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INTERVIEW

MARCUS RASHFORD

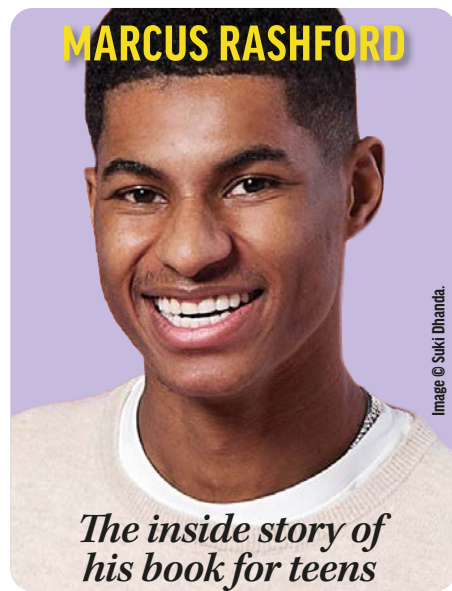


Image © Suki Dhanda

*The inside story of
his book for teens*

DOING GOOD

Is kindness the
key to great
behaviour?

5 STEPS
TO BETTER
PASTORAL
CARE

SUMMER RECOVERY

What schools
are doing to
close the gap

ANDRIA
ZAFIRAKOU

"I'll never
enjoy working
through screens"

How's my teaching?

THE TRICK TO GIVING
GREAT FEEDBACK

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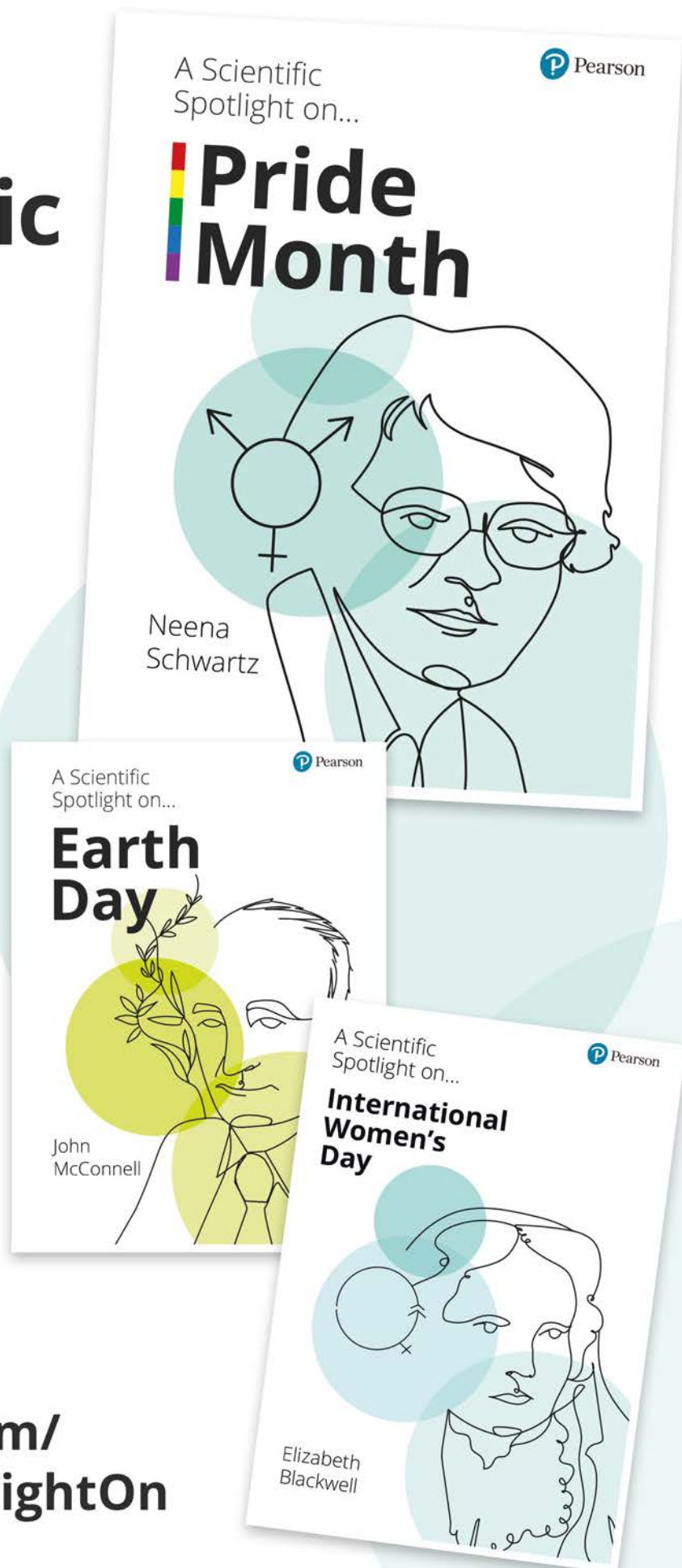


A Scientific Spotlight On...

For several awareness and international days in 2021, we're shining a spotlight on scientists who deserve recognition and have positively impacted the way that we live today.

Find free PDF booklets to download for each of our chosen scientists on the Pearson website. Explore key facts about these scientists and the awareness day they relate to, as well as fun activities and discussion starters with your students.

 go.pearson.com/ScientificSpotlightOn



FROM THE EDITOR

“Welcome...”



You don't have to be a mental health professional to know that being constantly on edge while hundreds of people look to you for help and guidance (and lay the blame at your feet when things go wrong) isn't going to do wonders for your peace of mind.

Yet that pretty much sums up the professional lives of teachers and leaders since March 2020, from their herculean efforts at pivoting to remote learning, to being among the first cohort of workers to spend days in crowded interiors, while the rest of the economy slowly opens up behind them.

As we go to press, the British news media is rife with forebidding headlines concerning the spread of the delta COVID-19 variant throughout schools in England, which has resulted in the sending home of classes, distancing bubbles and even the closure of several schools in County Durham.

For now, though, the mid-May lifting of some mitigation measures in schools – notably the easing of rules around masks – still applies. The severity of the situation continues to vary between regions (with parts of the north, as so often seems to be the case, having to contend with far more than the south), and the vaccination programme puts us in a very different place to where we were last year – but this somewhat cavalier attitude to safety measures in schools from the centre is hardly making things any easier.

Nor, indeed, is a much-vaunted Education Recovery Plan from the government that headteachers, including Vic Goddard (p19) see as not going far enough. As this most fraught of school years gradually winds down, and as schools prepare to spend part of what's usually a quiet August applying academic triage (p66) we can only hope that the coming weeks give the nation's educators a chance to breathe, take stock and recharge.

Until we meet again in September, we hope you all get at least some respite and relaxation over summer. It hardly needs to be said how much you deserve it.

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser
callum.fauser@theteachco.com

On board this issue:



Julia Knight is an international teacher and vice principal



Dr. Paul Heery is CEO at The White Hills Park Trust



Adam Robbins is a head of department and teacher development supervisor



Hannah Day is a head of visual arts, media and film



Dougald Tidswell is a subject leader for mathematics



Alka Sehgal Cuthbert is a teacher, independent academic and writer

KEEP IN TOUCH!

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

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In this issue's selection of ideas and suggestions - a primer on using restorative practice effectively; the importance of making your classroom instructions measurable; what's meant by 'desirable difficulty'; and how to make those between-activity transitions go without a hitch...



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BUILD



FUTURES

**Step by
step,
*we're by
your side***

Starting to think about planning for next year? We're here to help.

Along with our draft specifications, mapping and switching guides and e-training module we have a number of subject specific roadshow events in July where our subject advisors are on hand to answer your questions. To find out more and book your place at a roadshow visit ocr.org.uk/cambridgenationals2022

The newsletter

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

The UNINFORMED teacher's guide to...

CHEUGY

In days gone by, the word would be 'square'. Later 'naff', 'tragic', 'basic'. Now the term that young people use as a cudgel to berate their older peers for being past it is apparently cheugy (*pron. 'chew-gee'*).

For now, at least, it's mainly deployed in a sartorial context, with TikTok (where else?) playing host to posts by the Generation Z fashion police pouring scorn on the clothing choices of younger millennials perceived to be trying a bit too hard, or rocking a look that says *'It's still 2011, right guys?'*

On the one hand, it's quite a sight to see these famously tolerant and progressive Gen Z-ers coming over all *Logan's Run* at the sight of someone wearing UGG boots. But then again, it was ever thus. The fashions that existed 10 years before our own adolescence will always be the most cheugy of all...



DO SAY

"Live,
Laugh, Love,
Losers"

DON'T SAY

"Who doesn't love
a Netflix Friends
binge, yeah?"

BEAT THE BUDGET



What are we talking about?
Role Models, by the Sussex Learning Network

What's the targeted age range?
14- to 19-year-olds

What's on offer?
A series of digital workbooks and videos on topics that include 'Gender & Sexuality', 'The Climate Emergency', 'Body Positivity' and 'Fake News'. The resources have been developed with input from students at the University of Sussex, to help adolescents navigate 'The life issues they wish they'd known more about when they were younger.'



How might teachers use the resource?

Each booklet contains hints, advice and personal accounts from the student Role Models, as well as exercises and links to recommended articles, social media accounts and helplines. Each topic is also accompanied by a teacher resource pack containing appropriately themed lesson plans.

Where are they available?
bit.ly/ts105-rolemodels

DON'T QUOTE ME...

"You've found £200m for a yacht so find cash for schools, ministers"

Robert Halfon, Chairman of the Education Select Committee

Think of a number...

£15 billion

COVID recovery funding package recommended by former catch-up tsar, Sir Keven Collins

£1.4 billion

Additional funding for schools' COVID recovery announced by Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson

71%

Percentage of parents who believe the information in Ofsted reports to be reliable

Source: Ofsted Parents Annual Survey 2021

ONE FOR THE WALL

"Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance"

Will Durant



"I'm used to it"

The charity Just Like Us has published a report showing that LGBT+ school pupils are twice as likely to have been bullied. Its UK study of 2,934 pupils aged 11-18 (of whom 1,140 were LGBT+) and 513 primary/secondary staff found that 42% of LGBT+ school pupils had been bullied within the past year, compared to 21% of non-LGBT+ pupils. Among the bullying victims, 18% of respondents didn't inform anyone of their bullying, while 21% had reported bullying incidents to a school teacher.

The report further notes that 40% of LGBT+ school staff are out to their schools, and that only 33% of LGBT+ pupils agreed that there was a clear process for reporting homophobic bullying within their school.

74% of LGBT+ pupils who reported not seeing any positive messaging from their school about being LGBT+ revealed that they had previously contemplated suicide; among those who had received positive LGBT+ messaging from their school, suicidal thoughts had been experienced by a comparatively lower 65%.

Among the voices quoted in the report was a male LGBT+ teacher, who stated "SLT are against LGBT+ inclusion in principle. That seems to be an insurmountable barrier."

Another voice, that of a bisexual Y11 pupil from Yorkshire, spoke of having to contend with people "Throwing things at me". When asked why they hadn't reported this, their answer was "I'm used to it."

Download the full report from justlikeus.org

▼ **SAVE THE DATE** ▼

KEYNOTES AND CORRESPONDENCE

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

THE HEADLINE:



Ofsted Chief Inspector addresses the the Festival of Education

WHO? Amanda Spielman **WHERE?** Online

WHEN? 24th June 2021

It cannot be right for children to have to cross what amount to picket lines outside their school because one group's religious beliefs – protected by law – sit uncomfortably with teaching about another group's sexuality – also protected by law. It cannot be right that the curriculum can be filleted by pressure groups.

We are also seeing more pupil activism in schools, on many fronts. Some of this is about racism, or anti-racism; some is about climate change; some is about issues that are quite remote for most British children, such as the charged and complicated politics of the Middle East.

But in some cases, children and teachers are suffering abuse or even violence simply for being who they are: for being the wrong religion, or race or ethnicity. This is completely unacceptable. And nor should children be all but forced to support a fellow student's campaign, no matter how compellingly presented, nor feel that they will be ostracised if they do not.

This is a difficult problem for schools. So much effort goes into encouraging young people to understand and think about their democratic rights, which of course include the right to protest and to campaign for what they believe in. But education must come first. And no child should ever feel targeted or marginalised because intolerance has replaced reasoned debate. Schools must continue to be places for all children to be welcomed, to learn and to grow in every sense.

THE HEADLINE:



Sir Kevan Collins resigns from government post of Education Recovery Commissioner

WHO? Sir Kevan Collins and Prime Minister Boris Johnson

WHAT? Letter of resignation **WHEN?** 2nd June 2021

I am writing to offer my resignation as Education Recovery Commissioner. Prior to my appointment, you announced the ambition that lost learning caused by the pandemic be recovered within this Parliament. I applauded this goal and viewed the responsibility of advising the Government on its approach to securing an effective recovery for all children as the most important task of my professional life.

The package of measures announced today provides valuable support, including important investment in teaching quality and tutoring. However, as I set out in my reports to you, I do not believe it is credible that a successful recovery can be achieved with a programme of support of this size.

I hope that you are able to allocate the additional resources that are likely needed for a successful recovery through the forthcoming Spending Review.

13-14 JULY Pupil Premium Conference | 21ST SEPTEMBER Free and Equal? | 6-8 OCTOBER The National Education Show

13-14 JULY

Pupil Premium Conference
Online
pupilpremiumstrategy.co.uk

IG Schools, part of Inside Government, has finalised a fascinating agenda for this online event. Key topics include overcoming the impact of COVID-19, effective use of, and accountability for the pupil premium, narrowing the attainment gap, making the most of the national tutoring programme and more. The event will feature live Q&As with sector leaders, dedicated discussion groups and match-making networking.

21ST SEPTEMBER

Free and Equal?
Lytchett Minster School in Dorset and online
beyondthis.co.uk/stand-up-conference

Organised by teacher and speaker Peter Radford, in liaison with Amnesty International UK and Unicef UK's Rights Respecting School Award, Free and Equal? is a conference for schoolchildren and teachers that will examine strategies for tackling racism and inequality. Attendees will hear first-hand accounts of growing up in the UK as a person of colour, reflect on how prejudice and unconscious bias perpetuate injustice.

6-8 OCTOBER

The National Education Show
Online
bit.ly/ts105-nes

Taking place across three days dedicated to ALN / SEN, teaching and learning, and mental Health and wellbeing respectively, virtual attendees will have the chance to drop in on 40+ seminars and short talks. With topics ranging from cognitive behavioural practices, to emotional resilience and working with parents, the line up of speakers so far is set to include Professor Mick Waters, Sonia Gill and Hywel Roberts.

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Is your school making the most effective and economical use of its learning technology?

Which of the many innovative learning solutions out there can deliver great outcomes for your students?

These are the questions we seek to explore in Technology & Innovation – a specialist publication by The Teach Company aimed at teachers and school leaders working across primary and secondary settings.



Inside this issue...

- Why schools should embrace personalised learning
- Making use of digital devices, minus the distractions
- How to get a good deal from your tech spend
- Is artificial intelligence really coming after your job?

MATHS CORNER

Intriguing problems to inspire curiosity



Get Into Film



June saw the launch of Into Film's new streaming service. Free to access for holders of a Public Video Screening Licence from Filmbankmedia, Into Film+ features a curated catalogue of more than 150 titles spanning recent releases, classic cinema, foreign language films, documentaries and more besides.

Each film is further accompanied by one or more exclusive learning resources covering a range of subjects and year groups. Examples include interviews with the filmmakers behind *12 Years a Slave*, *He Named Me Malala* and *Suffragette*, plus materials from partnering organisations such as the children's mental health charity Place2Be, which has contributed a resource on wellbeing in the context of *Inside Out*.

According to Into Film's CEO, Paul Reeve, "Into Film+ is a game-changer for teachers. As the first streaming platform dedicated to film and built specifically for use in schools, it enables the power of this wonderful medium and the stories it tells to be fully realised in education. A carefully curated catalogue that covers a broad range of titles and genres, and a wealth of curriculum-linked resources created by educational specialists, will provide an incredible goldmine for teachers looking to provide inspiring learning and cultural experiences for pupils of all ages."

Further details about Into Film+ and a full list of available titles can be found at intofilm.org/films



Retweets

Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?

Mr Osborne @MrAFOsborne

Yet another day of sorting out the administration of the TAGs; CAGs (whatever this nonsense is). As a teacher of 34 English students it's dominating my whole life. The profession is shouting and screaming with the devastating workload and NO ONE is listening!

Clare Sealy @ClareSealy

The sooner the profession gives up on showing, evidencing and proving things and just does its job, the better. All that misplaced energy which could be spent on actually teaching.

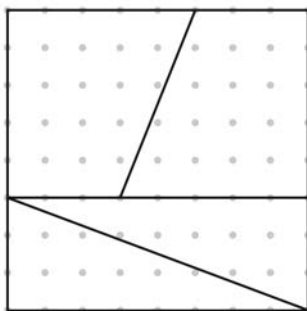
Follow us @teachsecondary - and let us know what you're thinking!

An Appearing Act

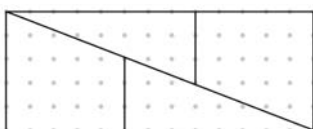
(Wild Maths Pathway: Dotty grids)

Draw an eight by eight square on dotty paper.

Cut it up to make the four pieces shown in the diagram:



Now rearrange the pieces to make the shape below:



It seems that the same pieces can make two shapes with different areas!

Can you explain where the extra area comes from?

Here are some questions you might like to consider:

Can other squares be split up and rearranged to make rectangles with a different area?

Are there other square/rectangle pairs where the areas differ by 1 square unit?

Is there a pattern in the sizes of squares that can be arranged in this way?

We hope that your students enjoy An Appearing Act; don't forget to check the latest Live Problems at nrich.maths.org/9451 - the NRICH team looks forward to receiving solutions from your students and will publish some of the best ones on the NRICH website.

A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

#16 ODD ONE OUT

Decide which object on the other side of this card you think is the odd one out.

Say why.

There are no right or wrong answers, but you need thoughtful reasons based on what you can see in the pictures.

A Few Minutes of Design ODD ONE OUT



MUST-READ TITLES FOR NEW TEACHERS

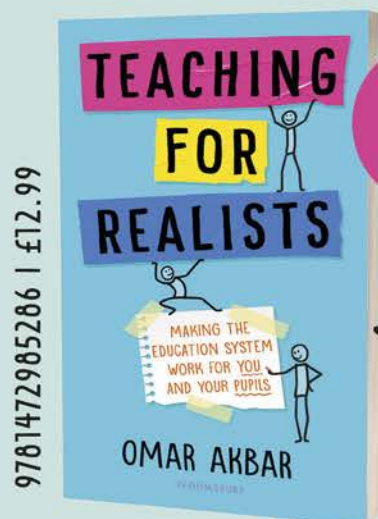
RESOURCES TO SUPPORT, INSPIRE AND AMUSE



9781472984487 | £14.99

FEEL FREE TO SMILE

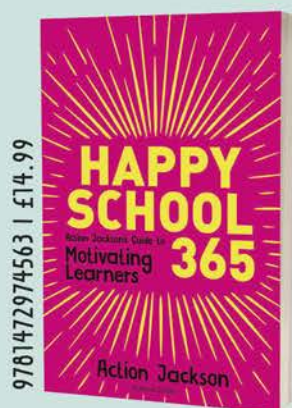
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TEACHING FOR REALISTS

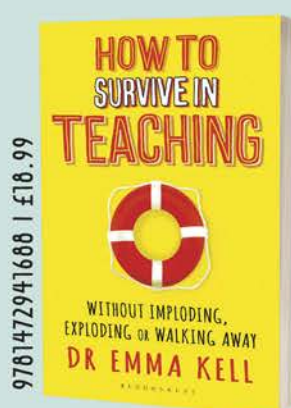
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HAPPY SCHOOL 365

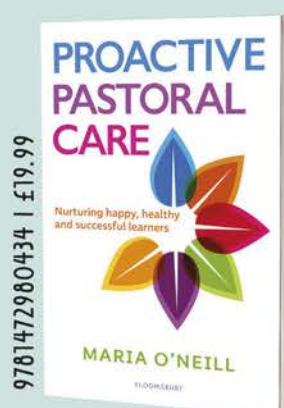
Motivate your learners to succeed with Action Jackson. An inspirational guide offering 21 easy-to-implement ideas to motivate young people and build their confidence.



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HOW TO SURVIVE IN TEACHING

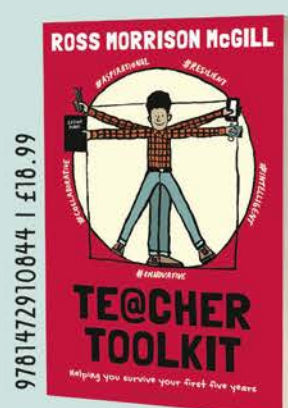
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[M A T H S P R O B L E M]

UNDERSTANDING INDICES

Students often misapply the 'rules of indices' – for example, multiplying indices when they should be added. This lesson aims to help students rely less on rules and more on understanding.

When a student sees the multiplication symbol in an expression like $5^3 \times 5^4$, it can be very tempting for them to multiply the indices and obtain 5^{12} , instead of adding them to obtain the correct answer, 5^7 . This lesson helps students to see why adding the indices for multiplication and subtracting them for division makes sense.

THE DIFFICULTY

This task is intended to bring to the surface students' difficulties with multiplying and dividing indices.

Match up any cards that are equal to each other. Some cards might not match up with any of the others.

$10^3 \times 10^4$	$\frac{10^9}{10^3}$	10^{12}
10×10^6	$10^3 \times 10^9$	$\frac{10^{14}}{10^2}$
10^6	10^7	10^3

The cards should end up in 4 groups:

$10^3 \times 10^4$ 10^7 10×10^6	10^{12} $10^3 \times 10^9$ $\frac{10^{14}}{10^2}$	10^6 $\frac{10^9}{10^3}$	10^3
--	---	-------------------------------	--------

If students finish early, ask them to make up two more examples for each of their groups.

Students are likely to mis-match $10^3 \times 10^4$ with 10^{12} , mis-match 10×10^6 with 10^6 , mismatch $\frac{10^9}{10^3}$ with 10^3 , and mis-match $\frac{10^{14}}{10^2}$ with 10^7 . Asking students to check by evaluating each expression (the multiplications by 10 should be easy to do without a calculator) should help them to spot the errors. At this stage, it is enough to get these errors out in the open.

THE SOLUTION

1. Multiplication requires addition of the indices

What does 10^3 mean?

Students might say 10×3 or $10 + 10 + 10$, but this is wrong.

Write down $10^3 = 10 \times 10 \times 10$ and ask students what this is equal to.

Now do the same for 10^4 .

Students will write $10^4 = 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10$.

Explain to the person next to you what $10^3 \times 10^4$ must be equal to and why. Make up two more examples.

Students will see that $10^3 \times 10^4 = 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 = 10^7$, not 10^{12} .

2. Division requires subtraction of the indices

Now think about $\frac{10^9}{10^3}$ in the same way, by writing out all the 10s. Make up two more examples.

Students will work out that

$$\frac{10^9}{10^3} = \frac{10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10}{10 \times 10 \times 10} = 10^6, \text{ not } 10^3$$

Write a summary in your book of how multiplication and division work with indices.

Make sure that students appreciate that the 10 could be **any** number, but it must be the **same** number throughout



if we are going to be able to simplify the powers like this.

Checking for understanding

Make up a task like the one we started with, with 9 expressions involving indices that have to be matched up. Make sure there are some tricky ones that could catch people out!



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

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Schools

The Vocab Clinic

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

>< TRY THIS TODAY: **SIMPLE >< SOPHISTICATED**

One of the key skills for pupils to enact with vocabulary is to make the right word choice at the right time, whether they're speaking or writing. Of course, it's essential for pupils to have a broad and deep vocabulary to make choices from, but those decisions can be modelled and scaffolded in the classroom.

With the modelling strategy 'simple >< sophisticated', teachers can quickly and repeatedly model apt word choices. For example, if a pupil uses the word 'sweat' in biology, the teacher may model the use of 'perspire'. We can use such pairings repeatedly and discuss the choice – e.g. 'old >< archaic', or 'ask >< interrogate', etc.



Cracking the academic code



It's crucial for pupils to write in clear, well-organised sentences while making skilful word choices. One subtle truth about effective academic writing is that

it employs balanced sentences and sweet-sounding rhythms. One common approach to creating balance and rhythm is to vary sentence lengths for effect.

The 'Long, long, short sentences' model does what it says on the tin. The sweeping rhythms of long sentences can provide the clarity and detail that are key to effective essay writing and many other modes of writing. Following these with a short sentence can then give a paragraph a blunt, quick ending that provides great potency and rhythm, thus successfully hammering the point home.

DO THEY KNOW?

There are roughly 100,000 word families in the English language

ONE FOR: **MATHS STUDENTS**

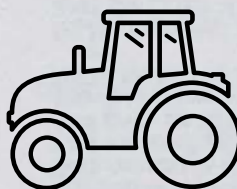
SUBTRACTION

Derives from: Latin, from 'sub', meaning 'from under' and 'trahere', meaning 'to pull'

Means: A mathematical operation that takes something away

Related terms: Deduct, remove, minus, submarine, submerge, retract, contract

Note: The word 'subtract' is closely related to the word 'tractor' – both pulling something!



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

CARDINAL

In maths

a cardinal number indicates the quantity of something being counted without using fractions or decimals, e.g. 1, 2, 3...

In RE

a cardinal is a leading figure in the Catholic church



One word at a time

We can sometimes go crazy for words with origins we love. 'Beserk' is one such word with a memorable etymology, being among the small number of words in the English language clearly derived from Old Norse roots (alongside words like 'sky', 'skull', 'ugly' and 'slaughter').

The Berserker warriors were known for fighting furiously in a trance-like state. The word itself combines two other Old Norse words: 'bjorn', meaning 'bear', and 'sekr', meaning 'coat'. The Berserker warriors' wild, bear-like appearance informs the common idiom 'to go beserk'. Feel free to go mad and encourage your pupils to use beserk in their own writing...



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

A problem of authority

Between modern aversions to notions of ‘authority’ and the policing of public discourse, is it any surprise that teachers are finding it harder to be authoritative?

If there’s one place in society where we’d want adults to be authority figures, you’d think it would be schools. Yet today, it seems that there’s an ambivalence, or even hostility to the idea of teachers acting in an authoritative manner, such that the job of educating is being made harder than ever.

Incendiary character

Take two recent examples. Firstly, that of the teacher at Batley Grammar School who was deserted by his head, colleagues and union representatives when some parents and members of local Muslim groups – not all of whom even had children at the school – expressed offence at his showing of a cartoon depicting Mohammed in a RE lesson about tolerance and freedom of thought.

In the face of protests at the school gates, the head suspended the teacher (and later his two colleagues) before issuing an apology to those protesting. An investigation is ongoing while the teacher and his family remain in hiding.

The second example is that of Pimlico Academy, where students held protests over the school’s policies regarding its uniform, curriculum and flying of the national flag. The head, Daniel Smith, subsequently resigned, not long after NEU members at the school passed a vote of no confidence in him.

At first glance, both cases concerned a teacher or leader who had seemingly shown insufficient sensitivity to feelings centred around race or

religion. Yet wherever you stand on the specifics involved, there are deeper issues at play here that don’t relate to racism or religious discrimination, but which serve to give both incidents, and others like them, their incendiary character. Those issues involve long-standing problems with teachers’ authority, and related failings of solidarity.

A common purpose

The ‘knowledge’ part of a teacher’s job requires them to be authorities in their subject, but also authoritative in a wider sense that models normative ethical behaviour.

or deny their respective home identities. But it does mean parking them for a while, so that we can get on with cultivating a common sense of purpose and developing the identities of ‘teachers’ and ‘pupils’ that are so unique to schools.

