

FLIP-FLOPS & STILETTOS

WHY IT'S OK TO BE STRICT ON DRESS CODE

The 14-year wait

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO GET 'THE CALL' A DECADE SINCE THE LAST ONE

How to upskill your TAs

Reduce exclusions
STRATEGIES TO KEEP THE PEACE



FLEXI-SCHOOLING

COULD MORE PUPILS LEARN FROM HOME?

WHAT GOVERNORS MUST KNOW ABOUT DATA

TACKLING SUMMER LEARNING LOSS - FAST

MENTORING BAME STAFF TO BE FUTURE LEADERS

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Welcome

Since becoming a parent I've become acutely aware of the cyclical nature of the year, and the extent to which our lives revolve around school. So, I can only imagine what this feels like for everyone heading back for the new academic year. I hope you have had a good summer break and are raring to go again.



Editing this magazine has allowed me to gain even deeper insights into the daily lives and work of heads and teachers than I had previously in many years of education reporting, and I am often inspired by the articles that are sent in. That is especially true of this issue.

Most schools dread The Call from Ofsted, regardless of how well prepared and how confident they are of a positive judgement. Gwen Lee's school was inspected this year – a whole 14 years after Ofsted's last visit – and she describes the experience here (p.16).

One of the great things about this role is the opportunity to visit schools and during the summer term I was welcomed into Gagle Brook Primary, one of the first – if not THE first – zero carbon school in the country. You can read about its innovative buildings and teaching methods on page 34.

Planning a new curriculum can be a challenging and arduous process. If your aim in doing so is societal, as well as academic, then it takes on a whole new level. In his article on page 30, Chris Jones explains why it was important for his school to try to stem the flow of young people and talent out of Warrington.

On a lighter – but no less important – note, where do you stand on stilettos? David Rushby examines this important question in our regular HR Clinic (p.63).

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Dorothy Lepkowska
Editor

This issue's experts



Kate Penfold-Attride

Deputy headteacher of St Matthew's C of E Primary School



James Simoniti

Safeguarding consultant with Judicium Education



Janette Mountford-Lees

Head of Hollinsclough Church of England Academy



Gemma Donnelly

Headteacher, Braywick Court Primary school



Andrew Chadwick

Head of Wilsden Primary School, Bradford



Anya Edwards

Education advisor at Tapestry and former teaching assistant



Kate Tokgoz

SEND Leader, Southminster Church of England Primary School



Sue White

Senior educational specialist, Widgit

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Sam Strickland dissects common pupil conduct problems and advises how to solve them

EDITOR:

Dorothy Lepkowska
dorothy.lepkowska@theteachco.com
01206 505933

HEAD OF COMMERCIAL SOLUTIONS:

Richard Stebbing

EDUCATION MANAGER:

Hayley Rackham
hayley.rackham@theteachco.com

PRODUCT MANAGER:

Gabrielle Pitts
gabrielle.pitts@theteachco.com
01206 505956

JUNIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER:

Alfie Bennett
alfie.bennett@theteachco.com

GROUP EDITOR: Joe Carter

ART EDITOR: Richard Allen

DESIGNERS:

Luke Rogers, Hannah Kemp,
Adam Barford, Kev Dennis

ACCOUNTS: 01206 505995

DESIGN & REPROGRAPHICS:

Ace Pre-Press
01206 508608

SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPARTMENT:

Andrea Turner

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES:

0330 333 0043

CUSTOMER SERVICES:

aceville@dctmedia.co.uk
0800 904 7000

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After a pay freeze in 2021/22 and pay erosion since 2010, heads and teachers have seen a real-term cut in salaries of 20%.

TWEET NOTHINGS

@Sue_Cowley

Sharing children's learning by putting it on display is a form of publication. It says 'this work has value' and hopefully builds confidence in handling peer group feedback. Personally, I'm a fan.

@SnellJulia

Ofsted often conflate speech and writing in their inspections, drawing ideological relationships between the quality of speech and the quality of writing, such as the idea that 'good speech' is characterised by 'full sentences' and 'bad writing' includes non-standard grammar.



