided sessions or tutor-led live training
- Trainees gain access to a personalised learning platform

## REVIEW BY JOHN DABELL

All staff need to possess up-to-date safeguarding and child protection training, so that they can capably discharge their responsibilities within a modern school setting. But for this, they require high quality, accredited CPD training and specialist support services from those in the know.

The Safeguarding Company would be my first port of call, since they offer a comprehensive training programme delivered by staff who possess a deep knowledge of essential safeguarding processes and strategies.

Their aptly named Mentor service provides schools with exactly what they need to manage the wide spectrum of challenges teachers can face in the course of their duties – including digesting the voluminous quantity of statutory guidance and legislation out there, and translating it into usable resources and handy summaries.

Mentor provides schools with an impressive suite of training courses designed to enable all staff to confidently carry out their roles while effectively safeguarding the children and young people in their care. They offer a choice between self-paced, on-demand learning delivered online, or interactive online tutor-led sessions that run throughout the year.

The courses themselves come in different forms to suit the various needs of teachers, and any support or volunteer staff working regularly with children. As such, the individual training can be introductory, general or specialist in nature, though there

are also offerings designed with whole staff training in mind, including refresher courses that cover the 4 'R's of 'Recognise', 'Respond', 'Report' and 'Record'. Beyond that, there are further courses geared towards yet more specific needs, be it those of DSLs, governors or even staff at international schools.

For those seeking an all-inclusive safeguarding training solution, The Safeguarding Company's Mentor Pro option includes access to its full range of on-demand, CPD-accredited courses and specialist safeguarding resources, as well as a useful download library that includes INSET packs, policy templates and guides for handling child abuse disclosures. If, on the other hand, you're looking for something more specialised, bespoke training and services can be arranged via the Mentor Plus package.

Common to all Mentor options are online community rooms and calendars that can be used to share best practice, obtain support and gather resources, as well as access to a host of materials that include case studies, presentations, guidance documents, glossaries and explanatory booklets.

Safeguarding is a complex and demanding area, in which schools need all the help they can get. With its high quality training and impressive array of resources, The Safeguarding Company's Mentor service can provide such help in spades – thus ensuring that school staff can develop and retain the vital skills and knowledge they'll need to keep children safe at all times.



teach  
SECONDARY

## VERDICT

- ✓ Offers a depth and breadth of training that's second to none
- ✓ Provides staff with informed, practical knowledge and the skills they'll need to ably safeguard students
- ✓ Helps ensure compliance with the latest statutory guidance
- ✓ All course content is supported by a host of high quality resources
- ✓ Can optionally support the delivery of whole-school safeguarding training

## UPGRADE IF...

You're looking to change the behaviours, attitudes and skills within your school in a way that creates a better safeguarding culture, or are wanting to equip safeguarding leads with the confidence to oversee consistently high safeguarding standards.

For more details and to obtain a quote, contact 0330 6600 757 or visit [thesafeguardingcompany.com/mentor](https://thesafeguardingcompany.com/mentor)



## HISTORY

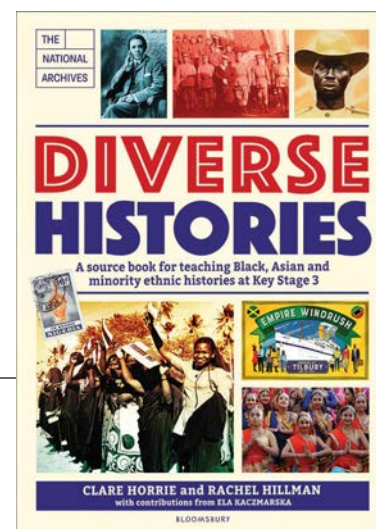
# Diverse Histories

Show your KS3 students just how rich, complex and multifaceted the past really was with this engaging sourcebook

### AT A GLANCE

- A KS3 history resource for developing a diverse history curriculum
- Based on historical texts sourced from The National Archives
- Unearths important stories from British history often omitted from textbooks
- Includes downloadable lesson plans, activities and other assorted duplicable resources

REVIEW BY JOHN DABELL



For too long, history has been viewed through the perspectives of white, rich, northern European men – a filter that has served to obscure just how diverse the movers and shakers of history really were.