Ground rules

In 1966, three eminent educational scholars – R.S. Peters, Basil Bernstein and Elvin Lionel – wrote a paper entitled ‘Rituals in Education’, in which they discussed the increasing inability of adult society to oversee the rituals of the young as they entered adulthood. Adolescents,

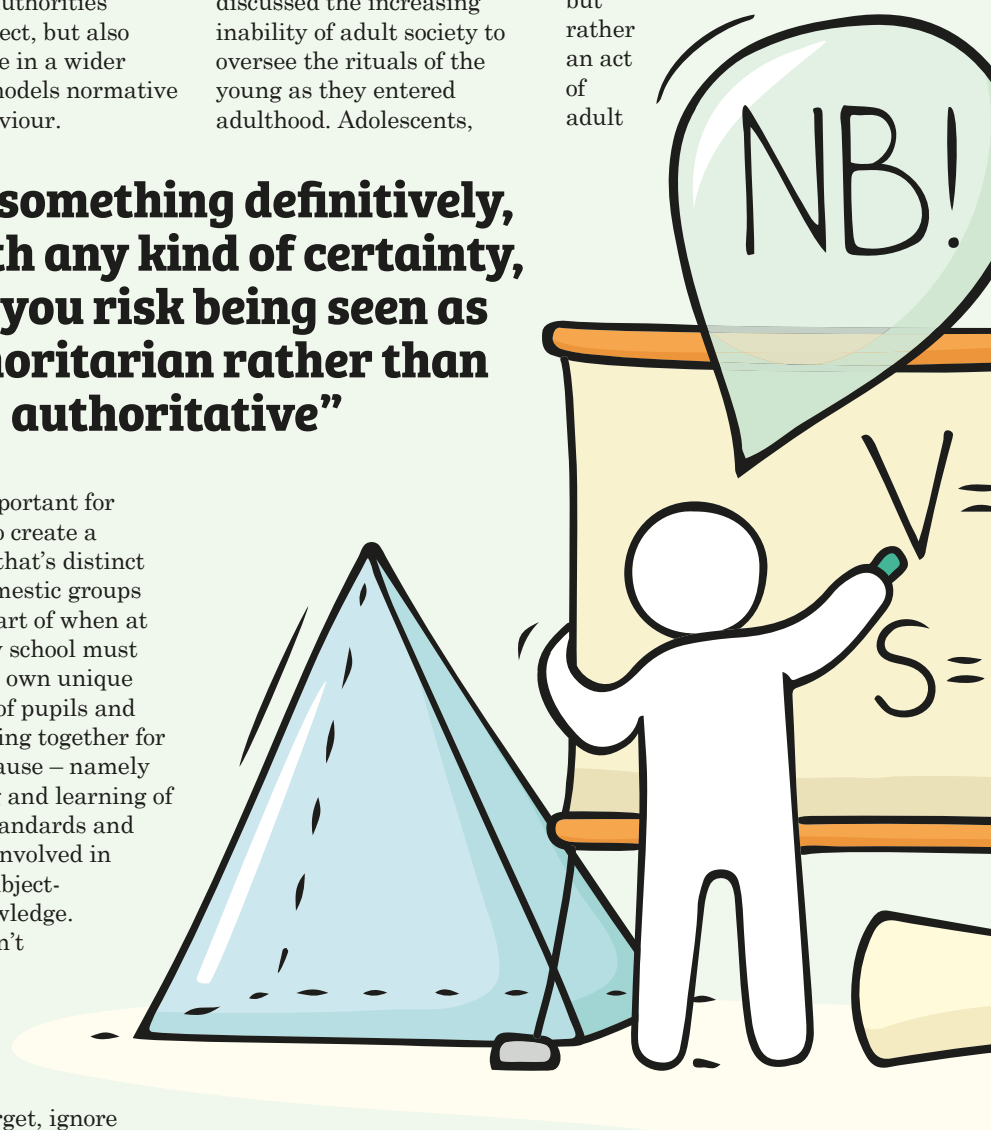
they argued, were overseeing these for themselves, while adults increasingly cleared the field. They didn’t foresee a happy future for schools in the event of the trend continuing, because intergenerational relationships in semi-public or civic institutions like schools depend on adult authority to guarantee common ground rules.

In this context, rules of conduct aren’t repressive or restrictive, but rather an act of adult

“Say something definitively, or with any kind of certainty, and you risk being seen as authoritarian rather than authoritative”

This is important for being able to create a community that’s distinct from the domestic groups pupils are part of when at home. Every school must maintain its own unique community of pupils and teachers acting together for a common cause – namely the teaching and learning of the ideas, standards and procedures involved in acquiring subject-specific knowledge.

That doesn’t mean that pupils – or indeed teachers – should somehow forget, ignore



Join the CONVERSATION

The Academy of Ideas Education Forum gathers monthly to discuss trends in educational policy, theory and practice. Find out more at academyofideas.org.uk/forums/education_forum

responsibility. In setting and upholding rules, teachers and heads relieve young people of the burden of responsibility for the school community, and shoulder the task of managing the emotional energies of individuals that can be potentially disruptive – something that very few students could take on, in addition to their studies.

Navigating the journey from youth to adulthood partly requires internalising which behaviours and norms are permissible at home with one's family, versus what's

permissible at school alongside friends and peers. The insights and experiences acquired during this process will help pupils negotiate their adult relationships later on in life.

These aren't rigid distinctions, but necessary ones if young people are to be educated and socialised so that they can participate in public and civic life as part of a pluralistic, democratic society. This requires a cohort of adults in schools able to act authoritatively, without having to constantly second guess themselves out of worry that what they say will be misinterpreted and lead to a students' revolt, parental protests or worse.

An abdication of duty

And yet, 'authority' itself is now often seen in negative terms. Say something definitively or with any kind of certainty, particularly among children, and you risk being seen as *authoritarian* rather than *authoritative*.

However, the fact remains that teachers must be able to stand before pupils as representatives of their subject, and not as perceived gaolers or psychological manipulators (or indeed, as friends or political comrades).

All adults need to support teachers in this task, and teachers need to support each other, because that's what adults do. By upholding discipline, teachers and heads can help to create and sustain the basis of a school community. Opting for easy popularity points by trying to be pupils' friends or allies in some social justice cause amounts to an abdication of this key educational duty.

Looking upstream, at what's happened in academia and teacher education departments over the past few decades, we can find teachers who haven't been helped to become authorities in their subject, or familiarised with the foundational subjects of education. Instead, they've been told to become experts in seemingly anything other than their *raison d'être*, whether it be cognitive neuroscience or educationism – take your pick. Any assertions of authority must be expressed in the most self-effacing way possible, through recourse to pseudo-scientific behaviour codes or child-friendly forms of restitutive justice. This is as dishonest as it is ineffective.

Faux market

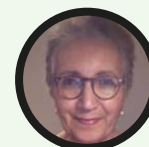
Into the moral space once occupied by teacher authority and the intrinsic value of knowledge has thus come the creeping marketisation of education and knowledge, while at the

same time, the educator and pupil relationship has morphed into one more akin to provider and consumer.

Schools and teachers now exist to serve individual pupil needs, and in this faux market, the communality of education is lost. Instead, we have this 'L'Oreal approach' to schooling where it's all about you – '*You're worth it*' – simply by dint of being who you are.

This is what most parents will tell their children, and a part of unconditional parental love. Teachers, however, have a different task – to help children extend their imagination, and develop their ability to reflect on and perceive the world from the perspective of individuals different to themselves. This democratically desirable characteristic is more likely to come about indirectly, through teaching and learning based on a liberal, subject-based curriculum. But in order to work, this type of education system needs authoritative teachers.

If we continue to accept that teachers and schools are there to serve pupils as consumers, and that pupils are there to produce good optics via school performance tables and statistically significant outcomes – then who exactly is there to serve education?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alka Sehgal Cuthbert is a teacher, independent academic and writer, and co-editor of *What Should Schools Teach? – Disciplines, subjects and the pursuit of truth*, 2nd Ed. (£25, UCL Press); follow her at @ASCphiled

I wish to be a teacher

Leah, 7

Brain tumour

*"Leah is noticeably
more independent
since her wish."*
Mum, Elaine

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Pegging oversight of the education system to electoral cycles and short-term government priorities prevents the kind of long-term, meaningful reform that will actually benefit teachers

Melissa Benn



A couple of years ago, I received a cry for help from a young woman who was nearing the end of her second year as a secondary school teacher at an inner city secondary. When we met, she described how, in her first year, filled with enthusiasm for her work, she'd get to school for 7am, work through her lunch hour and breaks, and leave at 7pm. She was determined to not be one of the four in 10 teachers who, back in 2019, were quitting within their first five years.

By the time of her first half term, she had become ill. As the year wore on, she continued to feel exhausted and unhappy. In her second year, she decided to do things differently; come in later, do the job and nothing else, leave by 5pm.

The change left her with more energy for her outside life, but she was still exhausted at the end of each day. At the same time, she felt powerless to solve the problems of her pupils, which were often the result of extreme or prolonged poverty.

By the end of her second year she had quit. Teaching had been sold to her almost as a virtuous mission – but this mission was being stymied by an over-controlled, underfunded system.

Mounting despair

While many schools and many teachers (particularly in better-off areas) have managed to maintain stable, high-achieving educational communities, those teaching in impoverished areas are falling prey to mounting despair and cynicism. The question is therefore, what now?

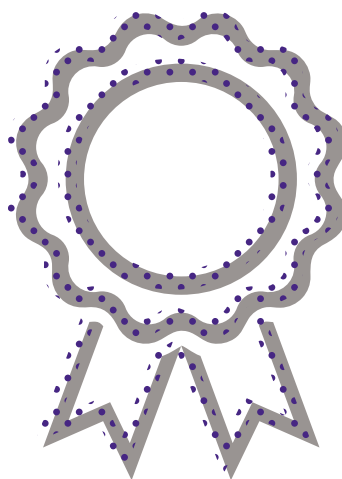
Is it time to present with evangelical fervour yet another set of proposals for

overhauling English state education? We can certainly point to some much-needed sensible reforms, such as replacing Ofsted with a more sensitive and supportive inspection service, and trimming the over-weighty curriculum. It would also be wise to lift the freeze on teachers' pay, while reducing the grossly inflated salaries of some academy and free school heads.

But if we're ever to tackle the system's underlying problems, then something else is needed.

Education has always been subject to the vagaries of our tribal political system. Would-be governments set out radical plans, and once they're in power, the profession is shaken up by the enactment of said plans while being told *'It's all for the best...'* More often than not (as with the Tory reforms of the last 10 years), various grand promises remain unfulfilled while old problems go unresolved.

We need to break with the politics of the short-term electoral cycle, and think instead about the long-term future of public education. What do we really want to achieve, and how we are going to get there?



Amicable agreement

A discussion just like this has recently been initiated by the Foundation for Education Development (FED). Some might be mistrustful of an enterprise that can bring Tories, Labour and Liberal Democrats to the same table in amicable agreement, but the FED initiative – which also involves a host of academics, practitioners and international experts – recognises that our education system is hugely complex, and that any deep dive discussion needs to reflect on everything, from purposes and objectives, to how to ensure genuine equity and inclusion.

Similar national exercises conducted elsewhere have previously led to radical reforms. The most famous example is perhaps Finland, where following two decades of debate, the country's unequal and patchy school system was replaced by a universal comprehensive system that's won plaudits from a number of different countries.

England admittedly has a very different culture to that of Finland – but it may be that a weariness fuelled by constant upheaval, faddy ideas and arrogant ministers has made those on both right and left open to trying something different.

There's considerable expertise, and a deep understanding of what does and doesn't work, right through our education system. At the very least, we owe it to the idealistic, energetic young teachers of the future to start designing an education system now that they can work for with genuine pride and enjoyment – and hopefully remain in for more than a handful of stressful years.

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The reporting and commentary around the government's Education Recovery Plan shouldn't conceal the fact that the funding doesn't go far enough – and that we'll be paying dearly for deciding to economise on our children's futures for years to come...

Vic Goddard



For most school staff, the last few weeks of exam classes usually signify the start of preparations for the coming academic year. Things still feel much the same this year, despite the lack of external exams, so it's been an opportune time for the government to release its Education Recovery Plan (ERP).

It would be fair to say, however, that for many of us, the 'plan' falls far short of what's needed. Its main focus seems to be on extending additional tutoring to include direct funding of schools, so that they can create local solutions. That's something that was missing from the initial rollout, and on paper at least, should be welcomed.

Unfortunately, the fact that schools will only be partially funded, and are expected to meet 25% of the cost, means that for some children, this tutoring simply won't happen. The government has also stated that schools will be expected to cover a bigger percentage of costs in future. It's important to remember that many schools have recently had to undergo restructuring and lost staff, due to real term funding cuts. Funding that 25% (or more) will be impossible for some.

Easy sell

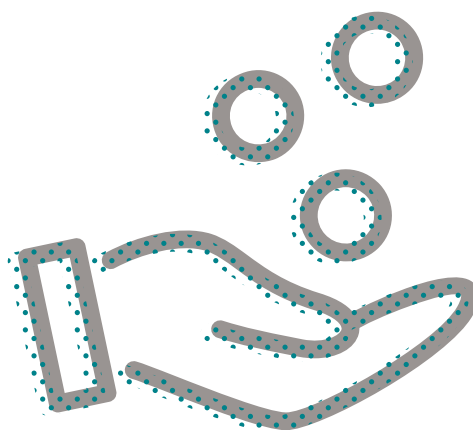
The tutoring programme turned out to be the main focus of media reporting around the ERP – possibly because it represented the biggest funding allocation, and was the easiest angle to sell to understandably concerned parents and carers. However, in a series of fleeting TV appearances, the Education

Secretary also mentioned the potential for longer school days.

While no decision has been made yet, it doesn't take much thought to appreciate the challenges this would present. A number of teachers may welcome the change – particularly those already providing additional learning outside of lesson time, and who would doubtless appreciate being remunerated for the extra hours they're currently working unpaid.

And yet, even if this government has learned nothing else about schools in the last two years, they'll have surely picked up on how any change in what schools offer instantly has a massive effect on *everyone*. That includes teachers with their own children, even more cars on the road during rush hour, young carers at home, the mental health repercussions of losing other valuable extra-curricular opportunities, such as the arts and sport...

If I'm honest, it almost feels like the government is hoping that we react, as individuals and through our associations, in a way that will once again let them blame 'lazy teachers'!



False economy

What's ironic here is that those aspects of the plan less emphasised within the government's media campaign actually have the potential to be very good, and have a positive impact in the long-term. The Early Career Framework, for example, has the potential to improve the support and training received by new teachers, and if implemented well, could keep well-informed and rounded professionals in the job for longer.

The £153 million of funding focused on early years staff training (specifically speech and language teaching), could help our young people become even more successful once they reach secondary school. The issue with these aspects is, of course, that any positive effects will take some time to emerge – certainly not before the next election!

I feel I've done well so far to not mention the resignation of Sir Kevan Collins from his role of 'Catch up Tsar', due to the level of funding allocated to the ERP – about a tenth of what he considered to be the minimum required. Of course, there are some incredibly difficult decisions to be made by the government, and I genuinely sympathise with their position – but to not invest fully in the young people hit so badly by the pandemic is, without doubt, one of the biggest false economies I can conceive of.

There are times when it's felt we're in direct conflict with the government's approach to education, with teachers painted as workshy and lazy by certain sections of the media. But not funding catch-up education fully doesn't punish teachers – all it achieves is to ensure that children are left abandoned. I'd therefore like to offer my personal thanks to Sir Kevan for acting with integrity, and for standing up for all of our young people...



Vic Goddard is headteacher at Passmores Academy – as seen on Channel 4's *Educating Essex* – and author of *The Best Job in the World* (Independent Thinking Press, £14.99)

5 REASONS TO TRY... LanSchool

Edtech software enabling engaging learning experiences in connected classrooms



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Backed by Lenovo, LanSchool's solutions guide learning, promote collaboration and maximise teaching time – all while keeping students safe. Having been used by teachers for over 30 years, LanSchool's award-winning solutions are now enabling successful blended and hybrid learning.

1 GUIDE LEARNING

As 1:1 devices have become common, the teacher's role has changed from front-and-center presenter to 'guide on the side'. Teachers need the ability to take command of the classroom, but with safe boundaries in place.

LanSchool gives teachers visibility into students' digital activities, whether they're exploring independently or working in groups. Teachers and students can message each other when support is needed. Teachers can also push the same website to the entire class for discussion, or they can broadcast individual student screens to the class.



2 PROMOTE COLLABORATION

Collaborative learning isn't just fun for students – it's also great for their academic and social-emotional growth. Collaboration has been shown to result in higher group and individual achievement, healthier relationships with peers, more metacognition and greater psychological health and self-esteem.

LanSchool enables students to collaborate on 1:1 devices through group chat, messaging, voting and screen broadcasting features. Teachers can observe and guide students from a central dashboard, as students work together in groups and present their final work to the entire class.

3 MAXIMISE TEACHING TIME

With all the administrative work that comes with running a classroom, teachers only spend about half their time actually teaching. Too often, the addition of digital devices adds to this administrative load, and can even

detract from students' focus during precious teaching moments.

LanSchool helps teachers stay connected with students while they work on their devices, ensuring they remain focused and on the right track. The software is easy to set up, learn and manage, so as to avoid overburdening teachers with additional administrative work.

4 SUPPORT STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

One of the biggest challenges teachers face is keeping students engaged. A recent LanSchool survey found that 86% of teachers felt student engagement worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that teachers ranked this low engagement as their number one remote teaching challenge.

LanSchool enables teachers to assess students' engagement levels, which may otherwise be difficult when they're working on 1:1 devices. Teachers can observe students' progress and chat with

them in real time, making it easier to keep students engaged and determine who needs more help.

5 ENCOURAGE DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Becoming a good digital citizen takes guided practice. Students with limited digital access outside of school – or whose only digital interactions are via social media – will need help from teachers to understand the rules of engagement online.

LanSchool gives teachers a way of guiding digital citizenship practice as students interact via chat, screenshare and messaging. It also enables schools to set boundaries around web and app access, and scan students' web and app history for any concerning interactions.

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For more information about LanSchool, please email sales@lanschool.com or visit lanschool.com/gb

KEY POINTS

Built for classroom and hybrid environments, with cloud-based and locally hosted versions, and compatible with any OS

Award-winning software built by teachers for teachers, backed by Lenovo and available on more than 8 million devices in 95 countries

Committed to student safety and within the reach of school budgets, through Lenovo's education device bundle offering

Software that's easy to install, implement and maintain, with customer service representatives on hand to help with adoption

The changing nature of Pupil Premium

Lauren Powell, IG Schools portfolio lead at Inside Government, surveys the ways in which the pandemic could affect how schools approach their Pupil Premium obligations

The IG Schools team recently took the time to speak with a number of education leaders and practitioners to better understand the key challenges the sector currently faces with regards to Pupil Premium. Here are the four main considerations that emerged...

Mental health

A key theme arising from our research was the extent to which respondents were needing to support children and young people's mental health, and help them cope with the impact of the disruption to their schooling over the past 18 months.

Pupils have had to process the difficulties of learning outside of classroom settings and last year's exam fiasco, and in many cases, deal with issues relating to anxiety, loneliness and bereavement. Those eligible for Pupil Premium are likely to have suffered more than most.

As such, many school leaders and support staff acknowledged to us the continuing importance of cultivating positive mental wellbeing and emotional resilience over the 2021/22 academic year. Given the turbulence so many are currently experiencing – not least the local spikes in infection rates at the time of writing – providing young people with a sense of stability was widely considered by our respondents to be of greater priority than focusing on their academic outcomes.



Post-COVID recovery

As schools approach the end of this academic year, their COVID-19 recovery plans are continuing shape how they operate. Accurate measurements of student progress have become more important than ever for their curriculum planning, and particularly so for pupils already experiencing levels of disadvantage.

This won't have been helped, however, by an increase in the number of pupils defined as disadvantaged over the past year – outside of standard Pupil Premium grantees or looked after children criteria – with the result that preparing and allocating resources for curriculum delivery has become extremely difficult.

Differentiating between levels of progress and subsequent future needs is an important task, but an increasingly complicated

one. The likelihood is that recipients of Pupil Premium will have benefited least from online learning during the lockdowns, yet schools must continue adapt and deliver their curriculum for every child.

Scaling up

School leaders are well-versed in allocating per-child funding entitlements for activities that support academic progression, in a way that addresses individual needs. But if the number of children needing that academic support has risen, then they'll have to consider how said funding can be best used, and determine which interventions will be most effective.

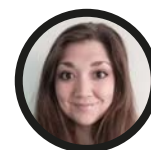
Our research suggests that schools have faced some difficulties with that latter task, and in determining how such

activities should be balanced. This has caused some confusion around the level of detail and breakdown required for reporting how Pupil Premium allocations have been spent, and how best to demonstrate the outcomes that have emerged from that spending.

Interventions and staffing

The actual delivery of interventions has also proved challenging, according to our analysis. Support staff, including TAs, have traditionally played key roles in the provision of academic and enrichment activities, but many such staff have seen their duties and responsibilities change significantly since 2020, affecting the type and level of support they're now able to offer.

Some staff we spoke to highlighted the need for perceptions to change regarding support staff, and TAs in particular. At present, it seems there's not enough understanding of just how valuable their skills and abilities really are – especially in relation to students in receipt of Pupil Premium.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lauren Powell is Portfolio Lead at IG Schools, part of the education training and events organiser Inside Government, which will be hosting the National Pupil Premium Conference on the 13-14th July; to view the agenda and reserve your space, visit pupilpremiumstrategy.co.uk

WHY I LOVE...

Trevor Cain explains how the Dremel 3D45 3D printer has helped breathe new life into his school's design and technology lessons

ABOUT ME:

NAME:

TREVOR CAIN

JOB ROLE:

Head of design and technology

SCHOOL:

The FitzWimarc School

FAVOURITE FEATURE:

"It's extremely easy to use, with a clear and intuitive display that makes it straightforward to follow exactly what's happening"



TALKING ABOUT:

DREMEL DIGILAB 3D PRINTER 3D45

“How are you using the device to engage your pupils?”

Since we introduced the Dremel printers we've seen big increases in the number of pupils choosing to take design and technology at GCSE and A Level. I put that down to two things – the power the printers give pupils to turn their ideas into reality, and the excitement of working with cutting-edge technology.

The Dremel 3D45 has a real 'wow factor' with our pupils, which makes my job easier, since the pupils are engaged before we even start printing. We have other 3D printers, but the great design of the Dremel means my pupils always choose it over the others.

“What have been your most successful projects?”

The Dremel comes into its own as a problem solving tool. Recent projects developed by our A Level students included a humidity level monitor for a lizard's terrarium, and a buoyancy floating aid that monitors PH levels near coral reefs. Our students were able to make multiple prototypes of their designs, in a way that they would never have been able to in the past. This process of designing, prototyping and improving a product is a critical part of how design is done in the real world, enabling our pupils to solve problems and create designs that really work.

DREMEL DIGILAB

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“What skills does it help to develop?”

The most important aspect of 3D printing in the classroom is the opportunity it affords for rapid prototyping. This process helps students get better at using CAD software, by allowing them to see whether their computer designs work as printed objects. More often than not, their first model won't work perfectly, prompting students to draw on their problem solving skills in order to improve their designs.

The Dremel printers also encourage independent working. The enclosed design ensures the printer is safe to use, allowing pupils to use the printers in their own time to improve and develop their designs themselves.

“Would you recommend it?”

The Dremel 3D45 is ideal for use in a school. It's extremely easy to use, with a clear and intuitive display that makes it straightforward to adjust your print and follow exactly what's happening and how long the print will take.

One aspect of 3D printers that's sometimes overlooked are their power as a teaching aid. The printer can be used to make a whole host of classroom tools and teaching aids. For example, we'd previously use videos to teach our engineering students about pulleys; however, we soon realised that we could print some classroom equipment ourselves, allowing us to provide practical live demonstrations.

WILL IT WORK FOR YOU?

+ A 'plug in and play' solution, thanks to its simple and intuitive design

+ The closed build area with cooling and filtration system make it safe for classroom use

+ The inclusion of built-in wifi and an integrated camera enables remote printing

+ Features a heated build plate that works to produce optimal results every time

3 things we've learnt about...

TEACHERS' VIEWS ON CATCH-UP LEARNING

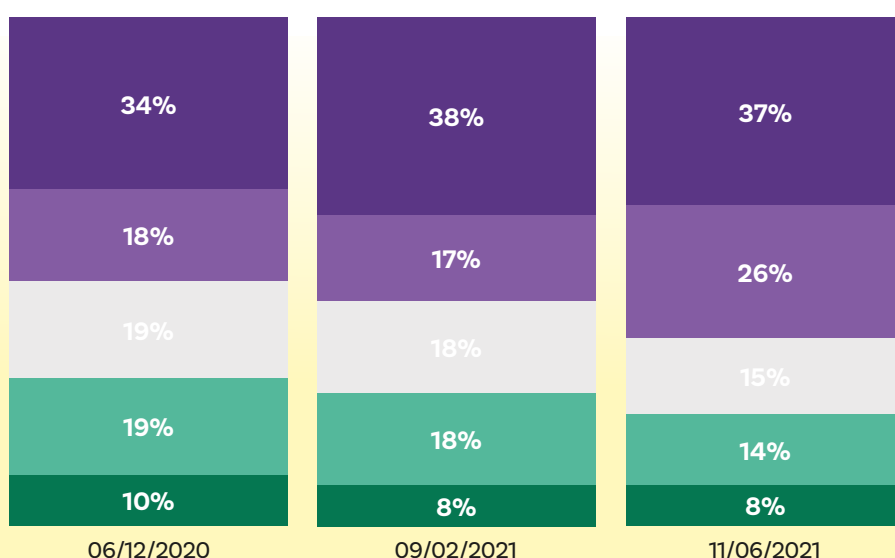
The government has some clear ideas for getting learners' progress back on track, but they don't seem to be shared by the wider profession, finds **Laura McInerney**...

1 Longer days aren't the answer!
Earlier this summer, the government's then 'catch-up tsar', Kevan Collins, mooted the idea of schools extending their teaching days. Children would either receive 30 additional minutes of academic learning each day, or be able to take part in voluntary activities until 6pm. The Education Secretary supported the idea, remarking that, "Schools were closing at 2.45pm," and that the extra time would help with catch-up. Teachers disagreed! When polled on their preferred option, 84% of you resoundingly rejected both. The rest were split evenly between compulsory and voluntary days. And Williamson needn't be concerned – only 1 in 5 secondary schools finish lessons before 3pm, with most of those starting before 8.30am or having lunch hours of 30 minutes or less. Students are spending as much time in lessons as ever.

2 Mental health is the biggest concern
Money for catch-up is currently being directed mainly towards extra tuition via the National Tutoring Programme, but academic learning isn't actually the first thing on most teachers' minds. When asked how they would spend £1 billion on education, the most popular response was 'On mental health support,' followed by pay increases for teachers. However, there is also a great deal of concern regarding learning loss, especially among those teaching in the most deprived areas. The majority of this group (69%) feel that at least half of their pupils have fallen behind due to missed learning over the past year. Around 5% of secondary school teachers said that they felt almost all their pupils had fallen behind. In terms of subjects, maths and languages teachers were the most worried, and humanities teachers the least.

3 And yet, teachers don't want to scrap GCSEs...
With so many young people now behind in their learning, it might seem like a good time to consider whether GCSE exams are the best approach for secondary assessment in future – but in light of the 2020 exams season, it seems teachers are now less likely to support getting rid of GCSEs than before. In December 2020, around 52% of teachers said they disagreed with the idea of scrapping GCSEs altogether; the proportion now is an even higher 63%. That's not to say that there's no support for other reforms, however. Before the pandemic, two thirds of teachers said they'd like students to have more opportunities to pursue work-related qualifications alongside their GCSEs. A quarter also felt that schools themselves could run exams, rather than exam boards (though we suspect feelings may have since changed on that one...)

SHOULD ENGLAND SCRAP GCSEs?



■ No, disagree
 ■ No, strongly disagree
 ■ Not sure
 ■ Yes, agree
 ■ Yes, strongly agree

Teacher responses vary from 4,435 to 4,724, depending on date asked (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

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



CLASSROOM LIFE

A SEND revolution

Marios Solomonides tells us how the multi academy trust BMAT has gone about rethinking its already extensive provision for students with SEND from the ground up...

I've been with BMAT since its inception, having previously served as headteacher of Freshwaters, one of its primary schools, before later joining Magna Carta Primary Academy is its headteacher and SENCo.