TRANS RIGHTS

The attorney general, Suella Braverman, caused controversy when she said it was legal for schools to refuse to use trans children's preferred pronouns and to ban them from using the toilets or wear the uniform of their stated gender. A headteachers' union accused her of "muddying the waters", as schools were still awaiting official government guidance on how to approach sex and gender.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

No time to read the news?
Here's your five-minute catch up

Three-day week looms for hundreds of schools

Hundreds of schools were reported to be starting the new school year considering cutting their opening hours, as the cost-of-living crisis continued to bite into budgets and amid fears that inflation could reach 15% in 2023.

Headteachers and MATs warned schools were on the brink of a "full-blown crisis" by having to foot the bill for the recent pay increase for teachers, as well as rising

energy bills, and said a three-day week for pupils was a distinct possibility.

One MAT, the Creative Academy Trust, was reportedly considering a recruitment freeze and scrapping Covid catch-up initiatives to save money.

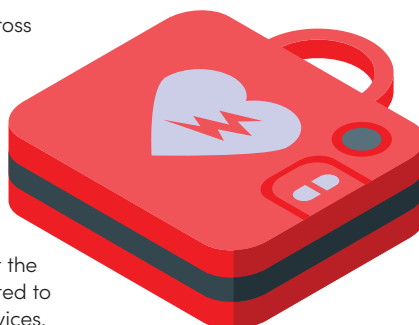
The Department for Education reminded school leaders that the length of the school week is 32.5 hours, and that it

expected existing funding to account for this. Schools are to be awarded a £7 billion budget increase in 2024-2025 – a rise of seven per cent in cash terms, per pupil.



Defibrillators

State-funded schools across England are to receive defibrillators under new government plans to make sure there is a device in every school. A survey will soon go out to heads to finalise the number that will need to be procured, but the government has committed to funding all necessary devices.



PUPILS LEFT BEHIND

The attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their wealthier classmates is the same now as 20 years ago, according to a report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies. It found that poorer pupils started school already behind some of their peers, and the inequalities persisted throughout their time in education and into adulthood.

The report said there was "overwhelming evidence" that the education system in England was leaving too many children behind.

CPD Diary

INFO-SHARING

September 3

The researched National Conference is back on September 3, and will take place at Parliament Hill School, London. The event aims to bridge the gap between research and practice in education. Researchers, teachers, and policy makers will come together for a day of information-sharing and myth-busting. Visit researched.org.uk for further details

CLASS DISRUPTION

October 3

The National Education Union will be holding a CPD webinar on low-level disruption, which will cover essential routines to prevent low-level disruption; pro-active behaviour management strategies; and common issues and how to deal with them. The sessions will be delivered by a behaviour management expert. Go to: neu.org.uk/national-cpd.

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DAVID MORRIS

“We’re quick to judge education outsiders”

How the army taught David Morris the skills to lead a multi-academy trust

A

s a junior officer in the Army, I was told that a good leader should never ask someone to do something they couldn't do themselves. It made sense.

But decades later, here I am as an experienced Multi Academy Trust leader and I can't claim to be able to teach phonics or key stage two maths.

On the other hand, there are plenty of lessons I've taken from my 10-year career in the Army that have equipped me well for the world of education leadership.

I've probably learnt most from working with some poor leaders in the Army and in civilian organisations. No-one should be belittled or micro-managed. Good people just want - and need - to get on with the job they excel at.

That's why in every trust I've led, the headteacher is the operational leader of their school. My job - and therefore that of the Trust - is to take away the many stressful distractions from teaching and learning, such as catering, HR, IT and finance. We support the headteacher, but they know their school best.

When you're a Captain leading soldiers, they need to respect and trust you. They know if you are telling them something just to make them feel good. Their respect often comes from being spoken to candidly, but compassionately.

As a MAT leader, it's easy to allow behaviours that aren't acceptable to continue. A school that inspectors have said is good may be unwilling to take on constructive advice. Leaders need to be supported with kindness, but also with honesty and transparency.

When you speak candidly, others will do the same. We all need to be comfortable enough to talk about the things that are going wrong, as well as those that are going right.

In my last role in the Army, I trained battalions, soldiers and officers who were about to be deployed to Afghanistan. It was a huge coordination role as those I trained were spread across the UK and Germany and many different parts of the Army were involved. We were sometimes short on time and I needed to cut through bureaucracy quickly.