The Bloomsbury-published *Diverse Histories* aims to redress the balance. It's a magnificent sourcebook for teaching Black, Asian and minority ethnic histories at KS3, created in association with The National Archives, which seeks to highlight a number of hitherto overlooked, but vital stories with reference to a range of digitised primary sources.

The book contains 60 starter lessons rooted in an enquiry-led approach that draw on a rich variety of sources, including photographs, government reports, telegrams, cartoons, posters, police reports, minutes of meetings, maps, manuscripts, private and official letters, as well as film production notes and newspapers.

Each lesson takes its lead from material stored within The National Archives' collections, meaning that the sources you'll encounter here aren't readily found in other existing textbooks. To that end, the materials are presented alongside important historical context, encouraging students to grapple with apparent contradictions while comparing multiple sources that represent differing points of view. In this way, *Diverse Histories* does a great job of preparing students to confront the complexities of the past.

Among the figures we meet are Black trumpeter John Blanke, who performed at the coronation of Henry VIII, Queen

Victoria's Indian Secretary Abdul Karim, prominent Suffragette Sophia Duleep Singh and Adenrele Ademola – a Nigerian princess and nurse working in London during WWII. To those, you can also add Sislin Fay Allen, who was the first Black woman to join the London Metropolitan Police Force in 1968.

As well as the question prompts you'd expect, the teachers' notes also contain enquiry questions, suggested activities and follow-up tasks for taking students' learning further, complete with downloadable sources, activities and photocopyable resources.

The resource does a good job of helping students see how historical narratives are evidence-based, yet often highly selective and frequently contested interpretations of an often very diverse past. It teaches them that debating, rethinking and revisiting is an essential part of what historians do.

The test of any resource like this is whether it can convey the essence of diverse historical figures in a dignified way, while encouraging different student groups draw parallels between said figures and their own various historical and cultural identities in a non-patronising way – a test which *Diverse Histories* passes with flying colours.

It adopts a transnational, multi-perspective approach that manages to avoid Anglocentrism, while at the same time helping students understand why certain historical topics remain emotionally charged and highly sensitive for particular groups and societies. *Diverse Histories* is a powerful learning tool that can do much to give students a better, more well-rounded understanding of the past.

## teach SECONDARY

### VERDICT

- ✓ Strengthens students' skills in handling primary evidence and forming their own historical interpretations
- ✓ Helps students think in complex ways about difference, diversity and bias
- ✓ Adopts an admirably global perspective in terms of the subjects it covers
- ✓ An indispensable tool for history departments looking to diversify their KS3 curriculum

### PICK ME UP IF...

...you're looking to rethink, reshape and diversify your curriculum, or are about to embark on a substantial process of curriculum review and wish to widen the breadth of history your students will study.

Paperback £24.99 / e-book £22.49



#### 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](http://prep4successnow.wordpress.com) or follow @johninpompano



## THE LAST WORD

# Truth hurts



One might think that maintaining fidelity to the truth and facts is an inalienable part of teaching that trumps all else – but alas, things aren't always so straightforward...

As a high school teacher of global ethics for 20+ years, I became used to regularly pulling off something of a high wire act. I always knew that my next unscripted utterance had the potential to, at best, enlighten my audience or, at worst, get me fired.

When the principal first accepted my proposal for a new ethics course, she warned me that parents would frequently complain more forcefully about ethics classes than those for any other subject – even politics. “Your job,” she stressed, “is to ensure that more compliments than complaints about you are ringing in my ears.”

At first, I naïvely assumed that this would be more likely if I maintained a strict fidelity to honest facts. It soon turned out that being truthful did indeed serve me well in my relations with students – but that when dealing with parents and administrators, greater circumspection would often be required.