It wasn't until I completed the required learning around SEND and earned the qualification that I realised what being a SENCo actually entailed in practice. Before that, I'd been familiar with the statutory side of things, but believed – as I'm sure many leaders and teachers do – that a SENCo's role is focused on those statutory obligations only, such as children with EHCPs, and what the law says schools should and shouldn't do.

What I'd failed to appreciate was the classroom dimension, and how much more we could be doing for children with SEND. We could ensure that all teachers have the training they need, and improve ITT so that NQTs can take ownership of supporting these pupils, rather than just delegating responsibility for that to SENCos.

A SENCo supports

teachers, but doesn't do all the work *for* them. In secondary schools, it's subject teachers who will know the children best and what their needs are. We shouldn't therefore simply be saying *'This is the plan for this child'* – teachers need to play an active part in the process, helping to devise ideas and strategies with input from parents and pupils.



ASK ANYONE WORKING AT ANY LEVEL WITHIN A SCHOOL WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SAFEGUARDING, AND THEY'LL TELL YOU THAT IT'S EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY. BUT ASK WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO ENSURE HIGH STANDARDS OF TEACHING FOR CHILDREN WITH SEND AND YOU WON'T HEAR THE SAME RESPONSE.

MARIOS SOLOMONIDES, DIRECTOR OF SEND

Having recently been appointed as director of SEND for the trust, I'm now doing everything I can to help SENCos empower their colleagues. Based on my own experience, I've recommended that whenever possible, all headteachers undertake training to become SENCos. Since then, two of our assistant CEOs have begun studying for the qualification, and we're expecting a further four headteachers to become qualified SENCos from September.

I think that's really positive, because it directly supports the most vulnerable children we have. That's the group headteachers and SLTs need to be thinking of first, when making decisions – but it's easy not to.

Complex needs

The nature of SEND in our secondary schools is changing to take account of more complex needs. One of our secondaries has developed a highly effective form of nurture provision, through which the curriculum is personalised. Others have facilities that rival those of special schools, including a profound and multiple learning disabilities unit, and

a dyslexia support unit.

We also have a form of dedicated social, emotional and mental health provision at one of our secondaries that we call 'Build up', which supports children who have SEMH needs that affect their learning and behaviour in returning to mainstream provision. We've developed Build Up over the last couple of years, having identified a need to keep children within the system, rather than exclude them.

One of my priorities in this new role is to consolidate the strengths of our SEN leadership. We have access across the trust to experts with specialist knowledge spanning all areas of SEND, which lets us easily signpost those requiring that specialist support, and address any areas of growing need within our schools.

If parents choose to send their child to one of our schools, then we want to do as much as we can to meet their needs. We don't distinguish between 'the trust' and 'the schools', because the schools *are* the trust. Our CEO even teaches a regular English class. Rather than the trust making decisions centrally, our strategic direction is quite

IN NUMBERS

Student population:

6,292 pupils on roll trust-wide (1,652 primary, 4,640 secondary)

SEND identification:

16.35% of all pupils (15.01% primary, 16.83% secondary)

organic. Anyone can make suggestions, whatever their role, and know that they'll be listened to.

Equity and justice

That said, we can still do better – part of which is making SEND a top priority for all of our staff. Ask anyone working at any level within a school who is responsible for safeguarding, and they'll tell you that it's everyone's responsibility. But ask whose responsibility it is to ensure high standards of teaching for children with SEND and you won't hear the same response – more likely, they'll reply that it's the SENCo's responsibility.

Yet it's not. The SEND Code of Practice (see bit.ly/ts105-bmat1) makes clear that responsibility for SEND lies with *all* teachers. I want to make sure that all of our teachers possess the skills and knowledge necessary to support all children with SEND.

We've therefore set up a working party that includes SEN leaders from within the trust, and have enlisted the support of David Bartram – a renowned SEND specialist and consultant who helped the DfE develop its SEND policy – who will be helping us in the autumn term to evaluate the effectiveness of our provision across the trust.

We will then get to work on

developing on a long-term strategy specifically focused on improving the life chances of children with SEND, so that whoever you are, and whatever your needs may be, you will receive the best possible education and start in life at our schools.

Having some of our leaders forming part of our SEND teams will help to ensure that important changes are implemented. When making decisions about their schools, they'll be doing so while considering how those decisions affect children with SEND. Which parts of the curriculum will they be able to access? Is there anything else we need to do to ensure equity or justice?

Once we're allowed to, my hope is that we can organise regular SEND Leaders Cluster events at our various schools. At present we're hosting them online, the idea being to give our senior leaders opportunities to meet and share SEND practice, ideas and strategies.

Keeping things simple

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the main worry we had was how we were going to provide the support our students with SEND needed and deserved when we couldn't be with them. In the event, the vast majority of children with SEND across the trust continued to attend their schools in person. We carried out all 'reasonable endeavours' we were asked to, and looked to ensure that all children with EHCPs received appropriate provision.

One positive that emerged from the restrictions of lockdown was that we were able to communicate with parents far more frequently, which was especially welcome at our secondary schools. Another benefit for us was seeing some of our primary students make significant advances in their speech and language assessments, due to being in such small groups and receiving more focused

interventions.

Looking ahead, we're keen for our increased interaction with parents to continue. We relied on parents a great deal during lockdown, particularly those whose children had to remain at home. We would often listen to them, speak with them and help them, and they would help us in turn. The overall level of communication we experienced was brilliant.

We also learned the importance of keeping things simple. Without our usual resources to hand, and while teaching via Teams, it was necessary to refine things down to a very simple level. In effect, it's teaching as it was in the old days – streamlined and clear, with direct instruction. Our

children with SEND tend to respond very well to direct instruction, however, as well as opportunities to interleave their learning with prior learning. Those approaches we adopted when using Teams are largely things we're keen to continue.

If everyone could read the SEND Code of Practice and stick to what's in it, and if schools and LAs can continue to bring professionals together with parents, then children will continue to be successful. No one will ever say no to pumping in more money, of course – the more we have, the more we can do – but even with the situation as it is, all of us can continue to do the best for our pupils with SEND.

The Catch-up question

Solomonies offers his take on the proposal for schools to provide 'catch-up' learning over the summer break...



In my opinion, spending two weeks on academic learning, particularly for those students with special educational needs, is unhelpful.

The best people to teach students are their teachers; the ones who know them most. I think that unless a child's teacher is the one doing the 'catch-up' lessons, it won't have much benefit in terms of academic subjects, because by the time they've built a relationship, those two weeks will have ended.

Schools have spent every waking hour, during remote learning and since all students have been back at school full-time, with the aim of continuing their planned curriculum, and closing any gaps in knowledge through excellent teaching.

What students have missed above all else – and perhaps the hardest thing of all to catch up on – is social interaction and creativity. In fact, these aren't areas anyone can really catch up on in a practical sense. It's more a case of being patient and planning the most helpful opportunities possible, for students both with and without SEND.



ASK THE EXPERT

'This year's long transition'

GL Assessment's Crispin Chatterton considers some of the post-COVID challenges currently affecting student transitions out of KS2 and between year groups at KS3

1 Why is the KS2 to KS3 transition a particular challenge this year?

Transition is always difficult for students and schools alike, but September's Y7s won't have been in school full-time since Y4. The absence of any national data from KS2 SATs only complicates an already confused picture. In many cases, schools won't have a complete data profile of their new intake, and thanks to serial lockdowns, students won't have had all the support and interventions they would have normally received.

2 How can secondaries and primaries support each other to ensure smoother transitions?

Organise a solid handover of data. The more comprehensive the student data schools can share with each other – wellbeing assessments, as well as progress and attainment scores – the better. Triangulating datasets can be useful for getting a more complete picture of an individual child. Reading ages, for instance, can be a good indication of academic performance across the curriculum, not just in literacy. Of course, it also helps if primaries and secondaries are familiar with the same types of assessment.

3 How have transitions between year groups at KS3 been complicated by the pandemic?

KS3 has always been problematic, sandwiched as it is between high stakes assessments in the years immediately before and afterwards. But the disruption caused by the pandemic means that new Y10s starting their GCSE courses in September won't have had a normal school year since Y7. It's probably more accurate to think of these students as part of a 'long transition', with all the academic and wellbeing support that entails. Formative, standardised assessments can help here – not least because they can provide valuable national benchmarks in this second year, without KS2 SATs.



EXPERT PROFILE

NAME:
Crispin Chatterton

JOB TITLE:
Director of Education

AREA OF EXPERTISE:
Developing assessments that anticipate schools' needs

BEST PART OF MY JOB:
Knowing that we're providing teachers with high quality tools to support them in their vital work of educating our young people

4 In the absence of national data, what can schools do to reliably monitor students' progress throughout KS3?

Establish a baseline from which you can benchmark progress. Some primary schools will have conducted assessments such as New Group Reading Test (NGRT) or the Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4) – information from which could be shared as students move into KS3. Schools can otherwise use CAT4 and FFT Aspire to set targets and establish a baseline in Y7; CAT4 also provides retrospective KS2 indicators. With that baseline in place, schools can combine standardised assessments and day-to-day assessments – but a robust baseline is critical.

5 What behavioural issues should schools be mindful of, given students' relative social isolation over the past year?

The overriding priority for many schools as students returned after lockdown was to reinforce classroom behaviours. In most cases that didn't take long, but teachers have reported that lingering issues – notably relationships with their peers and home lives – often remain. Students have generally been keen to re-engage with school life, but preliminary findings from our Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) assessment suggest that students' perceived capabilities and self-regard as learners may be fragile – which is perhaps unsurprising, given the disruption they've had to cope with. These should be tackled as soon as possible.

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gl-assessment.co.uk/longtransition E: info@gl-assessment.co.uk

Curtain call

As theatres begin to reopen their doors, youth groups across the UK have been preparing to stage their very own productions as part of the National Theatre's annual Connections youth theatre festival...

Connections involves the commissioning of 10 new plays intended for performance by young people, and aims to bring together some of the UK's most exciting writers with the theatre-makers of tomorrow. Teachers and youth theatre leaders are the driving force behind the programme, leading their students' efforts at bringing a script to life on stage, and empowering them to explore a range of important issues – such as climate change, gender and mental health – through the creation of a professional theatre production.

Despite the numerous challenges and restrictions faced by theatres and schools this past year, over 3,000 young people were able to participate in an adapted programme that saw groups taking part in online workshops, running rehearsals and performing via Zoom, and joining a number of digital theatre festivals run by 30 partner theatres across the country.

As well as creating valuable learning opportunities for students, Connections gives teachers considerable scope for developing their own personal, professional and creative skills. Open to companies of young people aged 13-19, any school or youth theatre group nationwide can apply to become part of the programme, regardless of whether you've never staged a production before, or are an experienced theatre maker with multiple productions under your belt.

The annual Directors' Weekend, held in October, serves as a springboard for the programme, bringing together a host of teachers and youth leaders for a series of creative workshops and sessions



attended by professional artists and theatre-makers. This year's Directors Weekend will be delivered digitally, with around 300 teachers and youth leaders expected to take part, giving participants the chance to join a large, friendly community of creative practitioners and learn about the various different skills involved in putting on a theatre production.

Participants will learn about the play they're working with from the playwright themselves, before taking part in workshops that will cover topics ranging from marketing, to being creative in a digital context. Each group will work closely with

a mentor director, whose role will be to support the group in developing their creative practice.

Inspiring creativity

The resilience and creativity shown by teachers across the UK in adapting to COVID restrictions, while collaborating with their students on brilliant theatre productions, has been inspiring to see. Each participating group has the opportunity to transfer their production to a leading regional UK theatre, while receiving advice from a combination of live and digital festival events. We've already seen how several groups are using communications

technology to create unique hybrid performances that blur the lines between the 'real' and 'digital' worlds by incorporating Zoom exchanges, social media filters and animation into their productions.

According to Mr Jones, head of drama at Heles School in Plymouth, "Taking part in Connections has allowed me to develop my own practice, as well as inspire and ignite my students. Students have relished the opportunity to perform again, be creative and have something positive to work towards.

"I feel it has been a vital part in their mental and social wellbeing, especially during a collection of national lockdowns. Creative opportunities give us a platform to explore with who we really are, in a safe space, full of laughter, inquisition, fun, smiles.

We are determined to continue facilitating chances for young people and teachers to experience theatre-making for themselves, and access various creative opportunities as part of their drama education. If you're interested in taking part in next year's Connections programme, and like the idea of joining a community made up of like-minded teachers leading the theatre makers of tomorrow, you can apply now by visiting nationaltheatre.org.uk/learning/connections; the closing date for applications is 1st September 2022.

National Theatre

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



Kirsten Adam is The National Theatre's Connections producer; for more details, visit nationaltheatre.org.uk/learning or follow @NationalTheatre

Collins

YOUR CHOICE

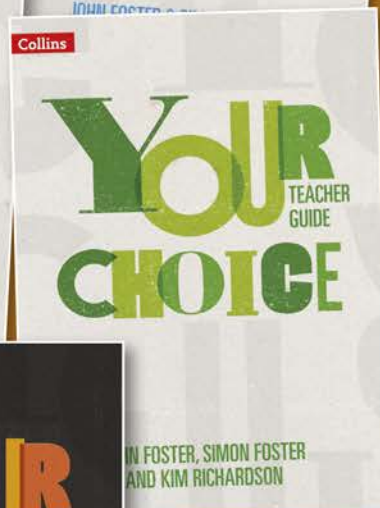
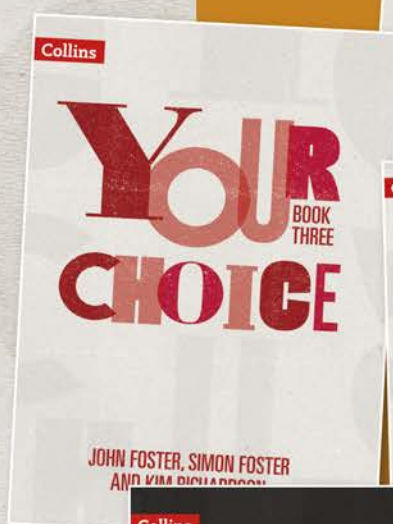
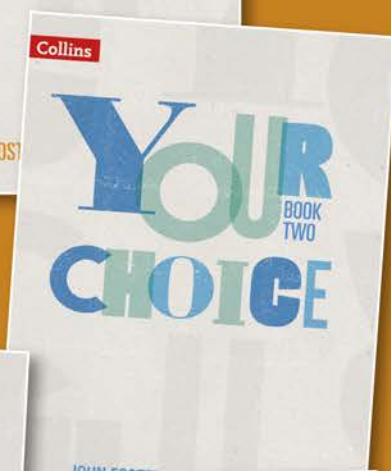
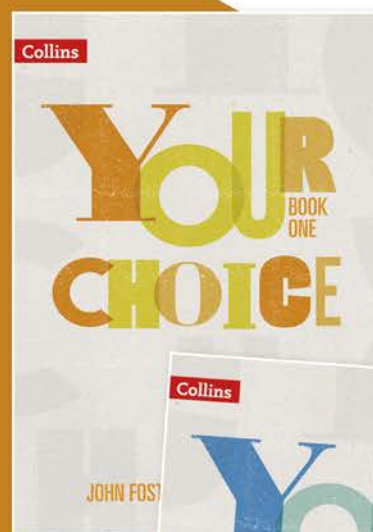
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THE TS GUIDE TO... HEALTH & WELLBEING

After a year that's presented educators with challenges to health and morale like never before, we look at several approaches to fostering wellbeing in schools that could make a real difference

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Gordon Cairns explores the practice of using books and stories in schools for therapeutic, rather than simply academic purposes



IN FIGURES: PARENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

53%

of parents believe their child's school to be 'good' or 'very good' at supporting children's mental health and wellbeing

33%

of parents don't know who is in charge of mental health and wellbeing at their child's school

29%

of parents admit they would feel embarrassed if their child expressed a wish to undergo counselling

Source: Place3Be

3 TEACHWIRE ARTICLES
FROM THE ARCHIVES

YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEVELOPMENT

Discrepancies between a young person's age and typical social and emotional development can lead to a number of difficulties, says Alastair Lidster
bit.ly/105special1

"SIMPLY TALKING WON'T HELP"

Kat Howard explains why wellbeing efforts in school should involve less discussion and more concerted action
bit.ly/105special2

SHOULD SECONDARY SCHOOLS TEACH HAPPINESS?

The mental health crisis facing 11- to 16-year-olds is never far from the headlines – so should we put wellbeing on the curriculum?
bit.ly/105special3

The Kindness Principle

In an increasingly divided and impatient world, managing challenging behaviour with kindness can be an apparently radical, but ultimately effective path for schools to pursue, says **Dave Whitaker...**

Kindness can sometimes be perceived as weakness and, when associated with behaviour management in schools, can be a real conundrum.

Is it possible to use kindness in a way that leads to successful behaviour management? How is it possible for a school to have kindness as its basis for relational behaviour management and still have children who show respect, follow the rules and achieve success?

It is hard to believe that kindness, as a foundation for behaviour management, could be questioned or doubted – but it is. If we aspire to be relational in our approach to behaviour management, then we must start with kindness. Kindness can mean being tough and fair – exposing frailties and weaknesses but doing it with warmth and compassion. To remain kind in difficult and challenging environments takes courage and strength.

Strict conformity

We are living in an era of polarised views on managing behaviour. Fast-track school improvement is based on creating compliance at all costs. High levels of strict conformity are seen as a strength in many schools, even if the collateral damage is high exclusions and cohort change.

Many schools across the country employ a system based on strict consequences and sanctions. They use this compliance, along with the threat of punishment, to successfully ‘control’ the behaviour of most of the children in their care. But what do we mean by ‘successfully’? Exclusion is viewed as an acceptable and inevitable consequence of a system in which, without compliance, there is no

their behaviour.

This is inevitably going to provoke controversy, but the idea should at least be explored and debated. As educators, we should all ask ourselves the question about what successful behaviour management actually is. Permanent exclusion essentially means passing the problem onto someone else. It certainly is not a cure.

“Schools too often focus on dealing with the symptoms of challenging behaviour, not the causes”

other option. It is regarded as an unavoidable and tolerable side effect of what are perceived as successful behaviour policies.

Strict compliance at all costs is even viewed by some proponents as a positive life lesson that prepares children for adulthood and the ‘real world’.

However, surely a behaviour policy should only be viewed as successful if exclusion is not needed? Arguably, if a behaviour policy must rely on the cliff-edge sanction of exclusion, then it is not successfully changing behaviour for the better. If a school permanently excludes a child, then perhaps they are admitting defeat – that they aren’t able to manage

in order to be successful.

Schools too often focus on dealing with the symptoms of challenging behaviour, not the causes. There is a small but seemingly ever-increasing cohort of children – if my experience is anything to go by – who are either excluded from education or trapped in a cycle of punishment, which seems to be considered an acceptable consequence of a widely used and highly regarded behaviour strategy. We must ask ourselves whether this is OK.

Behaviour management in schools begins with our choices as adults and our behaviour as professionals. Yes, we can write out our behaviour policy and have the rules, rewards and sanctions clearly displayed on classroom walls, but it is our understanding of, and ability to deal with, relationships that really influences behaviour.

A danger to the profession

We all need to be careful with our choices as education professionals. We can, and do, choose where to work, who to work for and who to work with. We are constantly influenced by those with whom we work, live and socialise. We all work with, or have worked with, leaders and colleagues who either inspire us or frustrate and infuriate us.

We must always be willing to learn and develop

A failing system?

Should we, as education professionals, regard schools as successful if they do not do their very best to work with the most challenging and vulnerable children in society? Some children need additional support, guidance and flexibility in their educational journey. Some pupils have specific additional needs that cannot be met in a mainstream environment. Some need to move to specialist settings because it is in their best interests to do so.

However, some are excluded because the system is failing them; they are moved from school to school because nobody is repairing the damage and making the adjustments that they need

by exposing ourselves to new ways of working and thinking. We must be led by our core values but also willing to adapt and change throughout our careers as we gain more experience, knowledge and understanding.

In the modern world of fake news and social media, we are exposed to strong opinion and polarised views, more so than ever before. Educational debate, particularly on social media, can be both enlightening and utterly frustrating. We must be willing to listen to and learn from the wise. Wisdom is powerful, but it comes from genuine experience and not just from research and books. Books help, as does data, but there is no substitute for wisdom gained through experience.

Behaviour management is never easy. It is a roller coaster of emotions and stress, which causes us to suffer constant highs and lows. It changes from class to class, week to week and year to year. You think you have got it sorted and then an hour later you think you are a failure. It definitely does not become easy – it just gets easier than it was.

Working in challenging schools with complex children is both truly rewarding and exceedingly hard work. It relies heavily on your personal resilience, your ability to accept getting things wrong, and your understanding that when it does go wrong, it is not necessarily anyone's fault. It is about trying to do your very best for the children who need you – and never underestimating how powerful that need may be.

In 2018, *The Guardian* published an article about the school where I was lucky enough to be the then executive principal and the

OLD TERMS RETURN

The Department for Education has recently sought to change the term 'exclusion' back to the old and antiquated term 'expulsion', and bring back the term 'suspension' to replace 'fixed-term exclusion'. This seems like a backwards step and a totally unnecessary change – these terms still have an extremely negative connotation that we could do without.

At the time of writing, following criticisms from charities and other organisations, the Department has since announced that it will revert to using the term 'exclusion', but continue to use the word 'suspension'.

way in which we used kindness at the heart of our values and philosophy (see bit.ly/ts105-kindness). Looking back, it seems incredible to think that being kind to children was worthy of making the national news – or any news at all.

It is also amazing to think that the article received criticism from some for a style of behaviour management that was considered soft, and that I, as the head, was even

considered a danger to the teaching profession because of my relational approach. It did, however, open up a debate which allows us to explore the values associated with managing behaviour. It allows us to consider in detail how we treat children in our care and to ponder what it is we are trying to achieve in our schools.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Whitaker began his career as a secondary school geography teacher, leading on inclusion and special needs, before moving into executive headship and later becoming a National Leader of Education; he is currently director of learning for the Wellspring Academy Trust and an Independent Thinking Associate

This article is based on an edited extract from his book *The Kindness Principle – Making relational behaviour management work in schools* (£16.99, Independent Thinking Press)

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Open your mind

Adam Dacey tells us how meditation can play a positive and practical role in addressing mental health challenges within schools – and why those seeking a quick fix would be better off looking elsewhere...

I first came across Buddhist mindfulness meditation at 18, when visiting Nepal between A Levels and university to teach English. After acquainting myself with the practice, and experiencing the hugely beneficial effect it had on reducing the stress and anxiety I had at the time, I immediately questioned why I hadn't been taught it while at school.

That planted the seed for what would eventually follow. After completing my training, I subsequently took up teaching Buddhist meditation. Schools would often visit the Buddhist Centre where I was based, usually as part of an RE trip, to learn about the life of Buddha. Over the course of their visit these coachloads of kids also had the opportunity to learn about essential breathing meditation, and it was immediately clear how positively they responded.

Another stressor

Around 10 years ago, I set up Mindspace as a way to take what I'd learned to a wider audience, visiting schools and bringing meditation techniques to children's attention. In the years since then I've

always found some level of receptivity to the idea among school leaders and decision-makers, but it's increasingly come to the forefront of people's minds now, given the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Introducing meditation and mindfulness into schools in a sustainable way ultimately requires getting teachers to come on board. However well-intentioned a decision-maker at a school or trust might be, however motivated they are by the mental health needs of children, it won't work without the school's teachers getting fully behind it.

What can happen is that it becomes just another stressor for teachers – *'How am I meant to squeeze in meditation sessions on top*

of everything else I have to do?'

Schools that have used meditation successfully generally follow the principle that all related activities are very much 'opt in', for both students and staff, for the simple reason that meditation always works better if the individuals partaking in it actually want to be there.

That's why we'll initially provide schools with a general introduction or taster session to which both students and staff are invited and see how many attend. Once you've discovered how large your 'core group' is, it gives you something to build on. In most of the successful implementations I've seen, schools will provide meditation sessions via clubs held during lunch or after school.

Practice what you preach

I've also seen positive examples where teachers have presented mindful meditation techniques in quite an informal and relaxed way, drawing on techniques and methods that they use themselves at various points during their working day.

That's a message I'll often emphasise to teachers – that if you want to pass these meditation techniques on to your students, it's best for you to practice them yourselves.

Of course, another key challenge with introducing schools to meditation is that everyone is often *very busy*, so that even if they're keen to reduce their community's stress levels and improve levels of mental health, they'll want to do so as quickly as possible. My approach – not necessarily a popular one – is to instead encourage staff to take a more long-term view of how their school can benefit from meditation.

That may involve envisaging what the school's mediation practice will look like in two, five or even 10 years. Many people will look to mediation as a quick fix to help address challenging personal behaviours, stress, anxiety and other issues. On the contrary, however, a school's use of meditation will only be successful and remain sustainable if it's allowed to grow organically over time. Gradual, organic growth is fundamental to the way meditation works.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Dacey is the founder and director of Mindspace and was speaking to Callum Fauser; for more information, visit meditationinschools.org or follow @mindspaceuk

How good is your PASTORAL PROVISION?

Hannah Day looks at how schools can gauge their staff's existing level of pastoral expertise and build upon it...

One are the Victorian days when teaching only concerned the imparting of knowledge and preparation for a life of work. Our modern education system understands that schools must also support students' emotional and physical wellbeing in order for them to achieve – what we call 'pastoral care'.

Pastoral care is now routinely embedded at all levels of what a school does, from its curriculum, teaching and behaviour policies, right through to how staff are managed.

Despite this, however, we know that not every school is getting pastoral care entirely right. Post-lockdown, the mental, emotional and physical health of our young people calls for a greater investment of resources than ever.

The result of good pastoral care should be a school full of students who feel safe, happy and looked after; students who are developing emotional and social maturity, individuality, initiative and confidence. Students who are able to feel safe and happy at school will make better academic progress,

achieve more consistently and be more likely to meet, or even surpass their expected outcomes.

To achieve this, a school must actively explore and address two distinct areas – the needs of its students, and the skills and abilities of its staff.

Practical confidence

I write these words in a rural and lightly populated part of the country. We have a high number of agricultural families whose children come to us, with a lower than average number of degree-educated parents, no local university and limited public transport.

As a result, some of our key pastoral roles centre on social mobility. Like all providers, we offer careers advice, provide support for accessing higher education, help students research their post-16 school options and assist them in getting there.

Our provision also includes careers days that we organise with local business, numerous links with universities, plus a yearly whole college trip to a UCAS fair and university site. As head of art, I've helped organise trips to city galleries that also incorporate university tours, and we work closely alongside local employers, regularly placing students in a range of excellent post-college roles.

These efforts are echoed across all our departments.

We want to help students feel confident, emotionally and practically, when applying to what can often be monolithic institutions and inscrutable work sectors.

Focus your efforts

What demographic do you serve? Do you understand the likely or recurring issues your cohort face, and have an awareness of students' lives beyond the classroom?

Schools should be asking how many of their students' families use food banks, how many have limited access to IT equipment or internet connections at home, how many students live in unsuitable housing and how many have absent parents. Do any of your families struggle with meeting the financial costs and responsibilities of childcare?

Once you know this information, start focusing your efforts. Do you need to be providing education on youth crime? Should you link with the local food bank? Partner with other organisations to offer a community laundry or internet advice service?



Pastoral support is at best pointless, and at worst offensive, if we don't practically address the needs of our students, and in turn, their families. We all studied Maslow's hierarchy of needs as we trained, and will therefore be aware of steps 1 to 3 – physiological, safety, and love and belonging. Only once these needs are met can true learning take place.

Questions to consider

Next, how do you go about reviewing and improving your staff's expertise, confidence, and experience with pastoral duties? A focused period of self-assessment, examining both individuals and the whole school, or a specific focus on appraisals, would be a good start. As with their students' families, school leaders must be able to answer a wide range of questions before knowing where to focus their support for school staff.

Feedback from those who have previously used your school's pastoral support can provide invaluable insight. Are you collecting this information? If so, how?

tried and tested methods in your own setting.