When I first moved into education, I became a senior project manager with responsibility to support a single academy trust to become a multi academy trust. This included overseeing the construction of two new school



buildings and the opening of a new school. In the Army, I'd learnt the hard way how to cut through red tape whenever I could.

When I started at HEART Academies Trust in 2019, there had been a prolonged period of instability and unhappiness within the Trust and its schools. Hundreds of parents had protested at plans proposed by the Trust's former leadership team. I realised that this was actually a good thing. Here were parents who cared enough to take a stand. As well as reversing the proposed plans, I worked with some of those who felt most strongly and they are now members of our Board and some of our most loyal advocates.

It was during my Army career that I learnt how important it is to gain the trust of influential people and to show that you are trustworthy. I was often sent into very hostile environments where understanding, appealing to and ultimately winning over communities was essential. The British Forces are exceptionally strong at this, as I saw in Afghanistan when we needed to offer a secure environment for children to return to school. To change 'hearts and minds', you have to win trust.

In education, we're sometimes too quick to judge those who've had careers outside of the sector, and there are myths about those who have come from roles like mine. I cringe when people, often with a wink or a smile, trot out the stereotype of the former soldier who just knows how to shout orders. I would have a very serious conversation with anyone who thought this was acceptable.

Let's celebrate those who come into education from other sectors. The Army taught me many skills I use every day. I wouldn't be the education leader I am today without them. [HT](#)

“I cringe when people trot out the stereotype of the former soldier who just knows how to shout orders”

DAVID MORRIS



David Morris is the chief executive officer of

HEART Academies Trust, a multi-academy trust of four schools in Bedford. He served in Ireland, Bosnia and Afghanistan.

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Q HOW DO YOU SET GOALS?
 Our goals are driven by the wider company vision; from there we cascade our company strategy and departmental priorities, before setting individual goals. But it's important to note that every goal is shared, as we are one team. This makes us stronger and by collaborating we benefit from wider experience and ideas - and of course, there's no such thing as a bad idea when brainstorming solutions to goals and challenges. In fact, we're so fast paced that sometimes we forget to take a breath and celebrate how far we've come. We should, though, as we've achieved so much.

Q HOW DO YOU MOTIVATE STAFF?
 By making sure our team knows we care. We care that they feel safe, enjoy their work and know what is expected of them. Motivating staff means giving them autonomy to do their jobs and make decisions, knowing they have back-up and support. We also provide them with a modern work environment and facilities, and by offering fresh fruit, biscuits and even pizza sometimes, too. What's really important when motivating our teams, though, is treating them as individuals and understanding that they have different needs and different personal goals. We embrace everyone's individual journey and that's where we take a lot of pleasure - from seeing our teams thrive and grow, and the positive impact they have on the business and people around them.

Q WHAT SIGNIFICANT CHANGES HAVE YOU LED SUCCESSFULLY IN YOUR COMPANY?
 Running an aviation business during a global

In aviation, COVID made change essential

Resilience and adaptability helped her flight training company through the challenges of the pandemic, says **Katie Broadhurst**

remotely and spending a lot of time alone could leave them feeling isolated and without support. So, our task was to put strategies in place to ensure they and the instructors remained engaged. As a business, we were delighted to see the enthusiasm and dedication they all showed in adapting to their new environments.

Q HOW HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM ANY MISTAKES?
 Every day is a learning day, and that's what enables us to grow, isn't it? We

all make mistakes, be it at work or in our personal lives and in our industry, aviation, resilience is a keyword.

When we get something wrong, resilience is what keeps us strong, and helps us to learn from our experience. It's what makes us better, kinder, and stronger as individuals, and as a team. One thing I'm very proud to see in my team is how if one team member makes an error or faces a challenge, they all pull together - it's what makes us so special.