### The grey zone

I used to welcome my new students by giving them a copy of a laminated sign I had displayed on my classroom wall, which read as follows:

#### WELCOME TO THE GREY ZONE

**Warning** – *the atmosphere of this room is not conducive to closed, prejudiced, or simple minds; open-and-shut cases; black-and-white issues; paper tiger hunting; straw man savaging; self-aggrandising grandstanding; no-brainers; sound bites; or mere opinions.*

*In this classroom, we separate ‘wise guys’ from ‘wise-guys’. You are entitled to your own opinions, but not your own facts. We will seek the truth and facts whenever possible, guided by love and mutual respect for everyone.*

The grey zone is where grey matter wrestles with the grey areas of contemporary moral issues. I can still recall my Catholic students becoming visibly puzzled when I told them that my first loyalty was not to them, their parents, the principal, the Pope, holy texts, or even Jesus Christ (pausing briefly for effect) – it was to *truth and honesty*.

When we choose to put ego aside and seek the truth, it becomes impossible to lose arguments. Codology, pontification and truth decay, on the other hand, are reliably and painfully debilitating.

Teachers should seek to promote ideas that benefit wider society, rather than those which only serve narrow interest groups. While we will never all be ‘the same’, we should at least recognise the importance of aspiring towards universal equality.

Despite this, however, if I’d dared to point out, for example, that turtles’ eggs are given greater protections than those afforded unborn humans, friends would have shunned me and my career would have taken a very different turn.

### Virtue and values

Telling the truth can often provoke rage and accusations of so-called virtue signalling – “*Tone it down, can’t you?!?*” But when does one’s tone ‘become acceptable’? Should we keep modifying our views until they become bland and homogenised? Looked at this way, it’s hard to see why anyone would attack any teacher who consistently advocates for life, love, and liberty over violence, hatred, and suppression. Truth and honesty aren’t controversial – so it follows that nobody should be disciplined for expressing demonstrable facts, right?

One racist parent at the school demanded my instant dismissal after I’d told a class that racism was ‘born of ignorance’, but I’d maintain that making moral judgments about others based on biological difference *is* ignorant. Then there was the time an archbishop chided me for declaring that

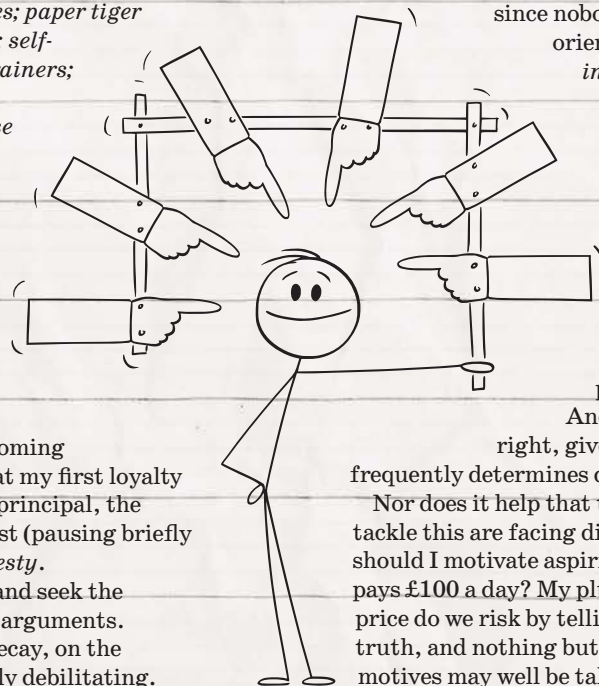
since nobody chooses their sexual orientation, *being gay cannot be intrinsically sinful or immoral.*

Socrates suggested that virtue and values can’t be taught – but if we fail to properly value truth and honesty, then we’re merely making noises. What has always saddened me most is seeing the despair of impoverished teenagers who see education as a game of two sides – one in which their side is always playing uphill and into the wind.

And to some extent they’re right, given how geography so

frequently determines destiny.

Nor does it help that the very people best placed to tackle this are facing disadvantages of their own. How should I motivate aspiring teachers when supply work pays £100 a day? My plumber makes £400+ a day. What price do we risk by telling teenagers the truth – the whole truth, and nothing but the truth – when our words and motives may well be taken down and used against us?







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