What about individual staff? Do you have personnel who are passionate about pastoral care, and if so, how can this be utilized? If this is already in place, do you have succession planning? If not, do you need to look at hiring? Where can staff seek guidance, and is that guidance clear or open to interpretation? What training needs do they have? Do you review your offer – both day-to-day pastoral care and how you address individual needs – with a focus on helping staff develop and improve their responses in the future?

As you work through those

attention to those less likely to talk – research suggests these will most often be younger staff and men.

3. START TALKING

Make staff part of pastoral care conversations. Have they been given the opportunity, time and framework to truly engage with how the school meets its pastoral duties?

4. PAY ATTENTION

Consider implementing automatic workload reviews for when members of staff

have to work on particularly long or complex cases, so that your system can be made more fair and transparent.

5. GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Build staff relationships beyond the work context. You could perhaps try organising a summer BBQ at the end of the school year, dedicating a day to team-focused activities, or holding weekly social, fitness or creative clubs.

Is it done in a way that encourages genuine reflection and ensures that all responses are honest?

A particularly effective approach can be to work with partner schools or linked sectors as benchmarks. This will allow you to observe other approaches to pastoral support, and potentially implement some of their

questions, consider both individual and team skills and remember that policies are only ever as good as the people who enact them. What would happen if you present your staff with a scenario and ask them to work through it using your most recent policies? Would their interpretation of those policies meet your expected standards and outcomes?

There should be a mission statement, or set of values that cover the key areas your students need to develop. These might cover healthy risk-taking, self-control and personal responsibility, self-improvement and social awareness.

Where possible, provide opportunities for students to mix across year groups and collaborate on tasks – say, helping out at lunchtimes or maintaining a school garden. By allocating specific duties, you can give your students responsibility for – and a sense of ownership in – some important elements of your school's community.

You may have already implemented some of these ideas, or something similar to them at your school. In any case, it's always worth looking again at the pastoral provision you have in place and considering it anew. Because a happy school is a thriving school.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hannah Day is head of visual arts, media and film at Herefordshire and Ludlow Sixth Form College, where she has responsibility for overseeing the department's teaching and strategic development

“Remember that policies are only ever as good as the people who enact them”

Without carefully considering these points, any changes you make to your current approach may prove to be ineffective, or worse still, weaken it.

Building the culture

Your ultimate goal is to build a school culture that prizes listening, nurturing, tolerance and patience. Your school should be one where pupils feel that they belong.

Peer support and mentoring programs can be hugely helpful here. Some of these can be school-wide – involving older students providing younger ones with guidance and instruction in certain areas, for example – and others can be provided on demand as needed.

Turning the page

Gordon Cairns explores the practice of using books and stories in schools for therapeutic, rather than simply academic purposes...

Having now been back in the classroom for a while, it's become clear that the post-lockdown return to school has been somewhat traumatic for some of our students. I recently found myself having to abandon two separate activities in one class after the young people struggled to stay on task – the class in question having seemingly reset back to how they were when they first arrived from primary school in autumn 2020.

One of the students asked me, “Why don’t we do what we did back at the start of term? You know – when you were reading to us?” This 12-year-old boy will have likely never heard of bibliotherapy (the use of reading materials for therapeutic benefit), but he was still able to recognise that something about being read to helped calm himself and his peers down.

Warmth and security

At present, research within this area is typically limited to why actively listening to a story, or reading quietly in the classroom is good for students’ mental health. There are overlapping theories which support the feelings held by many practitioners that such activities help to benefit young people beyond their purely educational purpose.

Others outside of teaching are also recognising bibliotherapy’s benefits. Educational psychologist Dr

Gavin Morgan believes that a number of elements contribute to the calming effect of reading to a class of students, which can take them back to the warmth and security of their early childhood. “Bibliotherapy is probably atheoretical, but it does encompass a lot of different psychological approaches,” he says, positing that one of these is attachment theory:

“Being read to takes us back to that early stage of our development, and is something we get from our caregivers. We can all remember our parents reading to us, so by its nature it’s a calming, attachment-building exercise.”

Where that attachment with a caregiver is insecure, a student may seek it with other significant adults in their life who can perform that traditional parental role of reading to them. Morgan adds, “Attachment is vitally important, and for some kids, attachment to a teacher can be really strong where they have an emotional bond – especially if they don’t have a secure attachment elsewhere.”

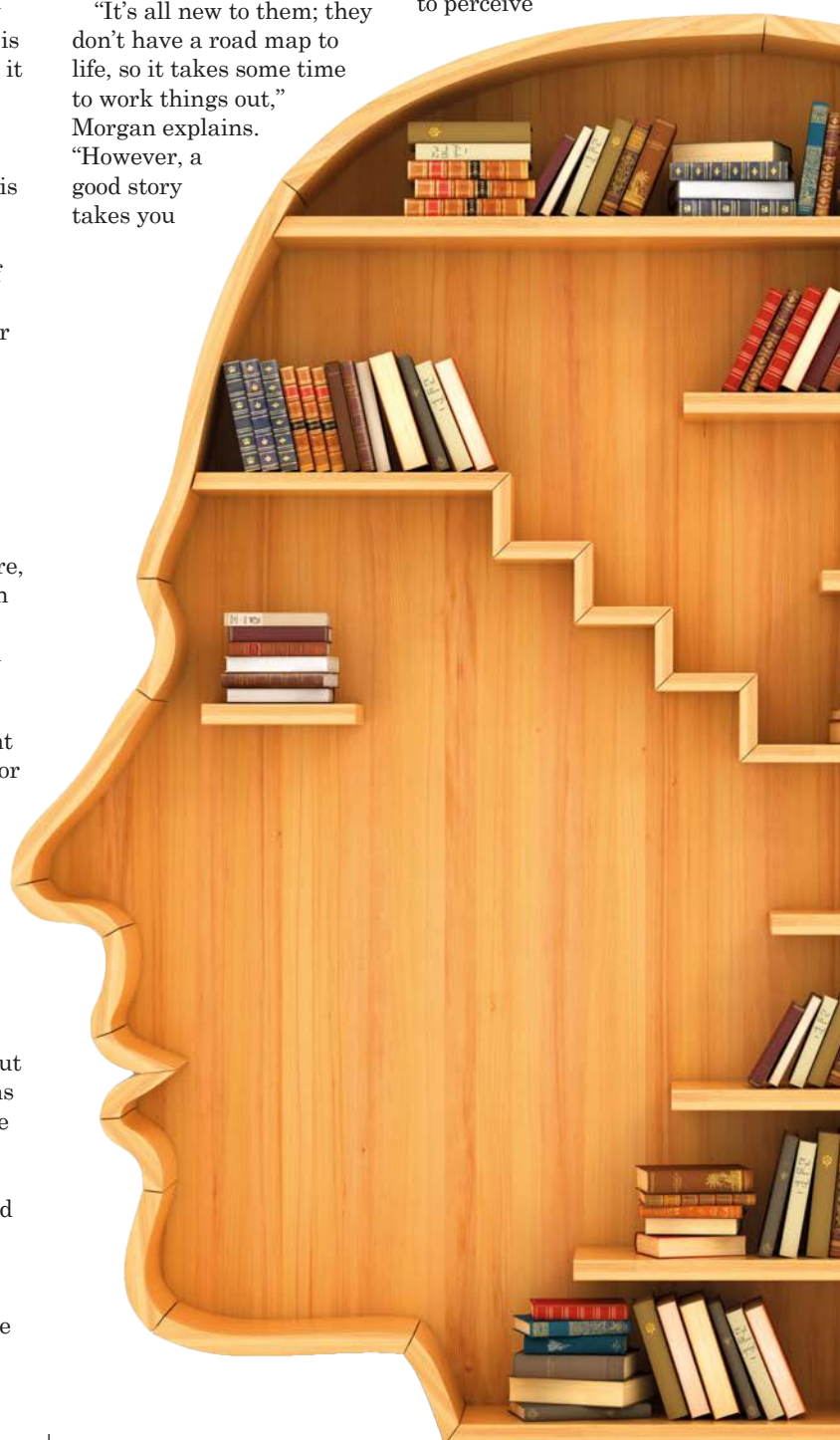
De-escalation

Morgan goes on to point out that bibliotherapy contains some elements of cognitive behavioural therapy – a talking treatment which aims to reduce anxiety and depression. In his view, literature can give young people examples of life challenges they won’t have

experienced yet, which are CBT-like in their potential to help de-escalate those problems and challenges they actually are experiencing.

“It’s all new to them; they don’t have a road map to life, so it takes some time to work things out,” Morgan explains. “However, a good story takes you

somewhere else, sparking your imagination as you begin to visualise the narrative. For some children, this can be really effective in enabling them to perceive





TRIED AND TESTED

Keen to realise some of the wellbeing benefits to be had from bibliotherapy yourself? Start here...

1. MAKE READING REWARDING

I've come to realise counting is central to my own reading experience, from how many pages I've read in a single sitting, to the number of books I've read that month. Target-setting can break long books into more manageable reads, while triggering our internal reward system. By noting how many pages or chapters are read each period, students can be encouraged to feel a sense of achievement – especially those for whom a narrative alone isn't enough to keep them engaged.

2. SET THE TONE

Try to create an environment that lends itself well to reading – ideally one with subdued lighting, plenty of ventilation and noise reduced to a minimum. If students are reading books of their own choosing, I'll sometimes let them eat snacks or drink so that they associate reading with a pleasurable experience.

3. DON'T INTERRUPT

Doing nothing might be anathema to most teachers, but for a session of bibliotherapy to work, teachers really have to take a back seat. If reading aloud, fight the urge to break out of the book to explain a teaching point, and don't add a background commentary of events. Instead, model your own behaviour on that of your ideal cinema companion.

4. ALLOCATE YOUR TIME CAREFULLY

I've found that it's best to start a new book earlier in the day, when there's greater tranquillity in the class unit. Once the narrative has captured their imagination, and they want to find out what happens next, this becomes less important (though creating calm after a PE class with the adrenalin still flowing may challenge even the most compelling narrative)...

5. DON'T PRESCRIBE

This is one session where teachers can't be prescriptive. You can't force someone to enjoy a book, nor march up and down the classroom making sure all eyes are on the text. The pupils have to find the joy in reading naturally.

“A good story can alleviate young peoples' tendency to catastrophise, and help teenagers put their personal lives into perspective”

different perspectives and allowing them to see how people in stories solve dilemmas and work out problems.

“That can be really helpful for some children – allowing them to transfer themselves into situations, seeing characters brought to life solving difficulties.”

A good story can further alleviate young peoples' tendency to catastrophise problems and help teenagers put their personal lives into some sort of perspective. “We know from working with adolescents that their social life is vitally important, but also the main thing that causes upset. A well-chosen story can show them kids working together to solve problems and de-escalate situations.”

As well as the positives

relating to attachment theory and CBT, a book's ability to take children to a calmer place offers some mental health benefits of its own: “When we are reading, we are comfortable; we are quiet, we are focused, we are imagining. We are being involved, and we are actively listening. All of this generates that air of calm.”

No easy option

Yet despite all the benefits of active reading as a class, one barrier preventing educational professionals from embracing it wholeheartedly is the notion held by some that reading isn't really teaching. There's the perception that it's somehow an ‘easy option’ – an idea that Morgan is quick to refute:

“There is a pressure on teachers to get kids to work

towards collecting evidence through reams of writing – but to me, that's always a secondary issue. You can have difficulties with children if all you want from them is ‘product’, as that can lead to flashpoints in the teacher/pupil relationship. There may be no concrete written evidence to show when kids are responding to you and listening to you read, but they are learning.”

Morgan concludes that, “As a teacher, you have to be flexible and need different weapons in your armoury to keep kids on task and learning. Everybody learns in a different way, and reading should be a part of a good teacher's skillset.”



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

“Art was in my blood”

Art teacher and Global Teacher Prize recipient
Andria Zafirakou MBE

reflects on the future of her subject in the face of shifting education priorities and student pressures...



Image (c) Suzanne Plunkett

When I first started teaching at Alperton Community School, I was an excited NQT fresh out of university. But when I saw the art room for the first time, I was horrified at how neglected the facilities were.

I remember thinking at the time how strange that seemed. In my own experience, the school art room had always been this space that was endlessly inspiring and simulating. When I was offered the job, I asked if I could come in early and start getting the room ready. Straight away, the head replied with, ‘What do you need?’

The entirety of that summer holiday period was therefore spent with a friend of mine, clearing out 20-year-old clay and assorted art materials. My arrival at the school in 2005 coincided with a point where the arts weren’t seen as important. They were *liked*, insofar as there were GCSE and A Level groups, but certainly not prioritised as

a subject. Arts courses were for those kids who wouldn’t or couldn’t do anything else.

That said, what I inherited at the school was actually a blessing. Challenging though it was, the headteacher was serious when she told me that I could have whatever I needed to transform the school’s arts facilities. With just a little TLC applied to the room, the addition of a couple of plants, pinning up students’ work and generally making the room look as beautiful as possible, we were on the way towards establishing a really great learning environment.

I soon found out, though, that it’s not enough to just create a successful place for art in your school. Developing students’ talent and interest in the subject in a long-term, sustainable way calls for much more than that.

A ‘fluffy’ subject

My parents always knew that art was in my blood and that I was creative, yet when I came to choose my GCSE options and wanted to do art, they said no. Because what jobs

were there in the arts? They saw it as this fluffy, ‘not real’ subject with little value that wouldn’t get you anywhere.

Unfortunately, that same mentality still affects many of the young people at my school. There’s a view commonly held among many local migrant families that the arts aren’t valuable, because there’s little income attached to them. Better instead to become a doctor, lawyer or medical professional; the arts are for low-paid people.

And yet, just down the road from the school you’ll see all manner of beautiful textiles for sale, produced by an industry and made by people who aren’t highly valued. There’s a horrible stigma at play there that I’m constantly battling to change.

Then there are the pressures presented by the EBacc that our Schools Minister seems to love so much, and the way schools are increasingly being judged on how many of their students take it (though I’ve yet to see the job application that specifically requires

candidates to have done it).

In practice, the EBacc works to limit the options our young people have. I’m seeing the dreams and ambitions of many students squashed and shut down before their eyes, right at the point that someone tells them ‘*You shouldn’t be doing this – there’s no future or money in it. It’s just a hobby.*’ That’s mad.

I’ve never understood why, in a world where talented creative directors, filmmakers, architects, software designers and game developers are highly prized and earn high salaries, such figures seem so quiet. The type of work they do – as opposed to the products they produce – is nowhere near as publicly celebrated as it should be.

Multiple pressures

What gives me optimism are those students who are determined study art against all the odds. They include the child with the highest level of SEND, for whom it will be their only GCSE subject.

“Arts subjects can give students a better sense of their own identity”

The students who come to the UK with no English language skills at all, but when allowed into an art room, will show you so much talent, mastery and high-level thinking. These are intelligent kids, for whom the arts can work as a kind of catalyst – getting them onto a trajectory of making progress more quickly than may have been the case otherwise.

And then there are the kids at risk of permanent exclusion, who consider art to be the only subject, and the art room the only learning environment, in which they feel comfortable and as good as anyone else.

The arts are the most inclusive of subjects. Kids these days face multiple pressures. Many are terrified of failing, and wary of being in a busy school environments where they can often feel intimidated. Arts subjects can give them a better sense of their own identity, which in turn gives them the confidence they'll need to stay motivated and persevere over the course of their lives.

Going rogue

Winning the Global Teacher Prize in 2018 gave me the opportunity to see how education is practised in many parts of the world. Through this, I met a number of people – including some in *really* high places – who told me they couldn't believe how backwards England's educational ministers and structures seem to be, and how reluctant we are to move forward in our thinking.

I think that speaks volumes. It's what prompted me to go a bit 'rogue' after winning the Prize and do my own thing – reconciling myself to not receiving any

government help for my mission to improve arts education. I began seeing it as a solo mission that I just needed to crack on with.

My priorities now include ensuring that we can put role models into classrooms as part of our everyday practice. Teachers should try and speak to their students about textile designers, maybe make some connections and invite one into school to collaborate on some projects – anything that will inspire young people to think beyond the classroom and what their parents might telling them, and more towards their own future.

There needs to be more opportunities for getting the 'real world' of art-based work into our classrooms, so that kids can see for themselves that there are people with those kinds of careers who look like them and are from the same community, but have succeeded in trying something different.

Teaching in the dark

Over the past year there have been some nightmarish moments, but also others that have been brilliant. When reflecting on the year just gone, one thing I do know is that as a teacher, there's no way I'll ever enjoy working through a computer screen for my students.

During lockdown, I wasn't able to do the lessons I wanted to, and which I knew were what the students needed. That was frustrating enough, but then came the guilt that accompanied it: – *'Did they understand that?' 'Did they enjoy it?' 'Are they going to complete that task?' 'Did I do a good lesson?'*

I discovered that whatever

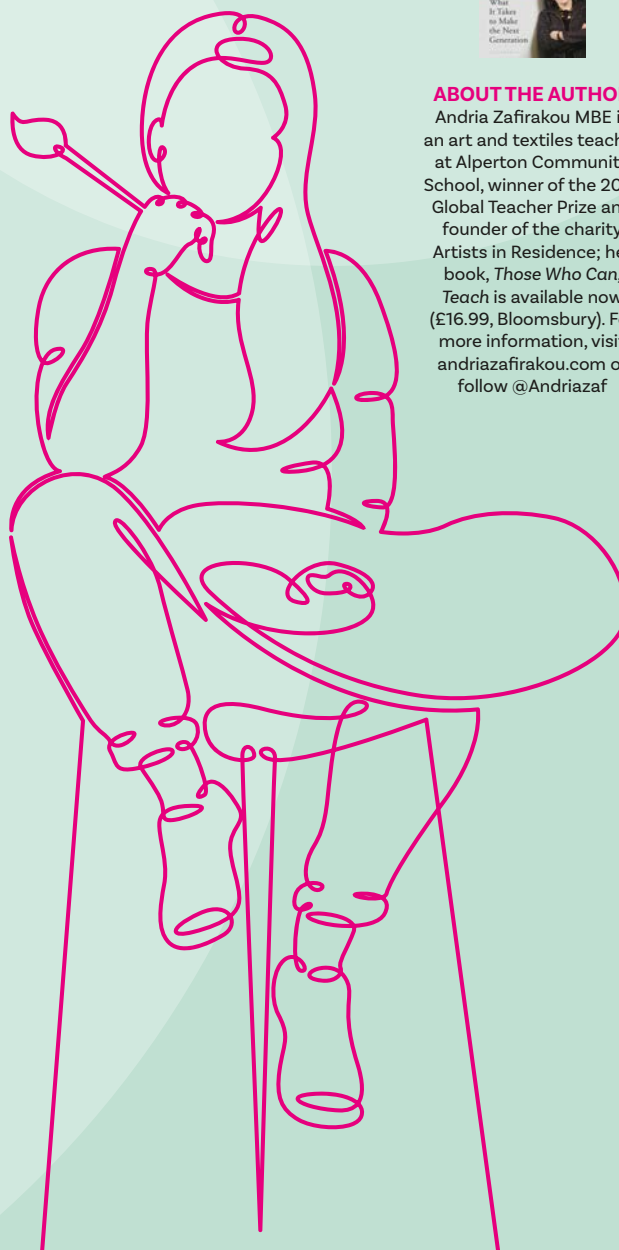
teachers might have learnt in the preceding 15 years, teaching online in 2021 almost requires you to throw all those lessons away. You've got to actively think about every element of what you're doing, in a very limited of amount of time. You have to be able to quickly navigate your classroom tech, chunk up your lessons, carry out assessment for learning and get used to teaching to blank screens when students don't have their cameras switched on. It can feel like teaching in the dark.

What kept me going throughout it all were those memories and moments that really shone for me, most often involving the 'ghosts' – the quiet ones in class who barely make a sound. Without classroom distractions, and often thanks to supportive home environments, they've been able to really thrive and gone on to another level. Seeing how much their confidence and abilities have grown has been a real eye-opener.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

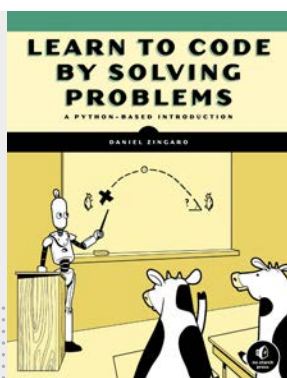
Andria Zafirakou MBE is an art and textiles teacher at Alpertown Community School, winner of the 2018 Global Teacher Prize and founder of the charity Artists in Residence; her book, *Those Who Can, Teach* is available now (£16.99, Bloomsbury). For more information, visit andriazafirakou.com or follow @Andriazaf





Off the Shelves

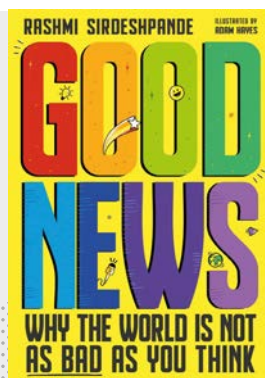
Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore



Learn To Code By Solving Problems – A Python Programming Primer

(Daniel Zingaro, No Starch Press, £24.99)

In principle, the approach taken by this book is a great idea. One could learn Python programming concepts in the expectation of one day applying them to various problems as they arise. This book instead proposes learning on a 'need to know' basis – visualise a specific problem first, then learn the concepts you'll need to tackle it. *Learn to Code...* sets out to examine nine common scenarios over nine successive chapters. Unfortunately, however, I found that the first program I tried yielded a syntax error, despite definitely entering the commands correctly. This wasn't helped by the book's lack of screenshots (though that may be due to receiving a pre-publication version), with any troubleshooting assistance seemingly outsourced to the web, unless the accompanying website is more forthcoming. **Reviewed by Terry Freedman**



Good News

(Rashmi Sirdeshpande, Wren and Rook, £9.99)

As the news cycle becomes ever more fevered and overheated, teachers may find this illustrated non-fiction book broadly aimed at readers aged 9 to 11 to be a welcome corrective. Sirdeshpande sets out to show that there's far more to the world than the often doomier picture presented by newspapers, TV and social media. Kicking off with a whistle-stop tour of encouraging social trends and positive contemporary news stories, the book retains a relentlessly upbeat tone throughout, while managing to address thorny topics such as fake news, confirmation bias and media echo chambers in an approachable and measured way. A book like this can risk betraying its own biases – Sirdeshpande's commentary comes across as broadly progressive, and includes an elegantly oblique takedown of the term 'virtue signalling' – but her optimism is infectious.



The Place for Me: Stories About the Windrush Generation

(Various authors Scholastic, £12.99)

Produced in partnership with Black Cultural Archives – a national heritage centre dedicated to collecting, preserving and celebrating the histories of Black people in Britain – and featuring an introduction by Dame Floella Benjamin, *The Place for Me* compiles 12 short stories from a selection of authors, including Katy Massey, K. N. Chimbiri, Kevin George and Salena Godden, all inspired by the experiences of the Windrush generation. The book's tales of homesickness, racism and uncertainty, as well as finding love, loyalty and community in London and elsewhere, alternate with short 'Fact File' chapters that present concise overviews of post-war Britain, the NHS and the 2018 Windrush scandal. The end result puts moving personal perspectives into historical context, making for an informative and powerful read.

THE WORD

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

Raising Hell

(Bryony Pearce, UCLan Publishing, £7.99)

It's said that one moment can change your life – but in Ivy's case, that one moment manages to throw the entirety of the UK into turmoil. After she partakes in a botched supernatural ritual led by her friend, they inadvertently tear open a rift that allows dark magic to seep into the world, giving power to spells once thought bogus. Ivy then takes up a security job at her old school, where her role is to protect the young lives her actions have endangered.

Raising Hell is an absorbing urban fantasy that had me glued to every page. The horrifyingly described monsters make for some truly beastly antagonists, which Ivy has to face on a personal mission to save a powerful spellcaster. The book's events lead up to a magically-charged power struggle and a pleasingly tense finale. Planned as the first in a series of novels, I'm excited to see what Pearce has in store for Ivy and her friends next...



Meet the author

CARL ANKA



How did you come to be involved in writing *You Are a Champion*?

I'm a football journalist by trade. In early November 2020 I received a message from my agent, asking if I wanted to have my name put forward to co-author a book that Marcus Rashford wanted to write, so I went for it. Two weeks later, the message came through that he'd selected me. It still hasn't quite sunk in yet...

What was the starting point for the book?

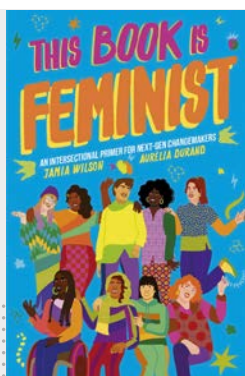
When I asked him why he wanted to write a children's book, his answer was that he wanted to give something back. He'd only started reading books when he was 17, and felt that if he could have started earlier, he'd have learned much quicker and progressed further in his life. I pointed out that he was only 23, and had achieved far more than most people in their lifetimes – and he said, 'Yeah, but books are amazing.' This book exists because he wants to help children dream, understand that their dreams are important and provide a way of turning those dreams into reality.

What did the writing process involve?

There was nothing really off limits as far as Marcus was concerned. He would happily talk to me for the better part of half an hour about nicknames he earned as a kid, his past birthday parties, in ways that were fantastic and enriching. What I had to do was hone in on those details that he felt were most important and why. Conversations between us that could have produced 12 pages for a book or a feature in a magazine had to become a page or two in *You Are a Champion*, based on what Marcus wanted to get across.

Was there anything in the book that was difficult to include, or which had to be left out?

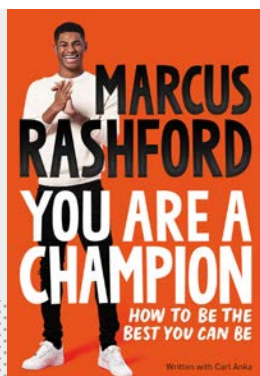
This book is Marcus – it's overwhelmingly his work. All I really did was put the words in a certain order, remove the 'ums' and 'ahs', add punctuation and explain the footballing terms. He had so many stories, so much guidance to offer and so many things he wanted to say, that it wasn't a case of telling his story for him, but more being a megaphone.



This Book is Feminist

(Jamia Wilson, Frances Lincoln Children's Books, £8.99)

Aimed at readers aged 12 and up, this non-fiction title sets itself the task of presenting and exploring modern conceptions of feminism via an intersectional approach, unpacking how ways of thinking about gender can inform, and be informed by, matters relating to race, class, culture, disability, sexuality and other aspects of identity. The book's scope may be wide, but Wilson manages to maintain a coherent throughline, drawing on contemporary history and her own personal experience to present readers with ideas, insights and observations that feel especially timely in the wake of recent discussions concerning sexual harassment, consent and violence against women. Though written from an American perspective, the book's interrogation of power structures, set against a series of vibrant illustrations, amounts to a compelling call to action.



You Are a Champion: How to Be the Best You Can Be

(Marcus Rashford with Carl Anka, Macmillan Children's Books, £9.99)

From the widely admired footballer who famously took the UK government to task for its failure to support vulnerable families and earned the respect of a nation – as well as an MBE – comes this life manual for children aged 10 and up. *You Are a Champion* is full of insights into Rashford's career and thought processes on the pitch that will captivate football fans, but also offers a wealth of valuable advice on what it takes for any young person to realise their dreams. Rashford's encouragement concerning the importance of diligence, perseverance and resilience comes across as an ideal complement to the learning around such topics its readers ought to be getting in school – delivered in a friendly, supportive and eminently readable voice that's captured well by co-author Carl Anka.

MY CAREER AS AN IMPOSTER

It's common for school leaders to *feel* fraudulent in front of experienced colleagues – but becoming a headteacher can often mean having to temporarily *be* an imposter, says **Dr Paul Heery**...

I'm sure readers will be familiar with the phenomenon of 'imposter syndrome'. Commonly felt by individuals who have recently secured a new job or been promoted, it's the inescapable feeling that you've somehow succeeded in advancing under false pretences – compounded by the fear that any moment you could be found out and sent back to your 'rightful' place.

Headteachers seem particularly vulnerable to this. Rarely have I spoken to a fellow head who hasn't felt like an imposter at some point, particularly during the early stages of a new headship. For many of us, the feeling never fully goes away.