Q WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU OVERCOME IN YOUR WORK AS A LEADER?
 Where do I start? Personally, some of my challenges have turned into things to celebrate. As a business, we train commercial pilots and when our students graduate, they often have a short period of time where they are waiting for airline recruitment windows. At this point we often snap them up to fill gaps within our internal teams. This then creates a significant challenge, as it does generate some staff churn. We are delighted when they leave to take up airline roles, but the challenge then exists to fill our vacant posts, often with more graduates. **HT**

NEED TO KNOW:

Company: Leading Edge Aviation

Job title: Chief Talent Officer and Board Director

Time in role: 3 years

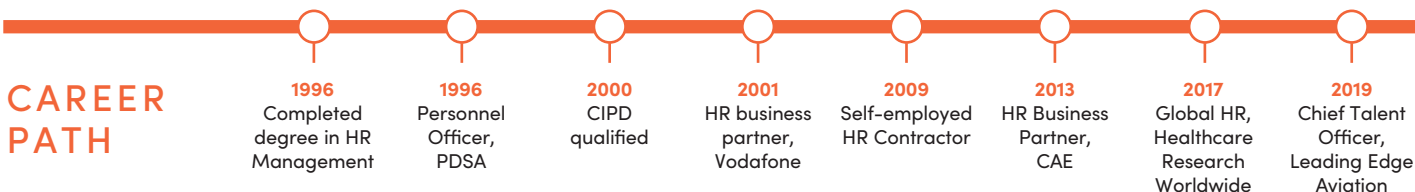
No. of staff: 115



pandemic meant facing many challenges that necessitated change, whether it's making bold purchase decisions or sitting down with our teams to work out how they can function in an ever-changing environment.

One of the big challenges I faced was how to ensure our students and instructors remained both motivated and safe whilst studying remotely at the outset of the pandemic. Teaching via video conference requires a unique set of skills and it can make it a great deal harder to monitor students, and ensure they understand the fast-paced and technical content we deliver.

Likewise for our students, studying





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www.juniormemorychampionship.com

UNDERCOVER HEADTEACHER

“We’ve not been heads, but Covid managers”

LAs were late to the party, and where was government recognition for our role in managing the pandemic?

T

here was a time when a headteacher could forge a vision, decide on the direction of the school and build a team of talented staff to take things forward. For me, that meant making the school the best place to foster

well-rounded children who were educationally, emotionally and socially ready for the next steps of life’s journey.

As I begin my retirement I’ve reflected on how, in recent years, the climate has shifted, making the job increasingly challenging. Keeping children at the heart of the school’s efforts has resulted in working all hours and juggling my standard responsibilities with an ever-expanding ocean of demands. This includes managing the expectations of parents – a relationship that’s becoming trickier as mental health problems surge in connection with financial struggles. Complaints often end up on social media instead of being dealt with in the head’s office. You call parents to discuss the problem, only to find they have already moved on – the angry email having helped them get it off their chest!

Headship can be a lonely and isolating job. Policy changes make us weary, and a lack of support from local authorities leaves us reliant on brainstorming and idea-sharing with other local heads – who are also busy and under pressure.

It doesn’t instill confidence when those above you at LA level either may not have been in education or are educationalists who have failed at school level. I have known leaders of schools found to require improvement rise to take roles in LA school advisory services.

Growing levels of need in mainstream schools can put a child in the awful situation of having to fail before an EHCP or alternative provision is provided. Many local authorities are not hitting the 20-week assessment window and there is a lack of specialist provision as they are inundated with referrals. Outside agencies, such as CAMHS, have a frightening 3-4 year waiting list, leaving children, their families and schools to struggle.

Teacher recruitment is also a growing headache. Where we used to have 30-40 applications, recently we have been lucky to get a handful. Primary schools are suffering an ‘experience drain’ as teachers take early retirement or leave within five years of starting in the profession.

The trepidation of being in the OFSTED window with its non-celebratory framework is a further pressure. It is not a level playing field and the judgement depends on who walks through the door – what is their attitude, approach and do they have the curriculum expertise to inspect the agreed deep dives? It seems we have gone safeguarding mad again, too. This is, of course, crucial but the stories we hear of inconsistent expectations from inspectors are worrying.

This also means school staff are becoming social workers, counsellors, mental health supporters and parenting experts, despite having no training in these areas. We try our best to be everything to everyone when we just want to do the job we were trained for and enjoy.

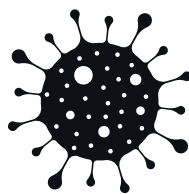
Then there’s Covid. For the past two and a half years we have not been heads but Covid managers. A vast number of parents became key workers overnight, and had letters to prove it. I was taken to task over the Covid guidance by disgruntled families. We had to acquire PPE and sanitisation, write detailed risk assessments, organise new staff rotas, get everyone up to speed on guidance and then instigate remote learning. LAs were late to the party, leaving heads to make important decisions alone.

And where was the recognition from the government? MP Michael Fabricant even commented during the recent Downing Street parties’ scandal that they were only partying as teachers were doing the same. I wish!

I cannot retire after so many years without mentioning governors, who can and do support schools valiantly. Departing heads always want to leave the school in the best possible hands. But what if governors don’t think through the whole process, or don’t notice which applicant is the best fit for the school?

It is a worry and a minefield, and yet governing bodies receive little support to make such complex decisions. If and when LAs do advise, it can be under the condition of recruiting their chosen candidates.

Despite all this, I have loved my time as headteacher. When the child is at the centre of what you do, when you have a supportive and wonderful team, it is the best job in the world. I will miss it. **BT**



“Headship is a lonely and isolating job that makes us reliant on support from other, also busy, heads”

The writer is a headteacher in England.

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EMMA TURNER

Schools must say yes to flexible working

Faced with a crisis of recruitment and staff retention, leaders need to support teachers to find a better work-life balance

There are few silver bullets in any aspect of teaching or educational leadership, but particularly recruitment and retention. There's an understanding that if we "do what we've always done" then we'll "get what we've always got", and currently that's a recruitment and retention crisis at all levels of teaching and leadership - including recruitment into ITT. With numbers dwindling, the biggest demographic leaving teaching (after retirees) is women aged between 31-40 years. Record numbers of heads (one in four) are considering leaving the profession within the next year, and 35% of teachers state they're unlikely to remain in the profession beyond 2026. The sector is facing a real challenge.

Teaching, which is often perceived to be a 'life-friendly' profession, actually has comparable levels of flexible working to those within the Royal Navy. This is set against the findings of a national survey that indicate that across all sectors, up to 87% of the workforce want to, or already do, work flexibly.

Unfortunately, the opportunity to work flexibly, and the knowledge of how to make it work, is often shrouded in outdated or preconceived ideas of what this means and the potential impact on the workforce. To address this, the DfE is currently rolling out support via its Flexible Working Ambassador Schools programme (FWAS), which sees one school per RSC region providing free support for schools, trusts and individuals in implementing, reviewing and refining their working practices. They're challenging some of the outdated narratives such as its unsuitability for senior or leadership positions, or that it's simply about part-time hours. The new DfE definitions are divided into three broad categories - 'Part-time working', 'Varied hours' and 'In-year flexibility' (tinyurl.com/HDTfw) - and outline a range of models that broaden the current narrative within teaching.

These FWAS support mechanisms, designed to continue until December 2022, have been rolled out across the last three terms. The need for teachers and leaders to move much of their work online and to think differently about how to structure and access meetings and CPD, and timetable teachers' work, has proven that



often there are more flexible approaches to teaching and leading than was previously thought. The creativity and agility with which the sector responded to the pandemic showed there are many more opportunities within the sector for incorporating flexible working.

There is a fear amongst some, though, that by being overt about flexible working, somehow schools will be inundated by unmanageable requests. However, in FWAS project schools this simply hasn't been the case. What the project found is that offering flex in job adverts, including leadership, increases the number and diversity of applicants. By only offering roles as full time, we're precluding colleagues from applying, and missing out on exceptional practitioners. A simple statement on adverts such as "Talk to us about flexible working" is a useful catch-all.

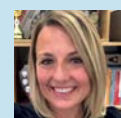
The same goes for appraisal and staff review conversations: by asking every member of staff if current working patterns allow them to develop as a professional, manage their workload and meet their commitments outside school, we can open a regular dialogue about how flex might suit both their career aspirations and life beyond the school gates.

Commitments outside work can be study, health challenges or wider interests, including hybrid working. The single-person, single-role, full-time narrative is still the pervading one, but it doesn't necessarily enable staff to 'live well' either in their career development or their work-life balance.