That's partly down to the loneliness that comes with the job, partly because honest and impartial feedback is often hard to come by, and partly because many of us feel the need to present an air of competence that would be undermined by us suddenly asking, '*How am I doing?*'

I'm no exception. I still vividly remember giving my most confident and reassuring smile to my new team, closing the door, sitting behind my desk and thinking, '*What the hell do I do now?*' No amount of time spent in SLT meetings, or even as an acting head, can prepare you for that 'buck stops here' feeling.

I've found it helpful to try and understand imposter

syndrome, and have found comfort in appreciating that others have experienced it too – but with the benefit of hindsight, I realise now that actually, *I really was an imposter*.

Staying true

My first teaching job was at a London primary school back in 1988, at a time when London schools were finding it almost impossible to recruit. Through a combination of eagerness, luck and market forces, I made rapid progress. After just three years, I was invited to apply for a deputy headship by someone I got chatting to over coffee on a CPD course and was duly appointed.

As a new deputy head with responsibility for teaching and learning, I observed the teaching of wise and experienced colleagues, and gave them pointers for improvement, while storing away tips and techniques for improving my own teaching.

I then became a headteacher, nine years after first joining the profession, and spent the next four happy years in a challenging school surrounded by supportive and talented colleagues. From there, I moved to an inner-city school that was in Special Measures. Thanks to wonderful support from school's staff team, as well as colleagues at the local authority and neighbouring schools, we were able to make a difference. Six years

later I became a local authority adviser.

That role saw me make frequent visits to great schools staffed by dedicated and skilled practitioners, during which I'd often think '*That's a good idea – I wish I'd done that when I was a headteacher.*'

It was around this time that my experiences as an imposter began to grow. Standing in a conference room, explaining to 200 headteachers how to implement a new National Strategy initiative I'd only read for the first time the day before. Carrying out a performance management review for a virtual school headteacher who'd already forgotten more about

children than I could ever hope to learn. Feeding back to

members of the Education Select Committee about the challenges of running a small rural school, despite never having worked in a school that was either small, or indeed rural.

Thinking on my feet, relying on great colleagues – that often got me through by the skin of my teeth. So long as I stayed true to my own values, and the values of the organisation I worked for, I felt I could contribute through a combination of hard work, showing willing and dumb luck.

A sense of panic

My 'greatest' imposter moment came relatively late in my career. I'd applied for a post leading a small trust, working across schools with a great deal of unrealised potential. The only problem was that the trust comprised two secondary schools and a sixth



“I was one question away from my ignorance being exposed and my credibility being shattered”

form. Now, it's not as if I'd never set foot in a secondary school before. Aside from attending one myself (albeit 30 years previously) I'd frequently worked alongside secondary colleagues – but with the best will in the world, you couldn't call me an expert.

Having been successfully appointed, I found myself suddenly introduced to a whole host of new acronyms and abbreviations – BTECs, EBacc, ALPS, NEETS. I knew I was one question away from my ignorance being exposed and my credibility being shattered before my new colleagues, all of whom quite reasonably assumed that the person leading their organisation had a competent working knowledge of the sector in which he was employed.

At those early meetings I was in constant danger of betraying a sense of (entirely justified) panic. Yet over time, of course, my expertise gradually grew and knowledge increased, to the point where I now feel confident enough to share these

recollections publicly – but the memories are still vivid.

Privileged position

Now, I'm not naïve. On reflection, the privileges that so often accompany my race and gender are likely to have been a significant factor in some of the promotions I've gained throughout my career, especially early on.

Not directly or overtly, and almost certainly not with the conscious knowledge of the people doing the appointing – but it's there, nonetheless. It's regretful that it's taken me until late in my career to recognise this, and to acknowledge the responsibility this places on me to make things better for others.

So what has my career as an imposter ultimately taught me? Firstly, that knowledge and skills can be acquired along the way, and that if you only ever wait until you're completely

HOW TO PROSPER AS AN 'IMPOSTER'

By doing the following, you can start shedding the pretence and become the individual you want to be...



1. Seize the initiative

If you want to do a job well, start doing it before you're appointed. If you have aspirations to becoming a deputy head, volunteer for standard deputy head duties – assemblies, timetables, mentoring, policy development, sitting in on the next governors meeting. See this as an investment to be cashed in at a later date.

2. Don't let people down

Meet deadlines, contribute to meetings, check your emails and be a supportive colleague. When you finally secure that leadership role, you'll value those colleagues you can depend on perform such seemingly mundane, yet vital tasks.

3. Keep learning

Whether it's through formal professional development, independent reading and reflection or engagement with peers on social media, we have to retain our curiosity and desire to learn. Failing to do so doesn't mean we stay still; it means we go backwards.

ready to take the next step, it's a step you'll probably never take. A spell of 'impostership' is therefore inevitable, but no bad thing if you get the balance right.

Secondly, I've learnt that no matter how important any individual is, they're only ever part of a team. It doesn't matter if everybody in the team has the full range of knowledge and skills required – only that *somebody does*. Even when my knowledge gaps have been at their greatest, there's always been something I could usefully contribute.

I've found that there are some attributes that can't be described as skills, knowledge or experience, but which nevertheless make a huge difference to any leadership team. Positivity and optimism are essential prerequisites for leadership, particularly when they're in short supply elsewhere. Everyone wants people on their team who firmly believe that success is achievable, and can communicate this with

a degree of infectiousness.

Loyalty and trustworthiness are similarly always noticed and appreciated. Every leader has to trust his or her team implicitly, otherwise open discussion and dialogue becomes impossible. Note that this doesn't entail being a 'yes' man – on the contrary, honest opinions are crucially important, so long as they're given at the right place, at the right time and before the right audience.

As leaders, whichever direction we take, we'll always bring others with us. Forwards seems like the best option – since having bluffed our way into our position, we may as well make it count.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Paul Heery is CEO at The White Hills Park Trust; for more information, visit whptrust.org or follow @whptrust

Room for growth

Gail Hovey recalls her involvement in helping students at one London secondary take some unused land and gradually turn it into an award-winning asset for the whole school...

St Gregory's Catholic Science College was originally built over 60 years ago, for half the amount of children we have currently. Being a school in a residential part of London, it's quite 'landlocked', but happened to have an unused patch of land that the governors once considered using to expand the car park. The children thought differently, however, and called for it to be turned into an eco garden.

When I first arrived at the school just over 10 years ago, a pond had been created on the land with the help of the head of science, alongside an area for growing vegetables. Being a keen gardener, I offered to become involved in developing the eco garden, and have since seen that patch of earth become completely transformed over the past decade.

A winding pathway

The pond is still there, and the vegetable patch is now one of multiple raised beds we're using to grow produce, alongside some fruit trees that we've planted. We also

added a remembrance garden that incorporates a rockery in the shape of a horseshoe, with a big mosaic cross at the centre.

Everything we've worked on in the eco garden has always involved input from our students. Some of our sixth form art students helped design the cross, and with the help of local council funding, we were able to bring in a mosaic artist to work alongside them and assemble the finished piece.

Entering the garden, the first thing you come across are fruit trees, then the growing areas, and the memorial garden just beyond that. At the very top is our outdoor learning environment – a diamond-shaped area with enough seating for a full class of children and a storage shed,

on which is mounted a blackboard. The creation of the space coincided with the school's recent diamond jubilee, so the students wanted the blackboard to reflect how children attending the school 60 years ago would have learnt.

There's also a path leading up to the area that's marked out into 60 sections, each one displaying brief details of a significant environmental event or development within the lifetime of the school, such as the introduction of the Clean Air Act in 1956, right up to the Pope's 2016 Encyclical on the environment.

Over the years we've entered a number of contests and awards schemes, coming second in the RHS' Green Plan It design project, but winning both David Domone's Cultivation Street

school garden competition, and the RHS' School Garden Teams of the Year competition. We've also formed successful partnerships with businesses and other organisations, which have helped us secure funding grants, and previously resulted in Sainsbury's donating us a greenhouse.

Getting them hooked

I usually run a gardening club on Wednesday lunchtimes throughout the year, and also on Thursdays during summer. The garden is often a venue for science lessons, and having converted to an academy, we now have multiple primary schools linked to us, which we invite in to the garden during the summer months to experience tailored lessons on biodiversity.

We've also regularly taken part in the RHS' 'Big Soup Share', turning the vegetables we've grown into soup as part of food tech lessons. One of our teachers has close links with a local soup kitchen, and will sometime organise teams of sixth formers to volunteer there.

Our student voice is mainly organised through the eco committee, which I run as part of our eco schools programme. Consisting of around a dozen Y9 students who serve for a year, the eco



“After having lessons in the eco garden the students usually feel a lot calmer”

committee will perform an environmental review of the school's biodiversity and outdoor spaces every autumn.

The garden club I supervise is open to all year groups – though usually made up of the school's more enthusiastic Y7s and Y8s – and will carry out most of the eco garden's physical maintenance. As each new Y7 arrives at the start of the year, we'll do lots of gardening and outdoor activities with them to get them hooked. By the time they get to Y9, there's a better chance that those students will be keen to join the eco committee, having spent lots of time in the garden already. It's ultimately the school's eco committee that comes up with the ideas that will inform our outdoor learning space from one year to the next.

Calm, yet stimulated

The children tell me that after having lessons in the eco garden, they'll usually feel a lot calmer. They really appreciate the fresh air, so it's good to see both the eco garden and outdoor learning environment being used across the curriculum.

The space is included within the school's wider room booking system, and has previously hosted history lessons, Y11 maths lessons involving loci and constructions, Y10 photography sessions and art lessons. Our history department has even used it to re-enact the Battle of Hastings!

It's also been used to support the volunteering and skills elements of the school's Duke of Edinburgh Award activities. I've had older students volunteer to help support our younger students in the gardening club, as well as use the space to learn new skills – something that's been really helpful for me, and from which they've gained

a great deal as well.

The pandemic has prevented us from holding the eco garden club as before, since it's not currently possible for different year groups to mix. The school's staggered lunchtimes have meant that our sessions have run into standard lessons, but the teachers don't seem to mind. They're largely happy to see the students getting outdoors, and have told me that when they return to class afterwards, they're both calmer and more stimulated from being outside.

I recently advised another local secondary comprehensive on how to use their outdoor spaces for learning purposes, and one of their key concerns was funding. There are many different funding streams out there – such as Learning Through Landscapes, for example – which are keen to promote outdoor activities and learning for children and gardening activities within schools.

There may have been a feeling shared among secondary teachers in the past that school gardens and outdoor learning spaces don't add any value, but that's not an attitude I've experienced here – the teachers have all embraced the space we have available.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gail Hovey is a science college project manager at St Gregory's Catholic Science College



TRY IT YOURSELF

1 REACH OUT

When creating an eco garden or outdoor learning environment, be sure to involve the whole school in the design and planning stage. Decide early on who'll be using it and for what purpose – subject teachers for standard lessons? Teaching staff and outside specialists for extra-curricular activities? Or both? Involve your school's students by setting up a dedicated garden council or committee, and look at potentially involving partner schools or local Early Years settings. The clearer your plan at the start, the more chance you'll have of successfully applying for external funding.

might include lettuces, radishes, strawberries, peas, tomatoes and first early potatoes (the latter in sacks).

3 SEEK ASSISTANCE

By joining the RHS' Campaign for School Gardening you can gain access to a wealth of helpful information via their website, including staff training programmes, lesson resources with curriculum links and details of upcoming competitions and accreditations that can earn you gardening vouchers. Find out more at schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/home

4 LOOK AFTER IT

A commitment needs to be made across the school that pupils will be available to maintain the garden, guided by a member of staff or volunteer, be it during lesson times or as part of a regular gardening club. Don't forget to decide who's responsible for watering it over the summer holidays...

2 START SMALL

Establish your garden with three or four raised beds to begin with. Look into growing fruit and/or vegetables with a quick cropping season, making note of what your children actually like to eat. Examples



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CLASSROOM VOICES

“The best decision I could have made”

Paul Hipperson reflects on his reasons for swapping MFL for computer science, and how making the switch was easier than he thought it would be...

I qualified as a secondary French and German teacher 10 years ago, and for most of my life I've had next to no knowledge of computer science. So it was a bit of a surprise to everyone, including me, when I decided to retrain as a computer science teacher.

As much as I'd loved teaching modern foreign languages, I knew that I wanted to retrain and find another subject that was similarly creative and sociable – two of the things I like most about languages. Having stumbled across computer science, I decided to look into it further.

Over the first lockdown, I taught myself some of the basics and attended a four-day summer school in York delivered by the National Centre for Computing Education, in order to increase my then GCSE-level computer science subject knowledge. I was surprised to discover how much computer science involves constantly talking to other people – there's a very supportive online community out there who will happily answer any questions, and numerous forums ready to offer a range of friendly tips.

Of course, changing specialisms was nerve-racking. I had nagging doubts, and spent a few nights awake in the dark, wondering whether there might be a way of teaching both computer science and MFL, but such a position wasn't available at the time. I needn't have worried, though. It's not been easy, but changing specialisms has definitely been the best decision I could have made in my teaching career thus far.

CREATIVE JUICES

I currently teach computer science and the BTEC in digital information technology to 40 students from Y7 to Y11 at College Central – a pupil referral unit in Eastbourne.

Luckily for me, I've timed things well because computer science is having 'a moment'. More than 500 million new applications are predicted to be built over the next five years – more than the total number of applications built in the last 40 – and schools have woken up to the fact that we need more computer science teachers.

Forget the stereotypes surrounding the subject, they're simply not true. I'm using my creative juices just as much now as when I taught French and German. MFL teaching draws on reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, and computer science teaching is surprisingly similar. There are distinct areas, such as image editing, sound sampling, writing code and networking that can be independently studied in-depth, but which are also interconnected, as were those skills I relied on for MFL.

I'd venture that MFL teachers (as well as teachers of other subjects) would enjoy teaching computer science if they gave it a try. Different coding languages have specific vocabularies and grammars, and their own distinct character. I've developed a preference for Javascript over Python, for example,

because I'm drawn to the former's more imaginative use of squiggly brackets – {} – which look much cooler than boring old ()s.

OPTIMISM AND OPPORTUNITIES

As with European languages, there are some words and phrases that are familiar to everyone, and some that are unique to one language. You can specialise in one programming language or dabble in several, just as some people are fluent in French, while others prefer to learn a bit of French, Spanish and German.

It's been easier to retrain than I thought. After attending the four-day Computer Science Accelerator programme and gaining my subject knowledge certification, I was quickly able to make new contacts among fellow teachers, build up my computer science knowledge and generate a stack of teaching ideas.

I've since started working with my local STEM Ambassador, who has provided me with advice and funding to help build the GCSE computer science offer at my school. I feel very optimistic about the opportunities I'll have access to as time goes on.

Learning the basics of computer science has given my career a boost and already taken me in directions I never would have expected. Any MFL teacher can rapidly gain the skills they'll need to enhance their teaching and motivate their tech-savvy students – or they could even make the leap into an entirely new teaching career as I did.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Hipperson teaches at a Pupil Referral Unit in Eastbourne



“The genie’s out of the bottle”

John Jolly looks at how parents have become increasingly invested in what their child is learning – and at what schools can do to capitalise on that...

Whether they liked it or not, once the pandemic struck, parents suddenly became more involved than ever before in their children’s learning.

Via a series of polls conducted over the following months, we asked parents how they were coping with those long, long periods of overseeing learning at home. At first, there was a palpable sense of panic – how on Earth had they ended up supervising all schoolwork? How were they meant to juggle holding down jobs and other commitments with ensuring their offspring could continue to learn? Throughout this upheaval, parents experienced a whole range of emotions. By the time schools fully reopened, however, one thing had become clear – parents were no longer just counting down the days to getting their lives back, but had found positives from having their children studying at home.

Now that the genie’s out of the bottle, it won’t easily be persuaded back inside. Parents now see themselves as more ingrained in their children’s learning and they want it to stay that way –

something that opens up the potential for schools to utilise parental participation in whole new ways.

Knock-on effect

After schools closed their doors to most pupils in March 2020, we launched an online poll to check in with parents, find out what support they needed and ensure their voice was being heard during the crisis.

In our first survey, parents registered an average score of 6.8/10 when rating how worried they were about the impact coronavirus was having on their children’s education. That average figure was taken across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with secondary parents more likely to be concerned, and parents of Y11 most concerned of all, averaging out at an alarming 8.3/10.

More than three quarters of respondents felt that the pandemic would affect their child’s education, citing children falling behind or missing out on learning, cancellation of exams and the lack of socialisation as their top concerns.

Many parents were having to deal with their children’s anxieties while at the same time meeting work commitments and addressing worries concerning their household’s financial security – as well as coping with the knock-on effect on their family’s collective mental health and overall stress levels.

Lack of confidence

By the time of our second coronavirus survey in May 2020, the fallout around school closures was gathering momentum in the news. Our finding that two thirds of parents were as worried, or more worried about the impact of the pandemic on their child’s education since the start of school closures was shared widely among education stakeholders, including teaching unions and the DfE. We received over quarter of a million responses, demolishing the target we’d set of a few thousand.

Rather worryingly, however, this survey also found that 34% of parents lacked at least some degree of confidence in supporting their child’s learning. Parents’ anxieties over school closures and remote learning subsequently became big news. In January 2021, ITV News and the BBC’s *Panorama* programme were among those citing what was then our most recent research finding – that a third of parents had told us that juggling home schooling with having to work from home themselves was proving challenging.

However, when we came to conduct our February 2021 poll – which asked parents for details of any positives that had emerged from their children’s experiences of remote learning during lockdown – we were delighted to find that almost two thirds

stated being more aware of what their child was learning.

34% also expressed positive views regarding their school’s use of technology, via innovations such as digital parents evenings – with the result that there are now many parents who wish to retain such avenues for engaging with teachers into the future. Outside of their original pandemic-related purpose, such solutions can help tackle the barriers preventing some parents with a bad experience of education from setting foot in their children’s



DOWNLOAD

Parentkind’s Feb 2021 remote learning poll results and Blueprint for Parent-Friendly Schools at

**teachwire.net/
ts105-parentkind**



“We’d like to see school leaders take this time – when there’s a community keen on staying involved – to maximise their parental engagement strategy”

school, while also saving time and effort for those with busy lives and competing commitments.

Anxieties allayed

In that same February 2021 poll, just over a quarter

indicated that they were more worried about the impact of

the pandemic on their child’s education than they had been in March 2020. A similar proportion felt roughly the same level of worry, but around 45% stated that they were now less worried.

That may have been because their anxieties were allayed by the satisfaction they felt with their schools’ remote learning provision, with 86% reporting being satisfied overall. Nearly a year into the pandemic, it

could have due to their children becoming more settled into their new routines. More than half said they were coping better with their current learning arrangements compared to the first lockdown.

Parents’ confidence had increased, too. 79% now felt they could support their child’s learning at home, up from 66% in May 2020. Overall, we saw a more positive picture of life at home start to emerge, after all that they’d been through.

A new appreciation

At the time of writing, in June 2021, we have many reasons to feel positive about the future of parental participation in children’s schooling. Many parents have been able to develop a deeper knowledge of the productive role they themselves can play in their child’s education. They have also acquired a new appreciation of the dedication shown by teachers, and overwhelmingly believe that staff and school leaders have done their utmost to keep their children’s learning on track – difficult though it has been to return with no learning loss at all.

The recent introduction of legislation requiring schools in England to consult parents on their RSE

policies will be a useful bellwether. It will indicate how quickly and thoroughly schools can adjust to having parents become more deeply involved in those education conversations and the issues that affect them.

We’d like to see school leaders take this time – when there’s a parent community out there that’s keen on staying involved – to maximise their parental engagement strategy. The key to helping children reach their potential is having schools and homes working in close partnership. We’ve tried it over this past year, and have seen vividly the great things that can be achieved by having parents and teachers working closely together and sharing mutual trust.

At this crucial juncture, as we confront the difficult task of education recovery and ensuring our young people can catch up on their lost learning, it’s more vital than ever that schools keep parents on board and ensure that two-way conversation keeps flowing.

GIVING PARENTS A VOICE

As a national charity, Parentkind gives those with a parenting role a voice in education. We invest substantial resources in representing parent views on their child’s learning to local, regional and national governments and agencies, because evidence tells parental participation in education benefits all children in all schools and society as a whole

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Jolly is CEO of Parentkind; for more information, visit parentkind.org.uk or follow @parentkind

What makes leaders bad at giving feedback?

Formal discussions of colleagues' strengths and areas for improvement aren't always approached by leaders in the most effective way, says **Adam Robbins**...

There's an oft-quoted saying in the teaching profession, 'Feedback is a gift' – suggesting that to the enlightened professional, all feedback is helpful. The saying 'Feedback is a kick in the spiritual goolies' is quoted far less, but holds just as true.

Why is feedback such a difficult thing to get right? I know that in my decade-plus of school leadership I've sometimes delivered feedback badly, and also received terrible feedback myself. It's worth acknowledging that there are two reasons as to why feedback can often go wrong – the content of the feedback, and the way it's delivered.

Content concerns

In their book, *Thanks for the Feedback*, authors Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone identify three key types of feedback: appreciation, coaching and evaluation.

Appreciation simply identifies what's going well. Coaching aims to find areas of improvement, while evaluation tries to holistically judge a person's performance against expectations. Coaching would appear to be the sweet spot where most teaching feedback should sit, but giving coaching feedback requires a degree of evaluation – a process that actually risks making

the person less receptive to the feedback you're trying to give them, of which more later.

The first issue leaders often run into when delivering feedback is 'feedback mismatch'. This is when the leader and teacher go into the conversation with different expectations of what the feedback will entail. The leader wants to give coaching, but the teacher can only really handle appreciation right now – maybe they've just had a full day of challenging classes, or are under other external pressures. Feedback mismatch will lead to the coaching being rejected, ignored, or causing offence. Leaders therefore need to find a way round this.

Now, I'm not necessarily suggesting that you begin all such conversations with a stilted acknowledgement of your intentions. Opening with *"I'd like to have a feedback conversation that involves coaching, by which I mean we'll discuss your strengths and weaknesses, and I'll suggest a target,"* isn't ideal. It'll just make you sound weird.

Instead, I'd recommend starting the conversation by simply asking how their day has been and listening to what they say. If it's been hectic, perhaps respond with something like *"It seems you've had a busy day – is now still a*

good time for your feedback, or should we meet tomorrow?" This allows them to be in control a little more, and approach the conversation on their own terms.

Bad feedback delivery

Schools are busy places and school leaders are busy people, with to-do lists often measured in arm lengths. This means that leaders will frequently be under a huge amount of pressure to get things done as efficiently as possible, thus reducing feedback to just one more thing to tick off on their lists.

The effect of cramming feedback into an already busy schedule can be to deprive it of the time needed for it to be carried out effectively. What we can end up with is a large volume of 'drive-by feedback', whereby people pop their heads round the door at the end of the day and say, *'Got a minute for some feedback?'* or stop you in the corridor to say *'While you're here, can I feed back on that lesson I just saw...?'*

Drive-by feedback isn't always bad. It's great for appreciation – a simple *'Loved your lesson yesterday!'* or *'Thanks for making that lesson resource, it was really effective!'* are perfect examples of good drive-by feedback. Coaching and evaluation are both terrible in this format, being far better suited to more formal, face-to-face meetings.

When structuring feedback, our prior training often provides us with feedback models we can use. I personally see feedback conversations as similar to sandwiches or tennis matches, in that they're not helped by having a rigid structure. If people spot an underlying structure behind the conversation they can become cynical, assuming that any positives are only there because they must be, suggesting tokenism.

Try, then, to keep a general structure in mind, but



“Anyone can say ‘Increase the pace,’ but not everyone can explain how to increase the pace”

don't be afraid to be flexible. With a lesson observation you could choose to give the feedback chronologically as you talk through the lesson, but it's important that this takes the form of a dialogue, with you asking clarifying questions about the decisions made that can help sharpen your insights. Teachers are reflective practitioners, and if they can pre-empt some of the areas for improvement, you'll become more closely aligned and less likely

to activate any triggers (see panel).

Generic versus specific

Leaders often seem to favour generic feedback over the specific, but this is a huge mistake. Generic praise, like ‘Good pace,’ will be received less well than more detailed praise, such as *“I liked the way the use of mini whiteboards allowed the students to quickly demonstrate their understanding – this really helped the pace of the lesson.”*

Generic areas for improvement are even worse. These need to be small, ideally simple things that can be practised and integrated into teachers' lessons. If there are substantial issues at play, then we'll need to initially hone in on the most important things now, and give only the feedback relevant to those.

TRIGGERS TO AVOID

Sheen and Stone identify three types of trigger that can block a person's ability to accept feedback:

Relationship triggers: The feedback might be spot on, but the teacher doesn't respect your opinion and therefore won't listen

Truth triggers: The feedback rings false from their point of view

Identity triggers: The feedback makes them question a fundamental part of their core persona, or even who they really are

All three triggers are common in teaching. School politics, policies and personalities make them an inevitable and unavoidable aspect of every feedback conversation that leaders need to deal with. It's therefore in a leader's best interests to be mindful of them when issuing feedback, pre-empting those triggers they're most likely to encounter and disarming them by thoughtfully and effectively structuring their feedback conversations.



Generic comments can also be interpreted as betraying a lack of expertise. Anyone can say ‘Increase the pace,’ but not everyone can explain *how* to increase the pace. Being able to demonstrate that expertise will increase teachers' trust in your judgements and willingness to act on your advice.

Curiosity can be a great way of framing feedback actions, especially with experienced staff. Asking them questions like, *‘Have you ever tried using a visualiser to build a model answer in real time?’* and then getting them to commit to trying it within a few days is a great way of getting them on side and preventing that identity trigger from being activated.

available can cause things to be rushed, but this is ultimately short-sighted.

Poor feedback won't help teachers improve. If anything, it just helps create new jobs later down the line, when the same issues – now potentially more advanced – need to be addressed again.

It's much more efficient to prioritise finding time to give effective feedback and get the job done first time. By giving effective feedback in a way that can create and sustain long-term change, we can free up our time and transform the quality of teaching in our teams.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Robbins is a head of department at a large comprehensive school, where he oversees and supports teacher development; he is also the managing editor at CogSciSci (cogscisci.wordpress.com) – a grass-roots organisation which aims to bring findings from the field of cognitive science into classrooms

Adam's new book, *Middle Leadership Mastery*, is available now (£16.99, Crown House Publishing); for more information, visit adam-robbins.com or follow @MrARobbins

Priorities, priorities

It's true that leaders often give bad feedback, but that's because giving good feedback is difficult. It takes time, skill and a high degree of sensitivity to your recipients' needs. Leaders are under huge pressures, so the time

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Ricards Lodge High School

HENRY IV PART 1

In the first of a new series exploring Shakespeare's works beyond the set texts, Helen Mears looks at how *Henry IV Part 1* contains some important life lessons for conflicted teenagers everywhere...

When should I teach it?

Since *Henry VI Part 1* doesn't feature on any of the current GCSE specifications, the ideal time to teach the play is at KS3 (although it's probably better suited to Y8 or Y9 than Y7). If you're using the EDUQAS specification, it can lead brilliantly into a study of *Henry V* at GCSE, offering an overview into his development from Prince of Wales to King.

Of particular interest to such a study is Hal's first soliloquy, in which he confides to the audience that his unprincely behaviour is a deliberate ploy to make his renaissance seem more remarkable to the people of England. This can provide an insight into some of the questionable tactics he uses at The Siege of Harfleur and The Battle of Agincourt, and his potential status as a war criminal.

How should I teach it?

There's no need to teach the whole play, as an extract-based approach can be taken. You might choose to strip back the Hotspur/Glendower rebellion subplot and focus on Prince Hal and the relationships he has with his father, Henry IV, and his dissolute companion, Falstaff.

However, Henry Percy, known as Hotspur, is a useful dramatic foil to Hal; the son that Henry IV wishes he had. This pairing creates the climax of the play, when they meet in hand-to-hand combat at the Battle of Shrewsbury.

Why should I teach it?

The History plays are very underrated and under taught. *Henry IV Part 1* contains enjoyable comedic scenes, perfectly juxtaposed with the serious matters of kingship and rebellion.

Hal is a teenager during the events

of the play, and modern teenagers may find it easy to relate to him and his estranged relationship with his father, leading Hal to hang out with the Classical tempter figure, Falstaff. This sets up a narrative about a disaffected young man having to choose between the good father, the King, and the bad father, the hard-drinking Sir John.

Teenagers should also enjoy the comedic, insulting banter between Hal and Falstaff, and the comic tour-de-force of the Gads Hill robbery. The play is also interesting stylistically, because of the frequent moves between prose and blank verse. Hal proves himself adept in using both forms of speech and, along with Hamlet, is one of Shakespeare's finest code-switchers, able to both speak the high language of the court and banter with his friends at The Boar's Head Tavern.

How does it link to the rest of the curriculum?

The obvious link would be history, with the background of the War of the

About the play

Henry VI Part 1 is the second play in Shakespeare's second History tetralogy, which follows the turbulent reigns of Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V. It was the most popular of Shakespeare's plays during his lifetime, and introduced one of his most enduring characters, Sir John Falstaff – supposedly a favourite of Elizabeth I.

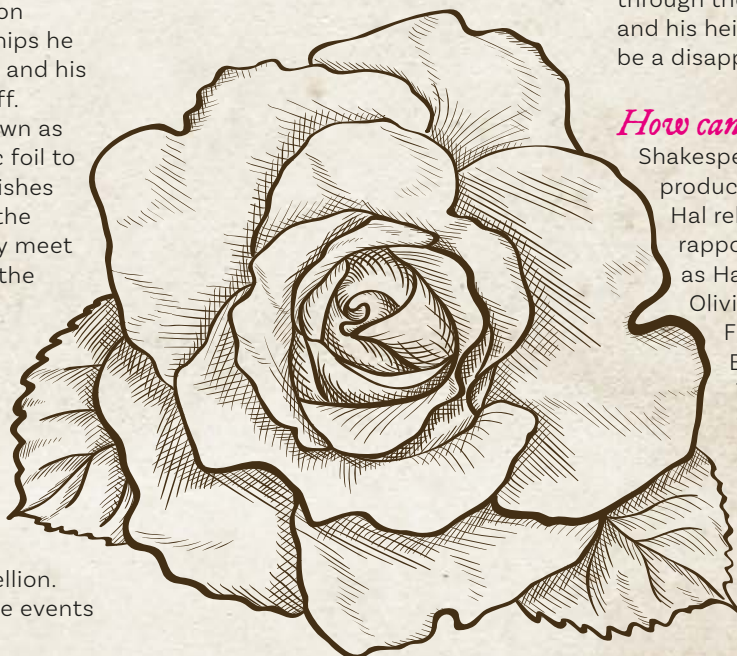
It tells the story of the Percy family's failed rebellion against Henry VI, a key part of the War of the Roses.

Roses. Like most of the Histories, the play explores notions of kingship and what it means to be a good king. This is an obvious thematic link to *Macbeth*, which is one of the most popular GCSE texts.

Links could also be made to media studies, where the influence of Shakespeare's plays can be observed in the popular TV series, *Game of Thrones*. There's also PSHE potential in exploring issues of teenage rebellion through the relationship of the king and his heir, and what it feels like to be a disappointment to your parents.

How can I watch it?

Shakespeare's Globe's 2011 production portrays the Falstaff/Hal relationship with an excellent rapport between Jamie Parker as Hal and Roger Allam in his Olivier Award-winning turn as Falstaff. Alternatively, the BBC's acclaimed production *The Hollow Crown* features Tom Hiddleston and Simon Russell Beale as the sparring pair, and offers a more cinematic take on the play.



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3

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4

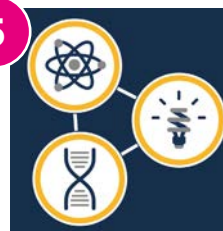
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5



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6

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MyLearning covers the whole curriculum, from KS1 through to KS4. We're a non-profit, funded by Arts Council England and have been established for 16 years. To find out more, visit mylearning.org or drop us a line at info@mylearning.org



7

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9

By your side

Following the DfE's decision to change how it regulates Technical Awards qualifications for 14- to 16-year-olds, OCR has taken the opportunity to update the content and design of its Cambridge Nationals qualification to incorporate the new rules.

Those in the process of planning and comparing qualifications for next year may be interested in examining how the redeveloped qualifications – ready for first teaching in September 2022 – have changed as a result.

Further details can be found at an online hub (teach.ocr.org.uk/cambridgenationals2022), where visitors can book places on virtual subject-specific Roadshows and consult with subject experts. As well as allowing visitors to review the draft specifications, mapping guides and switching guides, the hub also includes a free, 30-minute course that provides key information on teaching and assessing the revised Cambridge Nationals qualifications.



10

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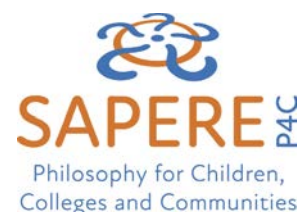
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'Is extinction inevitable?'

'Should we think differently about chemicals that occur naturally and those that don't?'

'Should scientists doubt everything?'

'Is being good its own reward?'



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FOCUS ON: MATHS

Taught by every school in the land and as 'core' as you can get, maths teachers arguably confront more barriers to student engagement than any of their colleagues. Why is that – and how can those barriers be broken down?

What steps can maths teachers take to encourage greater student engagement?

THE AGENDA:

58 “BUT I’M NO GOOD...”

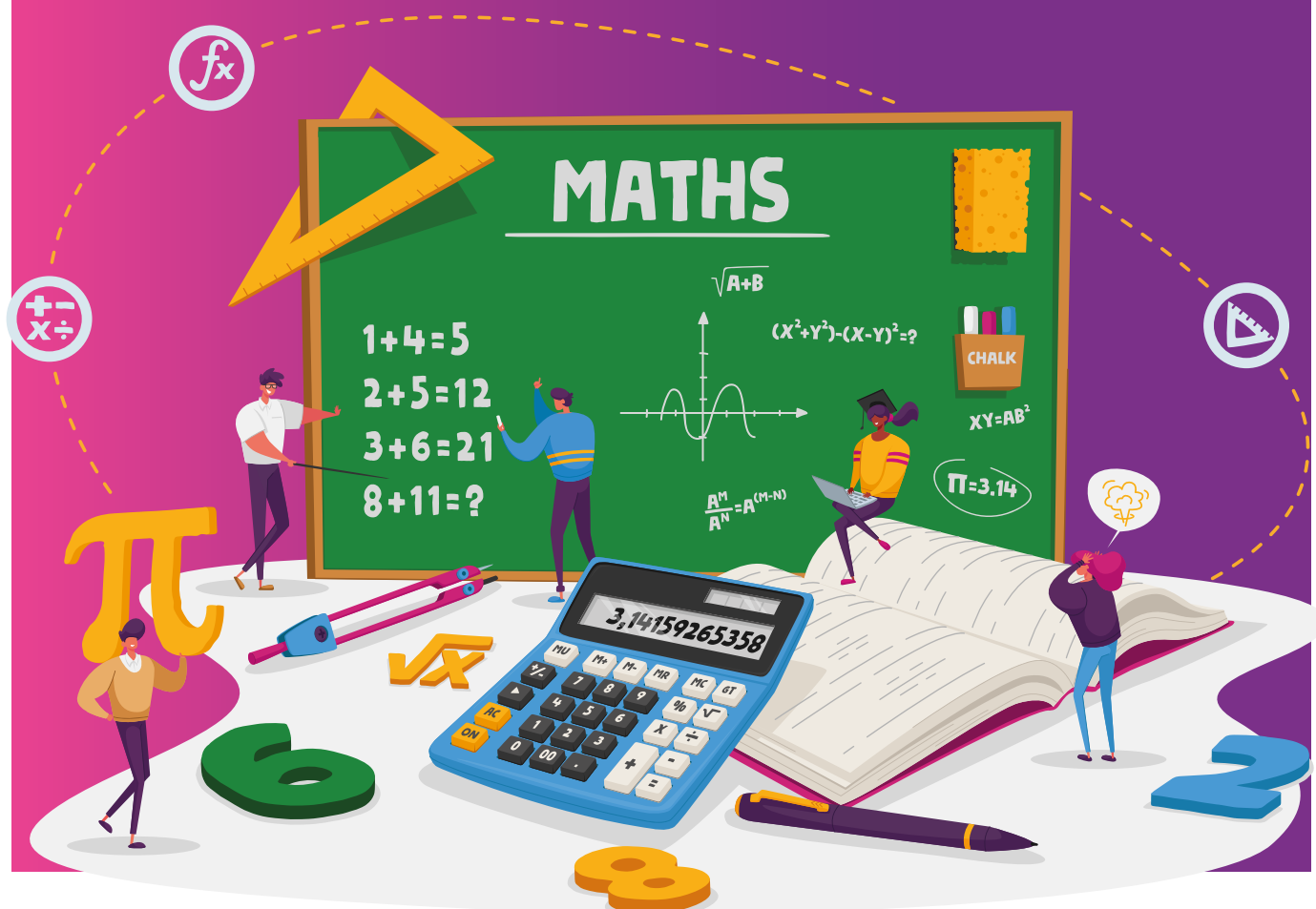
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“But I’m no good...”

Colin Foster suggests some ways in which teachers can better understand and support those students who have convinced themselves that they’re simply ‘no good’ at maths...

Very young children often have boundless overconfidence. They think they know everything and have no sense of their own limits – they’re the epitome of the Dunning–Kruger effect. They’ll often receive lots of encouragement from adults, both at home and at school, and perceive little sense of pressure, since nobody expects them to know everything.

However, this blissful state can’t continue forever. By the time these same children have reached secondary school, they’ll have often become disillusioned about education and their own

abilities. They may have already concluded that they are simply ‘no good’ at certain subjects, with maths often near the top of that list.

Why does this happen, and could it be prevented? And when it does happen, how can schools best support these students?

Cultural issues

It’s far too easy to blame teachers for this. It’s sometimes implied that negative attitudes towards maths can be ascribed to previous teachers not having provided students with sufficiently positive early experiences of the subject. Certainly, if your everyday experience of maths lessons involves very little success

– at least as defined by other people – it would be surprising if that didn’t turn you off the subject.

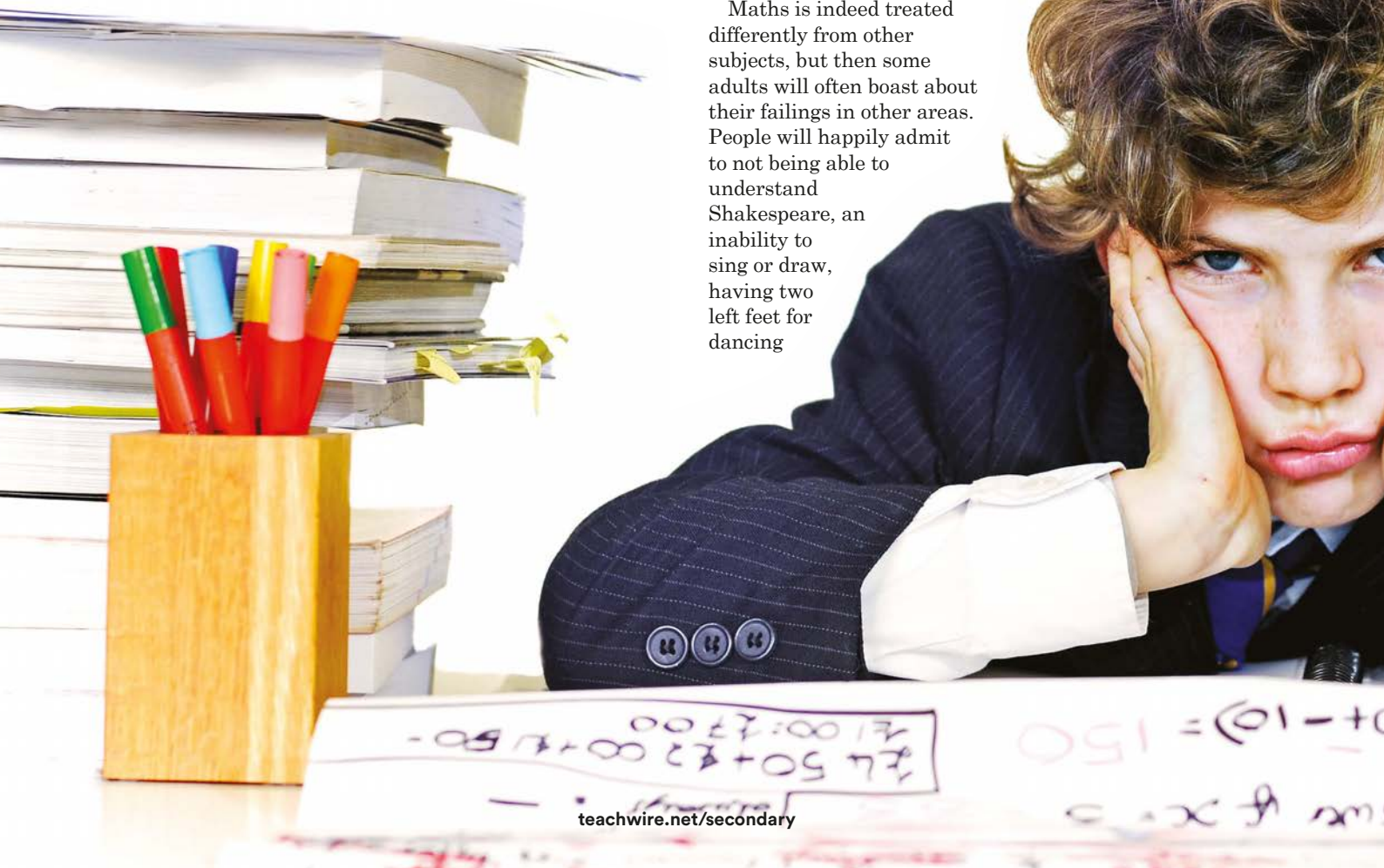
But there’s more to it than that. As a society, we have serious problems with how we view maths and maths ability. As Liz Truss put it in 2013: “There are deep-seated cultural issues with maths in this country which need to be challenged – in our culture where, inexplicably, it is completely acceptable for adults and children to shrug their shoulders and say, laughing, *‘I’m rubbish at maths.’* It would be unthinkable for anyone to say, almost proudly, *‘I can’t read,’* or *‘I’ve never quite got to grips with writing.’*” (See bit.ly/ts105-mng1)

Maths is indeed treated differently from other subjects, but then some adults will often boast about their failings in other areas. People will happily admit to not being able to understand Shakespeare, an inability to sing or draw, having two left feet for dancing

(see Leonard, Bannister, & D’Souza, 2020), having a ‘brown thumb’ for gardening, hopelessness at parallel parking or ignorance when it comes to using technology. I think we can sometimes make too much of maths being special in this respect.

Embracing the label

Even maths teachers themselves aren’t always comfortable with their identity as



'mathematicians'. Some time ago, a Twitter survey found that many maths teachers were uncomfortable describing themselves as mathematicians, whereas most music teachers will happily embrace the label 'musician'. It somehow seems easier to say *'I'm a musician'*, even if you've never taken a music exam in your life, than it is to say *'I'm a mathematician'* – even if you have a string of maths qualifications to your name and earn a living as a maths teacher!

This is perhaps because many people will study maths until they find it too hard and then stop. This applies even to people who have completed maths degrees and PhDs. They'll start off confidently, but by the final year of their degree, will be

desperately looking for 'easier' module options – something they would never have anticipated doing when they began.

I personally know of someone with a doctorate in maths who says they don't feel that they're 'really very good at maths', because they needed considerable help to complete their PhD.

There seems to be a view that if you struggle at all with maths, then there must be something wrong with you. I prefer to take the view that *'Mathematicians aren't the people who find maths easy; they're the people who enjoy how hard it is.'*

“Mathematicians aren't the people who find maths easy; they're the people who enjoy how hard it is”

Placing the 'blame'

It's also wrong to blame parents. Everyone knows that a guaranteed way to annoy your child's maths teacher is to turn up to parents evening and dismiss concerns about your child's progress by saying, *'Oh, I was never any good at maths when I was at school.'* This is obviously unhelpful, because it gives the child a ready-made excuse for failure, and potentially sets up a self-fulfilling prophecy – but does it follow that parents are supposed to conceal their true feelings about maths?

If parents themselves had a negative experience of

learning maths in school, they can hardly be blamed if they haven't yet got over it. Besides, we all know that teenagers don't blindly follow their parents' viewpoints – if anything, they'll often take pride in liking things their parents don't. We can't lay the blame at parents' doors.

Finally, it's also far too easy to blame the students themselves – *they didn't try hard enough, they weren't prepared to think, and so they got left behind.* I'm sure

we've all come across students who seem fine at most school subjects, but for some reason have a real block when it comes to maths.

In some of these cases, there could be issues of maths anxiety or dyscalculia at play that have gone unrecognised. More generally, however, if students have a consistently low view of their mathematical capability, then ascribing that to their own fault is clearly only going to make matters worse.

Play the long game

There's no quick fix. None of us, adults or students, change our attitudes in a hurry, and that's normally a good thing. We need to start by recognising how students feel and accepting those feelings, at least for now.

Trying to argue students out of it – *'You ARE good at maths, really – look, you got this right'* – is well-meant, but

can communicate that we don't take students' feelings seriously. Students will sometimes think they're bad at maths because they feel that they don't understand anything, even if they can perform certain procedures and arrive at the right answers.

They might not realise that other students similarly don't understand certain concepts all that well, but are perhaps simply less reflective or concerned about it. It's sometimes the most thoughtful students, those with lots of potential to make sense of the subject, who feel that they're 'no good'.

A more positive approach is to spend time working on sense-making with difficult concepts, rather than aiming for quick and cheap successes by saying *'Never mind; just do this'*. Short-term strategies are unlikely to convince students that they can really be comfortable with maths.

Likewise, attempts to motivate students by bringing in tenuous 'fun', pseudo-real life contexts will often fall flat. Instead of trying to generate superficial enthusiasm so that they work harder and are ultimately successful, it's usually better to turn this round. Focus instead on direct ways of engineering students' success and understanding, which can then lead to more genuine motivation and a more positive outlook on the subject. Play the long game, and you'll see those attitudes gradually change.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

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Why do we need to know this?

Dougald Tidswell puts forward some suggestions for making meaningful links between the maths students learn inside the classroom with the wider world outside it...

‘Who invented Maths? When I’ve built my time machine, I’m going to go back and stop them.’

It was one of the more inventive ways of expressing disdain for my beloved maths that I’ve heard, and set up a beautiful paradox that we briefly explored – but this was not the first, nor will it be the last student to have entertained the idea of a world without maths.

I doubt you would find many students willing to step away from our internet-infused, technological society. If pressed, most would grudgingly accept that scientific advances powered by rigorous mathematics are responsible for their beloved phones and Xboxes, but in the classroom, this connection to curriculum mathematics isn’t always so clear.

The mathematics that has made our lives unrecognisable to previous generations often isn’t apparent from what they’re learning in lessons, any more than a spelling test is to the finely-honed script of their latest Netflix binge-watch.

However, the desire to provide real-world applications continues apace, with increasingly contorted set ups appearing in each subsequent exam series to provide a hitherto unseen application. We’ll soon long for the days of Hannah and her sweets.

Easy wins

That said, there are some easy wins. Personal finance management, percentages, bank statements, loans – these are all entirely in syllabus and of direct relevance to every individual. Find real loan offers, compare bank loans to payday loans and work with spreadsheets to compare total repayments under various offers. There are numerous jobs where numbers are an everyday tool, but much of the processing will be automated – no fund manager is manually calculating their returns, for example.

A carpet fitter, on the other hand, may well be performing calculations themselves, but we should learn about the concept of area even if we’re not focussed on a career in carpets. Geometry isn’t on the curriculum solely for students to know and apply the facts themselves, but rather in order to learn about them, while getting to practice logical reasoning and problem solving.

In a world awash with disinformation, we should

want to equip our young people with such skills. But will your students buy into the argument that critical thinking skills, developed through the application of relevant circle theorems, will help them sort truth from fiction when browsing YouTube?

Our students learn the building blocks of mathematics, but there’s no reason why we can’t pull back the curtain and point to some of the applications this can lead to. When Pascal and Fermat started thinking about dice games and formulating probability theory, they had no idea where it would lead. Similarly, when we teach probability, we can preview the A Level content of hypothesis testing. The pandemic has brought little in the way of good news, but the mathematics behind clinical trials provides a good hook on which to hang the importance of evidence-based medicine.

Tell a story

Seek out opportunities to show students what lies beyond the horizon.

Gradients of lines allows you to introduce the real reason why Newton should be a household name, the true reason why Leibniz biscuits have that name and point out to any budding engineers how vital calculus will be to them. The specific mathematics may be beyond their current skillset, but the story isn’t.

There’s also merit in hinting at some of the dark arts that await the more confident mathematicians. When Y7s enter the classroom and see Y13’s working on the board, Arthur C Clarke’s assertion that, “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic” can be readily seen on their faces. Rather than suggesting that footballers are solving a quadratic when placing a penalty kick, let’s instead point to real-life applications like this.

Perhaps then, when our disgruntled student steps out of their time machine onto the plains of Africa 40,000 years ago, determined to stop anyone from etching any baboon bones, they’ll pause, look around and decide they’d

rather live in a world with mathematics after all.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dougald Tidswell is subject leader for mathematics at The Beaconsfield School



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Time to reconnect

Paul Carter explains how maths teachers can get students back on track post-pandemic, with the help of some smart edtech...

We know that disadvantaged pupils have fallen further behind in maths due to the pandemic. We also know the attainment gap didn't widen (or shrink) during the autumn 2020 term, which suggests that the learning gaps caused by COVID-19 are unlikely to close without strategic intervention.

Unless all teachers are supported in delivering provision that caters to all students, we risk failing a whole generation of children – and those from disadvantaged backgrounds the most.

Shrinking the gap

As a teacher, you'll have seen how every student will have faced their own set of unique challenges presented by the pandemic, and how some have been in a better position to cope with these challenges than others. Obvious though it sounds, it bears repeating that students with more resources at their disposal will have had a greater chance of succeeding in their education, in spite of the pandemic, compared to those without.

These inequalities can be especially pronounced when it comes to maths and other STEM subjects – not least due to the challenges some parents have encountered in providing additional educational support at home, thus widening the gap between students yet further.

The most helpful way of bolstering

the education of all students is to provide various learning opportunities that are suitably tailored to their learning preferences and personal circumstances. Now is the ideal time to reimagine what STEM education can look and feel like, and edtech is the ideal delivery vehicle.

Videos, games and other interactive learning opportunities can be used to support lesson plans and help consolidate learning objectives, while taking the burden off already overstretched teachers.

Useful insights

When deployed appropriately, edtech can also be a highly useful source of pupil data and insights into how successfully they're reconnecting with their learning. This information can then be used to inform future lessons and learning

priorities, and help with identifying those students who may need more dedicated support.

The right edtech solution will enable teachers to set a single class activity, game or quiz on any particular topic, be it maths or otherwise. Teachers can then track the students' subsequent progress, using the data to check how many students completed the task, where they may have stumbled, which questions worked well and where the starkest knowledge gaps within the class might be – all of which can be used to tailor one's classroom instruction, so that it addresses needs of every child in the class.

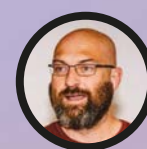
The interactive nature of some online study tools, whether accessed from a fixed or mobile device, can give students a chance to escape, while still being

engaged in learning. Many recent learning games and videos are now designed in such a way as to get progressively more challenging and enable students will build their skills at their own pace, while still enjoying themselves.

Teaching reimaged

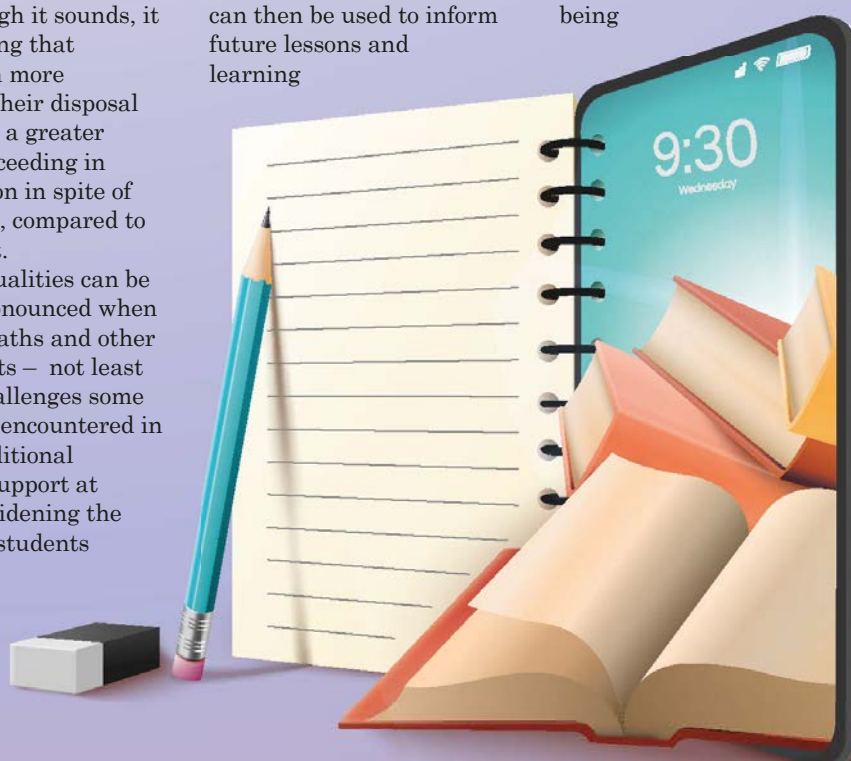
That said, some classes will still require access to physical resources that students can take home and work with, in the absence of a reliable internet connection. Students can benefit from numerous offline activities – particularly in maths, which offers plenty of scope for imaginative practical activities.

The pandemic might have disrupted education for all students, but some will have had more opportunities to jump-start their education than others. The largest educational catchup gaps are likely to be found in maths and other STEM subjects, making these the areas where disadvantaged children are likely need the most support. Reimagining the way in which we teach these subjects can provide students with valuable support at a time of truly unprecedented challenge.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Carter is a former teacher and head of learning content at Mangahigh



Tame your chimp

We hear how schools are making productive use of The Chimp Model to simplify the complexities of neuroscience, and help explain how and why we behave, react, and think as we do

In 2012, a book titled *The Chimp Paradox* by the consultant psychiatrist Professor Steve Peters outlined a distinctive model of mind management.

The book invited readers to consider the different ways in which their calm, orderly and rational thought processes could be hijacked – by sudden bursts of impulsivity, inattention brought on by stress, displays of aggression towards colleagues, or inaccurate assessments of one's own abilities.

Readers were then encouraged to see their brains as a machine with three core operating systems. The Human, a conscious thinking system which works with facts and logic; The Chimp, an emotionally-driven system working on instincts and drives for survival in the jungle; and The Computer, a programmable reference source for both the Human and Chimp systems.

Whilst all three systems are there to help and protect us, they regularly come into conflict with one another to create unwanted thoughts, behaviours and emotions, which can affect our psychological wellbeing and performance.

Using the Chimp Model, individuals can gain insight into their own unique mind and adopt skills to rationalise and manage their minds more efficiently. The Model helps us to reflect on our own individual behaviours – to recognise how and when our Chimp is in control, and how we can be affected by our Chimp. Being able to conceive this insight then equips us with tools we can use to manage our Chimp, helping us become less stressed, anxious and worried, and more confident, happy and resilient.

Given the demands and behaviours found within school settings, it's not surprising that schools have started drawing on the Chimp Model via Chimp Management – a charitable training provider set up by Professor Peters. Here, two school leaders tell us about their experiences of using the model so far, and the extent to which it's likely to shape their practice in future.



CATHERINE FORSTER

*Deputy Headteacher, King Edward VI
School Lichfield*

Having come across *The Chimp Paradox*, I subsequently saw Professor Peters at the Hay Festival in 2018. The school later received an email promoting a free Chimp Management CPD course taking place at another Midlands school, consisting of eight sessions, and we ended up sending along three members of staff.