Having worked flexibly at every level in education, I know that this approach is possible for the whole workforce. For improving recruitment or retention, it's certainly worth giving it a shot. **HT**

Offering flex in job adverts and within all roles, including leadership, increases the number and diversity of applicants

EMMA TURNER



works part-time for Discovery Schools

Academy Trust, where she is Research and CPD lead. Her book, *Let's Talk About Flex*, is published by John Catt Educational Ltd.

The Ofsted Report

OUTSTANDING

Christopher Hatton
Primary School
38 Laystall Street
London
EC1R 4PQ

chrishatton.camden.sch.uk

“Our last inspection was 14 years ago”

Preparations

There have been many different inspection regimes since we were last inspected in 2007, and we had been expecting a call for a very long time. When we heard they planned to inspect outstanding schools, we knew we’d be in the frame and hoped it would happen this year.

I’ve always found that the pressure of preparing and waiting for the call is greater than the actual inspection, because it’s on everyone’s mind.

We were well prepared, not necessarily just for Ofsted, but because we always aim for clarity over our vision and consistency across the school and the curriculum, and are able to articulate what we are about. This has to be an ongoing conversation.

Our vision is summed up in a clear message – informed, articulate and empowered – and this runs through everything we do and is easy for everyone at the school to grasp.

We also took care over our website because this really shows what a school is about. It is not just important to have lots of pretty pictures, but also to have clear and consistent messaging about our ethos, values and how we teach.

Ofsted’s focus

Ofsted sent two inspectors – one primary headteacher and one secondary. The secondary head had some experience of primary education, but it was interesting trying to explain why we do what we do to someone who isn’t

living the daily life of things like maths mastery.

The call ahead of the visit was very much a discussion about self-evaluation, our strengths and what we are developing. I did have to laugh when they asked what changes I had made since the last inspection. I said, “quite a

lot”, as it was 14 years ago.








The inspectors had clearly looked at our website so wanted verification of what they saw there. They asked about how our curriculum met the needs of all our children, what is distinctive about it and about the context of the school. They were interested



Christopher Hatton Primary School



GWEN LEE
Headteacher

 Ofsted rating: <hr/> Outstanding	 Previous Ofsted rating: <hr/> Outstanding	 Pupils on role: <hr/> 226	 Income: <hr/> £1.75m	 Outgoing: <hr/> £1.72m	 FSM: <hr/> (Over) 40%	 Pupils reaching expected standards in reading, writing and maths: <hr/> 80%
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Christopher Hatton Primary School, is located in Holborn, in the London Borough of Camden. Its most recent Ofsted report, in May 2022, judged it to be outstanding, with no identified areas of improvement needed.



in the impact of lockdown and how we support inclusion, as our school has quite a high level of SEND and high levels of deprivation.

They also talked about the areas for the deep dive and chose reading, PE and history. The inspector paid close attention to our focus on oracy, even though this is not a distinct subject, and wanted to see how this works across the curriculum.

Their questions were what I would expect an inspection team to ask. They wanted to know how we support and meet the needs of children who are in the lowest 20% academically, and how we ensure our strategies are making an impact.

Once in school, the inspectors didn't really want to speak to me

very much, but to verify what I had told them during the call. They spent a lot of time talking to the staff, pupils, governors and parents.

I would recommend that heads give the inspectors a tour of the school for orientation when they arrive, and to use this opportunity to point out the things you want them to see. This is time well-spent, as you might not get another chance.

The inspectors met all the staff and subject leads for the deep dive subjects and observed parts of lessons. They talked to teachers to ensure they had a good understanding of schemes of work, and to the pupils to verify they retained what they'd learned over time. There was a triangulation in their evidence

gathering, which I thought was a very good approach.

At one point, it appeared they weren't convinced that maths mastery was stretching the most high-attaining children, but we (and the children) were able to prove it did. They also watched our pre-teach interventions with lower achieving pupils.

At this point, I suspected they were looking at an outstanding grading and wanted to dig deeper for further evidence that it was justified. They became interested in every subject and if it wasn't being taught, then inspectors asked to speak to the subject leads, pupils and to see work samples and schemes of work to demonstrate cohesion across the curriculum.

What was nice was the amount of time spent talking to the children, which was great because that's what it's all about. They looked at pupils' work with them, and asked what they remembered being taught, recently and two years ago. In every conversation with pupils, regardless of age, they asked about behaviour and discipline, bullying, learning about rights and equalities.

What went well

They liked the consistency they saw and the good understanding among teachers of pedagogy in every class they visited. They also liked the focus on oracy and that children are very articulate, despite some starting the school with really low language levels.

From the children they got a sense that they felt empowered, and that there was a strong sense of unity and equality.

Where we can improve

The inspectors told me before leaving that there were no areas for improvement that they could identify. This was great to hear but life goes on and teachers come and go, so we need constantly to be self-evaluating and cannot rest on our laurels. We need to keep developing and moving forward. **HT**

BE PREPARED

What Ofsted asked

1 How do you support the lowest 20% attainers and ensure their needs are met?

It is important we know who they are and can show how they are identified. We don't use tutors but internal academic learning mentors to work with children who need support, who come to light through our pre-teach interventions.

2 How is your curriculum designed and how do you ensure it meets the needs of your children?

Our curriculum is constantly evolving and is designed with the involvement of all the staff, including those working in early years. We also look at best practice in other schools here and around the world and ensure it is constantly adapting to meet pupils' needs and interests.

3 How do you deal with safeguarding issues in the context of your local community?

The inspectors were very interested in the context of the school and the area it serves. It didn't help that there had been a stabbing nearby on the first day of the inspection. We talked about the need to teach children how to be safe, about their rights and to give them the confidence to say "No, that is not my path in life". We told them how we work closely with the community police team and other agencies.

4 What grade should Christopher Hatton be given, and why?

They asked this of the governors and it's a very good question because it required them to justify an 'outstanding' grading and to show they understand Ofsted judgements. I was asked the same question and replied "outstanding". Of course!

HOW TO TACKLE SUMMER LEARNING LOSS

Aimee Cave shares four effective strategies for getting children up to speed from the very first days of the new academic year

At a time when schools have only just begun to plug the learning gaps that appeared as a result of the pandemic, there is additional pressure to minimise the effect of summer learning loss as the new school year begins.

I have seen the number of children unsettled by the thought of getting a new teacher, moving classes or changing schools increase five-fold in recent months. What's more, those feeling anxious now include children who would previously not have given the change of a new school year a second thought.

So, our school has taken a fresh look at how we tackle summer learning loss this year and there are four key strategies we have put in place to help get children back on track as quickly as possible.

1 Set exciting and engaging activities for home

We want to encourage children to participate fully in the wide range of activities we create for them to do at home, which supplement the learning going on in school and help us close the gaps.

Activities designed to be completed outside of the classroom are purposefully devised to be fun, stress-free and engaging, with the learning bit almost invisible. Challenges include nine before nine, a fun competition where pupils are asked to read nine books before they reach their ninth birthday. They get a list of nine books which they tick off once they've read them and get a prize for completing them all. We run a similar activity for eleven-year-olds, which also works well.

There's also Crazy Reader, which encourages the children to find the most unusual (but

safe) place to read a book and make a note of the details to share in class when they are back in school. Pupils love this and their creativity in choosing locations knows no bounds.

2 Support anxious parents

It's not only the children who are experiencing anxiety about returning to the classroom, many more parents are feeling it too. Adult emotions can often rub off on children so it's worth considering what support families might need if they are concerned that their child

may have fallen behind over the summer or they're worried about how they will cope in a new learning group.

Consider launching a 'new school year learning week' to help. You could provide a toolkit packed with advice for parents to boost their confidence in supporting their child from home into and beyond the new term. Another option is a parental support group on social media to give parents somewhere to go when they're looking for new ideas for fun activities to support learning at home or how to incorporate literacy and maths skills into play.

3 Stress-free assessment

The first few days and weeks of the new school term are typically about welcoming new pupils and settling those returning into the routine of learning. But schools will also be focused on identifying where learning may have slipped over the summer.

It is essential to assess children's literacy skills early as a loss of spelling or reading ability over the holiday can have a major impact on

"It is essential to assess children's literacy skills early as a loss of spelling or reading ability can have a major impact on learning"

learning in almost every area of the curriculum.