They returned from the training feeling that it had been quite primary-focused, but believed it contained some great elements that we could use as a school. We discussed exploring the Chimp Management process further with the course leader – but then came that rather large, COVID-shaped hole that ultimately prevented any further training from taking place.

However, we continued to discuss internally the different Chimp Management training opportunities available to us, and eventually concluded that we could adopt the model for our staff support and development.

Take a breath

Being a fairly traditional school, we've been on quite a journey in terms of our remote learning provision – from initially using a platform to share worksheets, to adopting Teams and Office 365 Education. There's been extensive staff CPD focusing on the use of those platforms over the past year, which has informed the 'blended' approach to staff training we now use, where some sessions are held in person and others are hosted online. That newfound flexibility has enabled us to spread things out and use our training time over the coming year more effectively.

Our hope is that the Model can help some of our staff think more carefully about how they react to certain situations, and encourage them to pause, take a breath and react in different, more positive ways instead.

We can also see its scope for improving staff interactions with students – like many other schools, we've observed the rollout of the government's new behaviour hubs, and reflected on our current approaches to encouraging positive behaviour.

Longer term, there may be the opportunity to give our students first-hand experience of those reflective moments, but for now, our plan is for the Model to have an impact on staff – particularly their abilities to look after their wellbeing and manage their workload.

ANDREW SMITH

*Deputy headteacher, designated safeguarding lead
and mental health lead at The Manchester
Grammar School*

There are many things about the mind management model outlined by Professor Peters that are attractive to us as an institution. We're currently looking at collaborating with Chimp Management long-term to embed the approach into our PSHE programme, and have identified many areas in which we can use the model in an effective way – such as helping teachers better understand the way children relate to each other, and in teaching children how to reflect on their own internal thought processes.

As a very academic grammar school, we've seen how the Model could work well with our students, who tend to be highly driven, high functioning and very goal-orientated, and therefore likely find themselves having to manage stress, the fear of failure and desire for success and achievement.

So far, we've delivered a staff training session that was very well received. On one level, it's helped colleagues retain their sense of balance – these are individuals who have been working extremely hard and putting a great deal of pressure on themselves to support our young people – by helping them self-regulate and maintain a clearer sense of purpose. It's helped many colleagues recognise that some aspirations simply aren't realistic, and therefore not worth beating themselves up about.

Malfunction versus dysfunction

It's also been useful where our interactions with children are concerned – helping us attain a more nuanced understanding of what those interactions involve, and the mental processes at play on the students' part that are going to be slightly different to ours.

We've worked with other trainers in the past who have been very good, but focused more on understanding mental health in terms of 'malfunction' – situations in which people become depressed, anxious or mentally ill. What the Chimp model is very good at addressing is 'dysfunction' – within my normal mental bandwidth, am I managing my own emotions sufficiently well?

Looking ahead, I can see the model as being hugely helpful for our staff, though not necessarily something we'll embed in a series of formal school policies. It's not about 'indoctrinating' people, but rather adopting the model as an overarching way of governing everything we do.

That said, I see the most fertile territory for the model as being among pupils – helping them understand the workings of their minds, and regulate their emotional responses to the conflict that can arise from being in a competitive environment.

I've already used the model in PSHE lessons to help children understand the nature of bullying, within the frame of evolutionary psychology and neurology. The scientific underpinning makes it a very informative model that kids can quickly grasp – *'This explains what happens when I'm being challenged'; 'This is why things get out of control'; 'This is why I feel a certain way in particular situations.'*

SCHOOLS IN FOR SUMMER

As the government suggests using longer days and summer provision to get students back on track after an unsettled year, what will schools actually be doing over the break to provide students with the support they need?

“We had an amazing virtual online offer during lockdown, but there’s still no substitute for students working with their teachers face to face.”

So says Damian Lee, executive headteacher at New Rickstones Academy, which is once again planning to hold its traditional transition summer school for children joining next year’s Y7 – albeit with a slightly tweaked agenda focusing on academic improvement, social and personal development and wellbeing.

Following the pandemic and its accompanying lengthy partial school closures, this year will mark the first time that the school’s current Y7 and Y10 cohorts will be welcomed on-site during the summer for additional sessions.

The academy has been a Google School for over five years, and was therefore able to switch almost instantly to a full timetable of online learning when the pandemic first struck in March last year, enabling students to continue with their full quota of studies from that point on.

The summer sessions are intended to give the current Y7s some extra time to settle in to a school they’ve spent little physical time in over the course of their first year. The Y10s will meanwhile focus on English and maths catch-up learning, so that they can hit the ground running upon starting their final year of school and aim for the highest grades possible.

“We have offered our summer school to vulnerable students going into Y8 in the past, if they have needed that consistency through the break,” says Lee. “However, this year, we felt the current Y7 had missed a large chunk of their transition period into secondary school. Joining the summer school will allow them extra time to get themselves more acclimatised, like previous Y7 students would have been.

“We felt that Y8 and Y9 were already completely settled in at our school, and so didn’t need the same additional time over summer.”

Enrichment activities

Similarly, schools within The Sigma Trust will be holding their traditional

summer schools this year, with an extra focus on the mental health and wellbeing of a cohort who have had to face much recent upheaval in the course of their education.

Scott Holder, director of education at The Sigma Trust, told us, “Secondary schools within the Trust will all be holding summer schools for students in Y6, who will be joining their new school in September. All schools will have a balanced programme of academic catch-up, alongside enrichment activities.

“The summer schools will provide our young people with opportunities to make up for some of their missed education. They will also help to support pupil mental health and wellbeing, and improve their transitions to a new school. Uptake has been strong, which demonstrates a willingness on the part of our young people to take advantage of the opportunities provided by our engaging summer school programmes.”



“The Stanway School’s summer school provision will include activities based on a ‘survival’ theme, aimed at encouraging the children to collaborate and familiarise themselves with the school site”

At The Stanway School, part of The Sigma Trust, a summer school will be held for those transitioning into Y7, with more than 80% of the cohort set to join in.

It's the first time in some years that a summer school will have been held there. The schedule for the week includes English, maths, science, history, geography, citizenship, PE, food technology and design technology sessions, as well as literacy baseline tests.

"We have decided to utilise the government's request for summer provision to support our incoming Y7s in acclimatising to the secondary school environment," says Charlotte Beck Hansen-Spurr, acting senior progress leader.

"This cohort in particular, like many across the country, have experienced much disruption to their education, so we have chosen to accommodate both academic and social elements into our summer school. More than ever, we hope to create a real sense of what it means to be part of The Stanway School community.

"While this year has been tough on all school staff, we are really fortunate that so many of our staff see the value in supporting the project. We hope that having a broader insight into how we do things here will promote confidence, and allow the Y7s to join us in September with a sense of pride in our standards – and maybe give them a few friendly faces to spot in the corridors, too."

The Stanway School's summer school provision will include activities based on a 'survival' theme, aimed at encouraging the

THE PLAY'S THE THING

It's not just schools doing their bit to help support young people this summer.

The National Theatre is running two programmes for young people throughout July and August, focusing on theatre making and the climate crisis. Both programmes are aimed at creating spaces for young people to be creative, connect together and learn new skills.



According to Hannah Cox, young people's programme manager at the National Theatre, "After the disruption caused by the pandemic, we are committed to supporting young people with the opportunities and skills they want and need right now, rather than suggesting the need to 'catch-up'.

"We have launched two free online summer projects, 'Shaping the Future: Theatre Making and Climate' and 'The School of Hope with The Paper Birds', both of which will allow students to explore contemporary issues through theatre-making, connecting them with like-minded theatre makers from across the UK. Although relevant to the national curriculum, both courses provide space to be creative, learn new skills and empower young people to be the leaders of tomorrow."

For more details, visit nationaltheatre.org.uk/young-people

children to collaborate, and familiarise themselves with the site and its facilities. The first day will see students form a coalition in response to a mock crisis scenario – that of being stranded at school. Each day, activities will incorporate numeracy and literacy, humanities, arts and sport.

The head of Y7 and a broad range of teaching staff will be on hand during the week to get to know their students and help them to settle in.

Building up confidence

Forest Hall School, part of BMAT Education, has traditionally run a summer school each year to support the Y6 to Y7 transition, and plans to dedicate two weeks of this year's summer break to welcoming its new Y7, with some tweaks to reflect the impact of the pandemic.

According to Sarah Power, Forest Hall School's enrichment lead, "They have had a challenging Y6,

so we want to build up their confidence by inviting them into school.

Power goes on to note that "We planned for our summer term to incorporate interventions for our key groups, and to ensure that exceptional learning is taking place in the classroom, as well as in intervention time." To that end, the school has also been holding catch-up sessions in numeracy and literacy over the past year for its current Y7 and Y8 students.

"Summer school is an excellent opportunity for our new students to get a feel for the school," says Power. "There will be a catch-up element to this year, but in a fun, interactive way. Students will do some real-life maths, as well as some literacy. Interventions will take place during school time, after school and during weekends and holidays at Forest Hall, so we are always able to support students whenever they need it."



Taking care of BUSINESS

Dissatisfied with the processes and expense involved in sourcing supply cover and dealing with commercial providers, trust CEO **Nick Hurn MBE** opted to take matters in-house...

Schools, academies and trusts need to think creatively about how they spend their money and manage their resources. At the same time, they have to regularly question whether there might be a better means of sourcing and delivering vital services in a way that doesn't compromise on quality while delivering savings where possible.

Leaders understand the need for cost effective and efficient curriculum plans, and the prudent management of staff structures and pay. However, in our performance-driven world, this can often be a tricky financial balancing act when faced with the need to retain your best staff, or indeed recruit that transformational head of department. I therefore decided that our trust needed to think differently about how we managed our non-staffing costs and services.

Following the rollout of the National Tutoring Programme, we decided to pause and reflect on what was on offer from the array of national and regional providers. We quickly came to the conclusion as a trust that we could provide a far better programme ourselves – we could provide lots of very high-quality teachers for all subjects, and manage the quality and the organisation more effectively taking matters in-house. Our delivery

would be more focused, more flexible and more successful, and we thought it far better to recycle our catch-up fund to staff within our schools.

Home-grown tutoring

The plan we devised would see staff working with students from a school in our trust, but not their home school. Our tutoring would be carried out via weekly online sessions using Microsoft Teams, which tutors would arrange and record for safeguarding purposes, and use to share content with students while obtaining feedback as they went along. Each session would involve students working in pairs or trios.

We decided that each cohort would experience 10 weeks of tutoring, before we started again with a new set of students for another 10 weeks. Schools in the trust would nominate those students they felt might benefit from our tuition service, and then contact their parents/carers to offer the service and let them know that the tutor will be in touch.

Our tutors would then receive from the schools the parents/carers' contact details and students' email addresses. From there, the tutor would proceed to introduce themselves to the parents/carers and let them know when the weekly sessions would be scheduled. After delivering the session via Teams, staff would be paid £30 per hour for their efforts, though with

oncosts this figure is likely to reach £38 to £39 per hour.

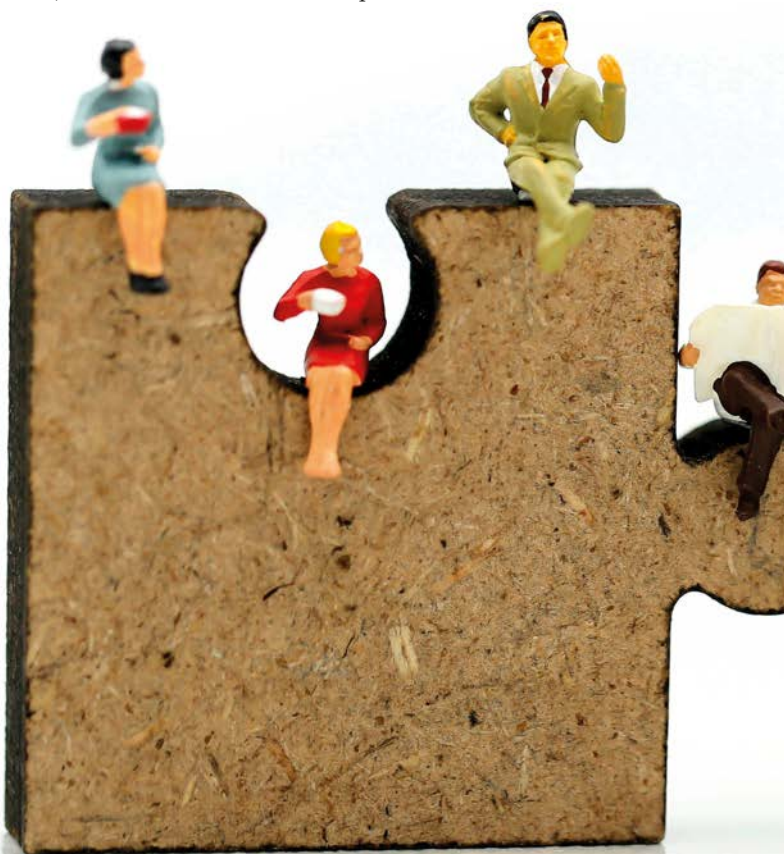
Supply and demand

Admittedly, the model outlined above is considerably more expensive than the NTP programme equivalent, but we're confident that our Trust-wide plan will have a much greater and longer lasting impact on the outcomes of all children, particularly those of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

The cost of supply is going up for everyone. We spend around £750k a year on this area ourselves, which represents an enormous portion of our education budget. Following on from that, service level

agreements and the purchase of goods and services account for whatever is left. My financial team and I focused on these particular areas of spending to see if we could make any substantial and long-lasting savings, without diluting the quality of service or provision.

We decided to focus on the issue of staff absence cover first, which led to the creation of Education Mutual, as an alternative to the traditional insurance company model. Education Mutual provides us with a staff cover scheme in which resources are pooled for the good of all. It's owned by its members – education providers – and has no



“Any money left over goes back to our members in the form of a benefit, rather than as profits and dividends to third parties”

obligation to make money for investors or shareholders.

The key advantage of this scheme is that any money left over goes back to our members in the form of a benefit, rather than as profits and dividends to third parties. Since its formation in 2018, Education Mutual has become the third largest provider of staff cover in the country, and supported schools throughout the pandemic – we were the first staff absence provider to pay COVID claims as far back as June 2020, and continue to do so.

Progress before profits

As CEO of the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust and chairman of Education Mutual, I've been keen to extend this concept and philosophy into other areas. As such, we've piloted a new recruitment and supply agency across our trust called Schools Mutual

Services, which has enabled us to provide a supply service that deploys high quality, reliable support staff and teachers to our schools, ensures fair pay for SMS-employed staff while being competitively priced, and gives back to schools by not taking excess profits out of the public purse.

For example, the SMS daily rate for a TA Level 3 is £85, with the member of staff paid £65. For a Fully Qualified Teacher (FQT), the daily rate is £145 and the teacher pay £120. Having commenced trading in October 2020, SMS has proved to be successful enough that it's now ready to expand into schools across the North East.

Bishop Wilkinson CET will meanwhile have 48 schools by 2022 and a turnover of around £80m. That means that almost

SAVINGS IN PRACTICE

In September 2020, we invited a neighbouring trust to participate in our Education Commercial Services procurement initiative alongside ourselves, and the results have been hugely impressive. Our two trusts, both relatively large, efficient and growing, currently boast strong financials and have achieved savings in excess of £564k, for an investment level of £38.5k over an eight-month period.

Thus far, this work has covered numerous categories, including ICT, photocopiers, office supplies, energy efficiency programmes and catering. The teams of both trusts have grown in skill, understanding and confidence, and succeeded in delivering ever-more efficient processes, to the extent that we expect to be making even bigger savings over the coming year.



every purchase of a good or service will be subject to very strict, and often complicated financial purchase and procurement regulations.

There are multiple frameworks and routes identified by the DfE that are intended to provide appropriate routes and guidance for academies, but this advice and guidance isn't enough to help schools take advantage of this highly complex and competitive sector.

We identified two major barriers that limited the otherwise substantial commercial improvements and savings we could make: our own limited specialist knowledge, skill and expertise within the sector, causing us to miss out on the opportunities available, and the continued existence of a highly fragmented and complex procurement and supply chain landscape that's not necessarily designed to support schools.

Commercial know-how

Having identified the need for a new type of specialist service that could bridge this ever-widening gap between suppliers and trusts, we formed Education Commercial Services – a school-led, paid for service that acts as a commercial

client on behalf of MATs.

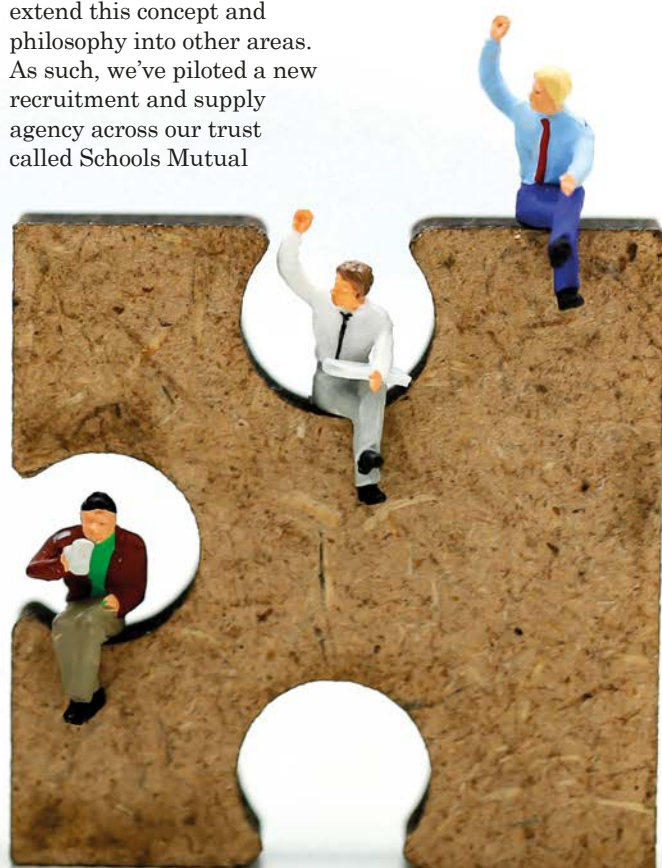
ECS primarily works with trusts on upskilling their staff and engaging with the procurement market to deliver improvements to their service provision. Working in partnership with Value Match – a specialist provider of procurement knowledge and specialists – ECS' objective is to locate the best and most appropriate solutions for trusts, while ensuring that any accompanying savings are retained by each trust and its schools.

I wanted to help form Education Mutual, Schools Mutual Services and Education Commercial Services because I wanted better options – not just for my trust, but other schools and trusts too. By creating alternatives to existing arrangements that aren't sufficiently responsive to schools' ever-changing needs and financial challenges, I believe we can deliver a way of recycling some much-needed money back into our schools.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nick Hurn is CEO of the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust



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3 USED EXTENSIVELY IN SCHOOLS

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CLASSROOM VOICES

“A ‘catch-up narrative’ only increases the stress”

Talk of ‘learning loss’ and ‘catch-up’ has dominated educational discourse in the UK, but internationally, it’s a very different story, observes **Julia Knight**...

Many people’s first exposure to the ‘catch-up’ narrative will have been when the UK government acknowledged that 2020’s mandatory school closures would result in learning loss for children throughout the country.

And yet, international schools across the world have been fairly quiet on the issue. Many such schools were similarly closed for lengthy periods, so surely their children would have missed out too?

STEPPING UP

The first thing to note is that the international school sector responded rapidly to its own mandated school closures. Here in Bahrain, the initial announcement was made in the middle of the February half term. By the first day ‘back’, teachers island-wide were already online and teaching. The country’s largest ISP stepped up by increasing bandwidth and allowing free access to education sites.

Of course, it helped that most families of students attending international schools had the technology needed to access virtual learning and were very supportive of schools’ efforts. Virtually all international schools were further already using some form of VLE, such as Google Classroom or Teams.

By comparison, UK schools have typically been slower to adopt VLEs, whether due to budget constraints, safeguarding concerns or from simply not seeing them as necessary. Compounding that has been the extra technical support required by some families, and the promised government investment that’s ultimately failed to materialise.

Many international educators have

since become experts in delivering content online, in accordance with the capacity reduction policies mandated by education ministries and governments worldwide. Schools in some countries, like Kuwait, for example, have remained closed and largely operated online since February 2020.

SOCIAL DISRUPTION

International leadership teams have been quick to realise that online learning is tough on whole school communities, and that a ‘catch-up narrative’ often only serves to increase the stress and anxiety felt by all. Parents have also understood that teachers and students need some time to decompress, after what’s been an emotionally draining academic year.

The majority of international schools are now looking beyond the current media headlines and towards the future, well aware of the profound

consequences the pandemic will have on children’s mental health and wellbeing globally. International schools are addressing these factors first, because seasoned educators know that healthy and happy children will thrive academically.

THE CURRICULUM FACTOR

UK public schools haven’t entertained the prospect of shorter lunches and breaktimes, nor are they considering extending terms or even organising catch-up sessions. Why is that?

It’s partly down to the majority of international and private schools tending to have students whose progress and attainment are advanced for their age-related expectations, and for whom learning loss will be less severe or quicker to recover from.

The resources available to private sector schools is admittedly greater than those typically enjoyed by maintained schools, but international schools in particular recognise the importance of curriculums designed to overlap and revisit skills in greater depth. There’s also often an emphasis on fostering a community that helps children to exceed (albeit helped by international schools’ greater freedom and spending power).

COVID-19 will profoundly affect education for at least the next three to five years, through which the sector will continue to be adaptable and resilient – as will the students.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julia Knight has been an international teacher since 2012, and is currently principal at EtonHouse International School Bahrain; follow her at @KnightWilliams

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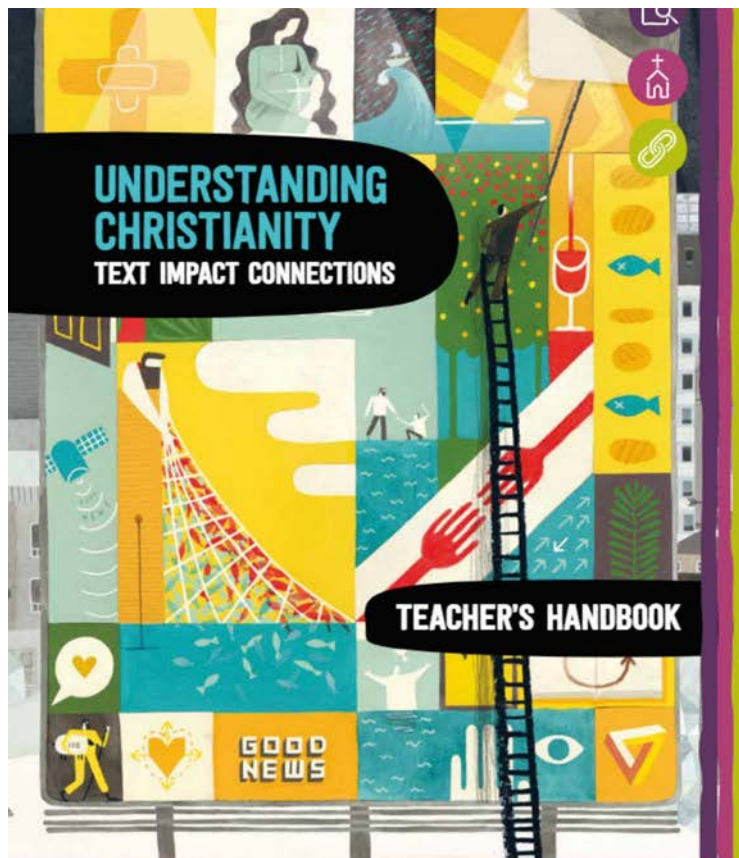
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LEARNING LAB

IN THIS ISSUE

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- + Why classroom instructions should be measurable
- + What's holding back the attainment of white working class pupils?
- + The art of achieving 'desirable difficulty'
- + Why good feedback is less about the 'how' and more about the 'what'
- + Make your transitions between activities go more smoothly
- + A Shakespearean treasure trove, courtesy of the BBC
- + How students can improve their note-taking skills

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How to use...

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

Let's look at the system of retribution many schools have in place and how it can end up causing more harm than the original transgression.

First, there's a '*What happened?*' part that's all about gathering facts as quickly as possible. Next, we turn to finding out – equally quickly – who's to blame. We then identify which rule has been broken, and work out what an appropriate punishment might be – one that fits the crime.

Here, we can be creative. You dropped litter, so you'll spend all lunchtime picking up litter. Or, given how busy we are, we'll just slot the student into the nearest passing discipline event or process. Perhaps one of the regular whole school detentions on Wednesdays, or the curriculum-area detentions on Thursday. Actually, we have a vacancy in isolation booth 3, a week on Friday – *see you there...*!

We get on with our lives, thinking that something has changed and lessons have been learned, and that we're all bigger and better because of it. Repeat.

So long as we're able to overlook the damage done to the relationship between the transgressor and the authority; that the students and colleagues who were harmed have

been ignored; and that accountability for any sense of closure has placed squarely at the door of the punishment – justice has prevailed. So let's move on.

A restorative view, however, seeks to create a better sort of system which sets about things slightly differently. Firstly, the '*What happened?*' element is designed to give everyone involved an opportunity to share their unique perspectives. Remember, at any given time there is always *my* truth, *your* truth and *the* truth.

Next, we'll ask who has been affected and how, and follow this by examining and exploring the impact on people and relationships.

We'll then draw things together by asking the 'needs' questions. What needs are there, and what needs to happen to repair damage and allow us to move forward?

This alternative structure of thought and practice will help move us towards a much more interpersonal process; a culture of shared responsibility and problem solving.

The voices and needs of all those involved are clearly outlined and addressed and – while some sort of punishment may well be necessary – the focus is on restoring trust and connection, on putting things right, making things better and ultimately moving forward.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Finnis is an Independent Thinking Associate and one of the UK's leading exponents of restorative practice, with many years' experience working with schools, local government agencies and social services; this item is an edited extract from his book *Independent Thinking On Restorative Practice* (Crown House Publishing, £9.99); for more information, visit l30relationalsystems.co.uk or follow @Markfinnis

QUICKFIRE STARTER: CO₂ AND CHEMICAL REACTIONS



The Science Museum Group's Charlie Pike serves up a suggestion for making that next science lesson go with a bang – figuratively, at least...

Ignite the curiosity of your KS3 students with a simple 'Blow Up Balloon' experiment that will get your class making predictions and close observations. To run the experiment, you will need:

- A small plastic bottle
- A balloon (ideally pre-stretched beforehand)
- A teaspoon
- A funnel (paper funnels work too)
- Baking soda
- Vinegar

Beforehand, challenge the class to share their ideas – *Is it possible to blow up this balloon without using our mouth or a pump?* Then take the students through the following steps:

1. Fill the bottle half full with vinegar.
2. Use the funnel to fill the balloon half full with baking soda.
3. Place the balloon over the neck of the bottle and allow it to droop over to one side.
4. Lift the balloon and pour the baking soda into the bottle, then shake well.

At this point, engage the class in a discussion of what might be happening inside the bottle as the balloon starts to inflate. What's causing it to do that? Does the process appear to be faster or slower than blowing up a balloon with your mouth?

THE SCIENCE

As you can see, adding the baking soda to the vinegar causes a chemical reaction that releases quantities of carbon dioxide. With the balloon forming a seal around the mouth of the bottle, the gas produced

can't escape – hence it fills up the balloon instead.

FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

Repeat the experiment with different variables, and task students with timing and observing what factors seem to make the balloon inflate faster or slower. They could try adding more vinegar or baking soda, using a larger balloon or a differently-sized bottle

FURTHER DISCUSSION

CO₂ is a greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming. Get the students thinking about its various sources, both natural and man-made.

The Science Museum's full 'Blow-Up Balloon' resource and video can be accessed via sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/resources.

TRY THIS

'MEASURABLE INSTRUCTIONS'

EXERCISE MORE CLASS CONTROL WITH ROBIN LAUNDER'S TIPS...

Consider these three instructions:

- 'Settle down!'
- 'Pay attention!'
- 'Quieter, please!'

They seem reasonable enough, don't they? Teachers use them all the time. You may have used them yourself. I know I have.

The thing is, though, they're a bit vague. They don't precisely state what you want your students to do – which in turn may mean that your students are unclear as to what you want them to do. And even if they are clear, that vagueness gives them wriggle room:

"But I *had* settled down, Sir..."

"But I was paying attention, Miss. I can pay attention and doodle at the same time..."

"But we were quieter. We were whispering to each other..."

To remedy this, make sure your instructions are measurable behaviours. Like this:

- 'Pens down!'
- 'Eyes on me!'
- 'No talking!'

Now there's no confusion. The pens are either down or they're not. The students are looking at you or they're not. They're talking or they're not. There's no middle ground, no wriggle room, no vagueness – but what there is, as a result, is increased compliance.

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

**SCIENCE
MUSEUM
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THE SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP OPERATES FIVE MUSEUMS ACROSS THE UK, INCLUDING SCIENCE MUSEUM IN LONDON, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY MUSEUM IN MANCHESTER, NATIONAL MEDIA MUSEUM IN BRADFORD, RAILWAY MUSEUM IN YORK AND LOCOMOTION IN SHILDON

54%

of students across all OECD countries report being taught how to recognise biased information at school

Source: '21st-Century Readers: Developing literacy skills in a digital world' report produced by PISA

The Education Select Committee has issued a report criticising the government for failing to address attainment gaps among disadvantaged white British pupils.

The report observes that white British pupils eligible for free school meals had an average Attainment 8 score of 31.8, compared to an average of 42.3 for FSM-eligible black African pupils and 48.2 for FSM-eligible Indian pupils.

The report states that as white pupils make up the majority of disadvantaged pupils, addressing their comparatively low outcomes would “Significantly shift the overall attainment gap.”

The report’s authors point to regional under-investment, family experiences of education and lack of social capital as among the factors responsible for disadvantaging white working class pupils. Their recommendations include strengthening early years support and doing more to promote apprenticeships and vocational training.

Somewhat contentiously, the report also singles out the term ‘white privilege’ in modern discourse, stating that “We are concerned that the phrase may be alienating to disadvantaged white communities, and may have contributed towards a systemic neglect of white people facing hardship.”

Read the full report via bit.ly/ts105-LL2

YOUR GUIDE TO ...

DESIRABLE DIFFICULTY

Robert Bjork’s concept of desirable difficulties suggests that introducing different levels of difficulty into learning significantly improves recall, retention and general memory performance. By ensuring that learning is pitched to a ‘desirable difficulty’, teachers can stretch learners enough to help them progress. If the difficulty isn’t desirable, learners likely won’t progress as well as they potentially could.

As teachers, we often find solace in student success, so the notion of challenging students to the extent that they may not succeed can feel daunting. Learning isn’t easy, and at times, nor is getting students to engage.

Teachers typically can’t afford to waste a minute of lesson time, which means making sure your planning doesn’t include tasks requiring minimal effort or brain power. Tasks should instead be planned for the *right degree of success*. Pitch it too easy, and students will think that learning has occurred, only to instantly forget what they’ve learnt.

The desirable difficulty for any individual should be around 80% –

they’ll mostly succeed, but sometimes get stuck and have to think more deeply before succeeding fully.

Consider also spacing learning sessions apart, rather than massing them together; testing learners on material rather than having them simply restudy it; and having learners generate target material via puzzles or some other active process, rather than just passive reading. Additionally, try varying the settings in which their learning takes place.

Any of the above approaches will serve to insert additional hurdles for the learners in your class, thus increasing the difficulty of a task, or series of tasks. In the absence of difficulty, learners won’t be able to adjust when encountering such obstacles in their learning, and have fewer chances to build up their resilience.

In the short term, student successes can boost your confidence and make you think your teaching is effective – but ensuring a good level of challenge is what will ultimately help your learners most in the long run. Don’t allow yourself to be lulled into a false sense of security.



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

£118 million

The level of financial support for disadvantaged pupils set to disappear from school budgets in England, due to planned changes to Pupil Premium funding calculations

Source: Analysis by the Local Government Association

Need to know

A guidance report published by the Education Endowment Foundation suggests that schools should focus more on the principles underpinning effective feedback, rather than the means by which it is delivered.

Based on a review of evidence drawn from around the world, the EEF's 'Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning' report sets out three key principles for effective feedback, recommending that teachers:

1. Lay the foundations for effective feedback, with high quality initial teaching that includes careful formative assessment
2. Deliver appropriately timed feedback that focuses on moving learning forward
3. Plan for how pupils will receive and use feedback, using strategies to ensure that pupils will act on the feedback offered

The guidance goes on to highlight the importance of a well-implemented feedback policy, advising that this should promote and exemplify evidence-informed principles. At the same time, however, it recommends that decisions around methods and timing ought to be decided on the basis of a teacher's professional judgement, given their familiarity with the learning contexts of individual pupils.

Download the full report via bit.ly/ts105-LL1



IMPROVE YOUR... TRANSITIONS BETWEEN ACTIVITIES

Once transition routines are established, it allows flexible, responsive teaching to flourish as teachers can switch between activities with confidence, adding variety, changing the tempo and increasing depth and challenge as required.

1. Establish expectations

As new types of activity are added to the class repertoire, run through the process of establishing expectations and rehearsing routines explicitly. Ideally, the number of different types of learning is manageable where teachers use them frequently enough for the routines to become embedded. If students are unsure what to do or what is expected, then transitions are much more likely to waste time and feel disruptive.

2. Verbal walkthroughs

Before initiating a transition, walk through it verbally using a familiar set of instructions: *"When I give the signal, I'd like everyone to move into your practical groups in your normal positions. As always, you only need your pencil, ruler and exercise book; everything else should be tidied neatly on your desk. Walk slowly to your normal stations and show me you are ready."*

3. Check for understanding

This is classic territory for using this strategy as a matter of routine. Instead of asking rhetorical, ineffective questions like 'Does everyone understand what to do?', select one, two or three students to run through

their understanding of what is expected:

"Kingsley, remind us what you all need to do when I give the signal."

"Amy, do you agree with Kingsley? Did he leave anything out?"

4. Signal, switch, re-focus

Signal: Give the agreed signal to start the transition. **Switch:** Monitor students as they go through the routine, switching from one activity to the next. **Re-focus:** Once they have switched, scan the class, making eye contact, making sure everyone is now re-focused, relaxed and ready.

You may want them to get straight on with the next activity, in which case make this part of the transition routine explicitly.

5. Review, refine and rehearse to improve each routine

The more fluid and fluent the transition routines are, the more likely you are to use them. Don't give up on them early on – time spent getting them right is time well spent. You will be able to remove some cues, pauses and checks as the transitions become more automatic. If something isn't working, change it and then rehearse and embed the adapted routines.

This item is taken from the book *Teaching WalkThrus 2: Five-step guides to instructional coaching* by Tom Sherrington and Oliver Caviglioli (£12, John Catt)



All the world's a stage

English and drama teachers may find that resourcing their Shakespeare lessons has now become slightly easier, thanks to a new partnership between the BBC and the Educational Recording Agency.

The public service broadcaster has made a significant portion of its Shakespeare archive available to schools, colleges and universities across the UK, amounting to hundreds of hours of radio and TV output spanning seven decades that can be digitally streamed by Educational Recording Agency licence holders.

As well as many acclaimed productions and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, the collection also extends to a range of documentaries, interviews and even Shakespeare-related spoofs and comedies, including material drawn from sketch shows and the Ben Elton sitcom, *Upstart Crow*. The collection currently comprises close to 1,000 items, with more content set to be added in due course.

Notable highlights include all 37 of the productions that made up the *BBC Television Shakespeare* series, a

1967 production of *Much Ado About Nothing* starring Maggie Smith and Robert Stephens, the 2010 BBC Four film *Macbeth* starring Patrick Stewart and the RSC's acclaimed 2009 production of *Hamlet*, featuring David Tennant in the title role.

According to Helen Foulkes, Head of BBC Education, "This partnership will provide an ideal complement to the extensive Shakespeare study resources we provide online."

FOR MORE DETAILS, VISIT ERA.ORG.UK/SHAKESPEARE-ARCHIVE

TRENDING

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

SOCIAL CARE CAREERS

The education charity Future First has launched a free virtual work experience pack that focuses on health and social care careers, containing a five-day programme of activities and videos.

futurefirst.org.uk

MILITARY PRIDE

To mark this year's Pride month, the British Army has produced a series of resources for students aged 11 to 16 that explore the historic contributions of LGBTQ+ service people, and highlight the importance of creating inclusive and supportive spaces for LGBTQ+ people

bit.ly/ts105-LL3

FAIR-WEATHER FRIENDS

From the Royal Meteorological Society comes 'Weather and Climate: A Teacher's Guide' - a free book with accompanying online resources to support the teaching of weather and climate to students aged 11 to 14.

bit.ly/ts105-LL4

STUDENT WALKTHROUGH

TIPS ON TAKING NOTES

HELP YOUR STUDENTS BECOME BETTER LEARNERS WITH ZEPH BENNETT'S VISUAL EXPLAINERS...



FILTER

Separate the main ideas from the text and remove unnecessary information in two stages. **Stage 1** - highlight key details to extract. **Stage 2** - write the details on a separate page and assess whether you need any more information



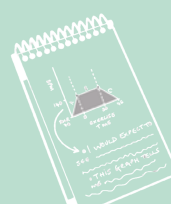
BULLET

Read over the material, and then separate out the key facts by noting them down as bullet points, using sub-headings for topic areas. Each bullet point can be given its own 'sub-bullet points' to indicate multiple connected concepts



LINK

You can try tying key themes together by referencing any topic(s) you have linked in your notes. Add page references, if applicable - you could also try illustrating any links more clearly in the form of mind maps.



INTERPRET

Annotate your opinions and interpretations of the data or sources you are analysing. If possible, do this directly beside, or around each individual source. In effect, you're putting together your own labelling and commentary system.



ILLUSTRATE

Use diagrams, illustrations and sketched notes throughout the course of your revision whenever you can. Create your own labels, or adapt them from other materials, and use these to extract key themes and components from topic areas.



SYMBOLS

When taking notes, use symbols and abbreviations to record terms and concepts that come up often. This will save you lots of time, and should make those concepts instantly stand out when you come to read over your notes at a later date.

ZEPH BENNETT IS A PE TEACHER AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT LEADER WITH 25 YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE; YOU CAN FIND MORE OF HIS EDUCATIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY FOLLOWING @PEGEEKSCORNER

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EDTECH

LanSchool

A software solution that guides learning, promotes collaboration, and maximizes teaching time



AT A GLANCE

- **Classroom management software that enables engaging learning experiences in connected classrooms**
- **Popular features include Screen Monitoring, Push Website, Limit Web, and Messaging**
- **Available on the cloud or locally hosted**
- **Compatible across all operating systems**
- **Designed with educators and learners in mind**

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES



With technology now playing a larger role in teaching and learning than ever before, effective solutions for managing students' use of devices are in high demand. Lenovo's LanSchool classroom management software is designed to do just that – keep learning current, whilst minimising the strain on teachers.

LanSchool makes teaching with tech easy, both inside the classroom and when overseeing remote learning. It boasts a number of features to help keep the learning process streamlined and safe, beginning with straightforward username / password access and the option to link user accounts to Google accounts. The teacher interfaces on both the 'Air' and 'Classic' versions of the software are highly intuitive, and will take very little getting used to before teachers can fully utilise their functions.

The screen monitoring function lets teachers view all students' screens, thus helping to keep learners on task while making it possible for teachers to monitor and provide feedback on their work in real time. LanSchool also allows teachers to 'blank' students' screens, for when their attention needs to be directed elsewhere. Another nifty feature is the 'push website' function, enabling teachers to send a website to all connected devices at the click of a button, significantly increasing the fluidity of the lesson and reducing lost learning time.

LanSchool can give teachers valuable

insights into what's happening on every device in the classroom, to the extent that they're even warned when the battery is running low on a specific student's device. Hopefully, that should mean no more major lesson disruptions when a laptop packs up half way through...

LanSchool does a great deal to encourage productive collaboration via nicely thought through features, such as the 'raise a hand' notification students can send to get their teacher's attention, and a clear messenger system. The latter is not only helpful for the classroom, but also when learning is taking place at a distance. Such functionality isn't new, of course, but what LanSchool does is allow teachers to efficiently manage all these functions at once via a unified interface, without having to frantically swap between remote calls and various classroom applications. Power is placed completely at their fingertips.

Lenovo has pitched things just right with LanSchool. It's sleek, simple and welcoming, while containing the functionality needed to make teaching and learning easier. All the tools teachers will need can now be found in one place, neatly arranged in accessible pockets.

LanSchool is very much designed with educators and learners in mind. While there are other, similarly-specified packages available, they aren't as closely tailored to the needs of schools, which for me is LanSchool's most readily apparent advantage. Lenovo has done a great job of making this software the perfect fit for teachers' requirements.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ **Functional and intuitive software that be used to improve the pace and flow of lessons**
- ✓ **Includes a powerful feature set that's easily accessed through an inviting teacher interface**
- ✓ **Puts extensive control of a classroom's various devices at a teacher's fingertips**
- ✓ **Expressly designed with teachers' needs in mind**

UPGRADE IF...

You're looking for an all in one classroom management system that's easy for teachers to transition to, and actually helpful when it comes to teaching and learning, tailored as it is to education users, rather than business and corporate applications.

Find out more at lanschool.com/gb



Ark Curriculum Plus – Writing Mastery

Help students improve their writing while simultaneously upskilling staff, with the aid of this wide-ranging language curriculum



AT A GLANCE

- A comprehensive writing offer for KS3
- The flagship content from the highly successful English Mastery programme
- Fosters confidence in creativity by using a number of mediums
- Builds accuracy in writing through direct instruction
- Includes development resources for teachers

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES



Creative writing at KS3 is simultaneously one of the best and worst things about teaching English. The learning opportunities that creative writing allows for, in terms of enabling students to express themselves and improve their understanding, are incredible – but too often, students are reluctant to engage with writing on the level that we want them to.

That's not through lack of trying, of course – yet we all know that an effective writing scheme of learning is more complex than simply providing a string of opportunities to write. Following the successes of the English Mastery programme, Ark Curriculum Plus has now released a standalone offer of Writing Mastery that's rich with impressive content.

Writing Mastery has been touted as the jewel in the crown of the English Mastery programme. Writing Mastery takes a research-led approach to tackling endemic challenges in students' understanding of grammar, and how to create meaning in their writing. From this comes highly engaging lessons that get students writing, and in time, able to become highly independent, confident writers with a firm understanding of the craft of writing.

At the core of the Writing Mastery package is a well-sequenced and interlinked KS3 writing curriculum. The quality of the resources, as you'd expect from Ark Curriculum Plus, are second to none, comprising all the materials needed to enable students of all abilities to make explicit, observable progress throughout KS3 against

clear success criteria. I've always been a fan of the logic evident in Ark Curriculum Plus schemes of learning, and am pleased to see that Writing Mastery is no different.

As well as the student resources, Ark Curriculum Plus also provides integrated professional development and planning tools to support teachers' curriculum and pedagogical knowledge, so that lessons can be delivered in the most effective and efficient way possible. That's not to say that they can't be tailored to context, however – the CPD element is brilliant for both departmental development and individual progression.

The package's foundation in effective pedagogy means that some elements of the techniques and strategies used in these lessons can directly translate to GCSE teaching in other areas, thus making the teacher resources every bit as valuable, at least in my eyes, as the student resources.

The programme embeds robust evidence of how students learn and master knowledge into a fully-resourced, sequential writing programme that has a real impact on students' engagement and writing attainment. Informed by research in the field of cognitive science, its focus on instructional design means no learning time is wasted. As an added bonus, the embedded discrete grammar teaching can also supplement students' wider understanding of language more generally. Writing Mastery is a serious tool that will revolutionise how you teach writing.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Exceptionally designed and well-structured throughout
- ✓ Proven to have a positive impact on students' development of their writing skills and understanding of grammar
- ✓ Fun, engaging and trackable activities for students to complete in class
- ✓ The included development tools for teachers aren't just a nice bonus, but come across as robust CPD materials in their own right

UPGRADE IF...

You're looking for a fully inclusive package that can help overhaul your KS3 writing offer. Also worth considering if you're looking to reduce staff workload, while improving your teaching impact and training offer.

Find out more at arkcurriculumplus.org.uk

BEHAVIOUR

Feel Free to Smile

A friendly guide to behaviour management that's equally helpful for both practised hands and those just starting out

AT A GLANCE

- A behaviour management survival guide for new teachers
- Packed full of tried and tested tips and tricks for managing behaviour
- Reflective chapter endings to encourage self efficacy
- Warm, open tone throughout
- Exceptional use of anecdotal tales from real teachers

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES



Behaviour management is a hurdle that all trainees and early career teachers will stumble over at some point when starting out. Finding support can be difficult, and while there are a number of behaviour-focused publications available, *Feel Free to Smile* does something different – it makes it okay to not get it exactly right. And I love that.

Written by Nikki Cunningham-Smith – a practitioner with experience of leading and being a SENCo – *Feel Free to Smile* draws on her years of working in alternative provision. The end result serves up a wealth of solutions to common behaviour scenarios spanning both primary and secondary classrooms – a cross-phase focus that really helps to broaden readers' understanding of the general principles underlying effective behaviour management.

With so much face-to-face time having been lost over the past year, *Feel Free to Smile* couldn't have come at a better time for those early career teachers most impacted by the pandemic. It's no secret that COVID-19 has meant that those just entering the profession now will have had to face fewer behaviour scenarios than may have been the case had schools been operating as normal, and it's in this respect that *Feel Free to Smile* can help plug the gaps.

You almost hear Cunningham-Smith coaching you through the scenarios cited, and the journaling space provided at the end of

each chapter is a nice touch. Even if not used explicitly as intended, the questions can serve as a nice summary of the preceding discussion.

Written in a humorous and open tone, *Feel Free to Smile* isn't a difficult read, and given the well-weighted chapters, won't take you hours to digest. What research there is is well-cited throughout, but I actually enjoy the way in which *Feel Free to Smile* isn't too reference-heavy. That's not to say there's no grounding in theory or ideas, though. Quite the contrary – the anecdotal nature of its case studies means that the academic complexity can be toned down, without sacrificing the effectiveness of the advice given. Consequently, the copy reads fluently, further adding to the open and informal tone.

I'm a fan of the way *Feel Free to Smile* seems to reach beyond its intended audience. As an experienced practitioner who delivers a significant amount of behaviour training myself, I found that the text was frequently getting me to reflect on my own practice.

It's easy to get into the habit of thinking you're always right when it comes to behaviour; *Feel Free to Smile* reminded me that we can always do better in this respect. More experienced teachers may therefore find the book to be an instructive humbling agent, reminding them of some useful practical strategies, and potentially getting them to change their ways for the better.

teach
SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Offers a range of practical and usable behaviour tips
- ✓ Presents scenarios that some teachers may not have faced
- ✓ Easy to read and written in an approachable way
- ✓ Well laid out and easily accessible for both new and experienced practitioners alike

UPGRADE IF...

You're looking for a bit of help with behaviour management, or are looking to develop your confidence in meeting particularly challenging scenarios. Also worth considering for those looking to update and refine their practice.

£14.99 RRP; find out more at bloomsbury.com/uk

EDTECH

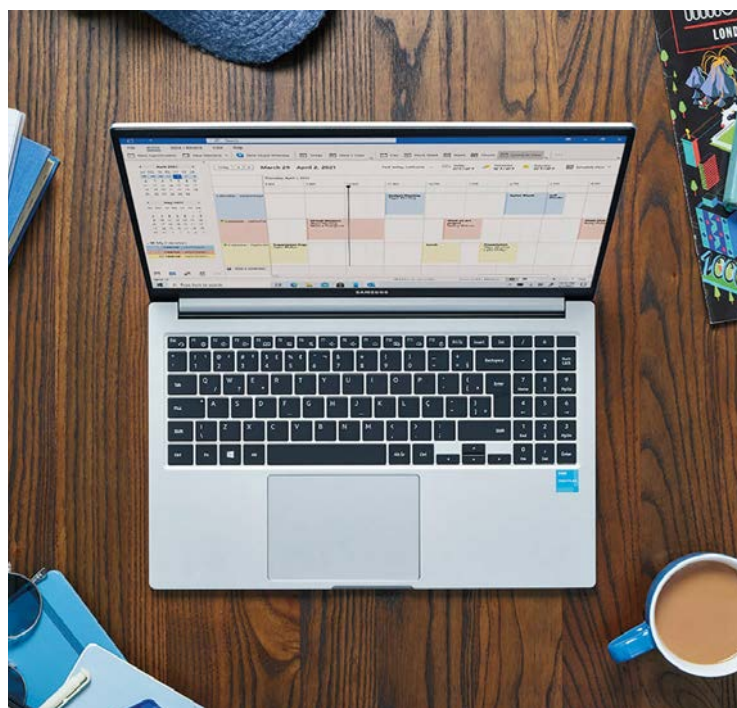
Samsung Galaxy Book

A reliable Windows laptop that's ideal for the post-pandemic blended learning now common in schools

AT A GLANCE

- A sleek, functional and stylish laptop that's perfect for educational settings
- Fast processing speeds and exceptional display
- Works seamlessly with other Samsung devices
- Designed with simplicity and functionality in mind

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES



As we've seen over the past year, learning from home can brilliantly supplement what's being taught in the classroom, assuming learners and teachers are able to work in sync – a task for which Samsung's newest Galaxy Book is ideally suited.

From the moment you pick it up, it's immediately apparent that considerable thought has gone into the Galaxy Book's design. It's a laptop that's light, yet durable and sized well for usability and transportation. The interface is smooth and intuitive, with users able to quickly acclimate themselves in just a few clicks.

The Galaxy Book range is powered by 11th generation Intel Core processors that can handle any classroom tasks you throw at them. The sleek casing is perfectly sized to suit the confines of a school bag, and the on-board battery packs plenty of stamina.

The Galaxy Book comes with Windows 10 Pro pre-installed, which gives you all the comprehensive security and tools you'll need to keep your files and data safe. There's also a hardware fingerprint scanner that can be used to unlock the device, thus ensuring that you're ready to go right off the bat.

With the growing popularity of remote learning, it's become more important than ever that teachers and students are able to stay connected throughout the day. Between its wifi and 4G compatibility, I found the Galaxy Book's robust connectivity to be a

notable positive during testing. There's nothing more frustrating than having to constantly troubleshoot the causes of intermittent internet connections while teaching, so I'm happy to report that the stability of the Galaxy Book in this regard was exceptional.

Samsung's proprietary 'Quick Share' feature allows users to easily and rapidly send media and other files between different Samsung devices with a minimum of fuss. Support for that is included here, opening up the potential for hassle-free interactive classroom experiences by using the Galaxy Book in conjunction with Samsung displays and tablet devices. A compact USB-C charger comes included in the box, though the 54Wh capacity battery ought to provide users with enough power to last a full school day under normal use.

When using technological solutions in their classrooms, teachers want peace of mind. In this respect, the technical support Samsung can offer will keep you moving in the event of any difficulties, and help you make the most of their range. In addition to the manufacturer warranty you'd expect, Samsung goes a step further by offering to pick up any faulty devices, before repairing and returning them to your school's doorstep as quickly as possible. It's these little touches that make the Galaxy Book laptop range a brilliant fit for schools.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ An exceptionally functional and versatile Windows laptop
- ✓ Designed with the needs of students and teachers in mind
- ✓ Easy to use, with comprehensive support available in the event of any difficulties
- ✓ Loaded with features out of the box and easily adaptable for different learning contexts

UPGRADE IF...

You want to boost the use of technology in your classroom, or want to support staff to help children who require specialist provision.

For more details about Samsung's bespoke pricing and volume discounts, call 0333 344 1916 or email samsungexperiences@prs-and.com



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Lawson is a former secondary teacher now serving as a foundation governor and running a tutoring service; for more information, visit prep4successnow.wordpress.com



THE LAST WORD

A disruption we don't need



COVID complications have emboldened those wanting to see the back of GCSEs and A Levels for good, but the time for doing away with them isn't with us just yet, ventures **John Lawson**...

Considering how disrupted our two most recent exam seasons have been, it was always inevitable that the value of GCSE and A Level tests would come under wide and close scrutiny. Having been in place for 70 years at this point, it's healthy and instructive to give our exam boards and wider examination system regular 'fit-for-purpose' assessments. After all, there's always scope for improvement.

Some teachers, however, believe that there's an elitist *raison d'être* inherent to the system as it currently stands – to favour the supposedly 'poshest' and 'brightest'. That's a fallacy, though I do accept that British elitism was far more pronounced when the foundations of the exams system were first put in place in 1951.

These days, thousands of students from all social classes go on to make their mark in many different fields after leaving our schools, colleges and universities. That seems to suggest that we're at least doing something right, and that implementing an academic perestroika now risks doing more harm than good. Haven't we had enough disruption of late?

Complex variables

External examinations will never be the perfect way to assess knowledge or potential, because the variables involved – at both an institutional and individual level – are so incredibly complex. A student may hold an Oxbridge First, but that doesn't necessarily mean they're smarter than the student who scraped a 2:2 from a red brick. The 'university of life' makes that abundantly clear every day.

Despite consistent and often strident opposition to standardised tests, they still remain our normative way of classifying academic achievement and will likely continue to. Why? Because the sharpest minds in politics and education haven't devised acceptable alternatives.

Courses and tests that are formulated and graded by 'objective experts' are still regarded as the fairest, most accurate and most meritocratic means of identifying exceptional academic talent. Why else would the governments of the world's leading nations continue to invest such vast sums in them?

That said, academic formats are governed by epistemology, rather than Whitehall or the White House, because identifying the movers

and shakers in-waiting is in everyone's best interests. 10 years from now, many of today's sixth formers will be prominent engineers, medical professionals, lawyers, scientists, educators, civil servants, artists and so forth, all tackling complex problems – hence the need for meticulous and meritocratic assessments.

The best so far

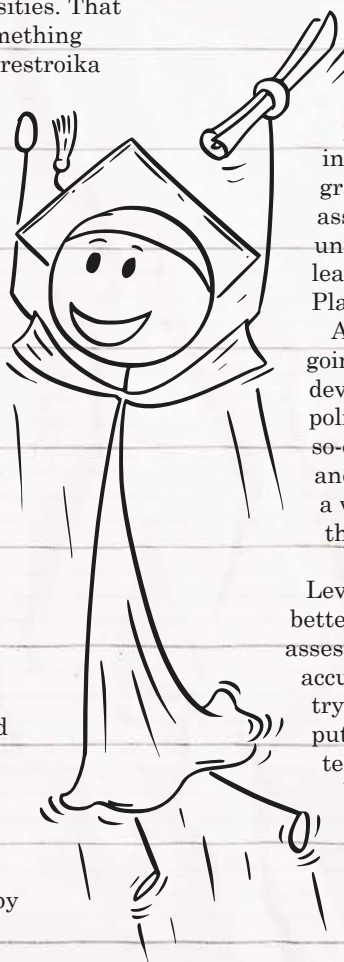
Families and friends might love us unconditionally; elsewhere we are judged by our skills and results. If UK standards were to decline, we'd be quickly relegated from the international Premiership. We may well survive outside the EU, but we can't isolate ourselves from the world and hope to prosper.

Our A Level programmes are highly regarded the world over; without such internationally recognised awards, most young people will never be accepted into the world's most renowned universities. And it's worth stressing that every major nation tests its brightest young academics in similar fashion. Even in North America, where high school graduations are largely based on internal assessments, students rarely get into the top universities without high SAT scores and at least six externally examined Advanced Placement certificates.

All this may not be the absolute best way of going about things, but it's the best way devised so far. Only in the realm of anarchic politics is it enough to just tear down these so-called 'bourgeois' institutions. If GCSEs and A Levels are ever to be retired, then a workable alternative will have to take their place.

Rather than scrapping GCSEs and A Levels outright, our time would perhaps be better spent looking at ways of making terminal assessments fairer, less stressful and more accurate, without losing the rigour. Let's stop trying to fix what isn't seriously broken and put greater energies into nurturing more teachers capable of making higher learning both accessible and enjoyable.

Only once the overwhelming majority of our very finest teachers, the true experts, start calling for radical change – that should be our cue to prepare for a possible reformation.



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