The best way to get clarity on where children are in their reading development is to assess them in a fun way. With no pressure of a big paper test, you are much more likely to get an accurate picture of their current ability and the information you need to support their ongoing progress. In my school, we use a software programme called Lexplore Analytics to do this, which automatically monitors eye movements as a child reads, out loud and silently. The tool uses AI and eye tracking technology to measure when, where, and how a student's eyes move in relation to the words





WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT SUMMER LEARNING LOSS

Teachers tend to notice that their pupils have become less attentive, perhaps a little lazier and that the return to school in September can take a week or two of adjustment. This is not surprising given that most will have done little, if any, activities relating to schoolwork during their holiday.

But few studies have been done to show, categorically, that summer learning loss actually occurs.

However, research carried out by academics at Northumbria University in 2017 – *Investigation of Summer Learning Loss in the UK: Implications of Holiday Club Provision* (tinyurl.com/SummerLoss) – looked at whether summer learning loss occurred in spelling and reading in 77 primary aged children aged from five–10 years, attending three schools in areas of low socio-economic status in Scotland and the North-East of England.

The children were tested three times – before and immediately after a seven-week summer break, and again after seven weeks of teaching. Their findings showed that spelling scores were significantly higher at the start of the holiday than when the children returned to school in September. But they had improved beyond the pre-holiday scores by the end of the first seven weeks of term.

When it came to reading, researchers found no significant changes, though there were some variations between the schools taking part in the study.

This was thought to be the first such study in the UK to demonstrate that after a summer break of seven weeks, some summer learning loss – or at least a stagnation in learning – had occurred.

they are reading and quickly analyses their skills. Our pupils have told us they find the experience of taking the digital test fun and they don't even feel like they are being assessed. This means we get the information we need to see where extra support is required and can act quickly to provide it, whether that's help with comprehension, sentence structure or word recognition, without pupils feeling stressed.

4 Prepare children earlier

Pupils need to feel safe and secure before any meaningful learning can take place. So, one of the

key changes we have made to better prepare children for a new school year is to launch preparations for the summer break much earlier than we used to.

Many weeks before the summer term ends, the children will start working in the learning groups to which they will return after the holidays. They'll be taught in their new classrooms, by their new teachers too. This allows pupils to familiarise themselves with different surroundings, make friends and settle into the new routines they can expect in the new academic year.

Making this preparation part of your regular school calendar each year will help ensure the

children are much more at ease when the new term begins. This means the initial days and weeks of the new academic year, which might previously have been spent settling pupils in, can be focused on uncovering and addressing learning gaps.

Children who are happy and confident about what the new academic year will bring are much more likely to recover the skills they may have lost being away from their teachers and peers.

With planning and collaboration, teachers, parents and children can work together to help ensure the new term gets off to a flying start. **HT**



Aimee Cave is a SENCo and assistant head at Pocklington Junior School in East Yorkshire

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“Without a sense of humour, our job-share would not be possible”

Claire and Carrie share how their talents combine within co-headship

CLAIRE REGNARD

Co-head,
Salfords Primary School,
Redhill, Surrey

CjrClaire



CARRIE CHRISTER

Co-head,
Salfords Primary School,
Redhill, Surrey

@carrie_christer



HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP IN THREE WORDS – AND WHY?

Committed, visionary and energetic. We have worked together for nearly 10 years at two different schools and have the same vision, despite being very different people – I am from the south, and Carrie is from the north. We bounce ideas off each other, laugh a lot and sharing the role means the school benefits from our energy.

WHAT SPECIFIC ROLES DO YOU PERFORM AS PART OF YOUR JOBSHARE AND WHAT DO THESE INVOLVE?

I work Wednesday to Friday and we cross over on Wednesdays which is a heavy day of meetings. It involves long hours and lots of work on days off, but being part time means we can balance the week and weekends better with family commitments. We try very hard not to double do our roles. Each of us is always happy to pick up a piece of work if the other one didn't get it finished. We both follow up with staff and families.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT INITIATIVE/PIECE OF WORK YOU'VE UNDERTAKEN TOGETHER?

Recruitment of key staff at Salfords and ensuring there is buy-in from everyone, from the office to teachers and all roles in-between. We know what works at our school, and even when the recruitment market is tough, it is worth waiting for the right person.

WHAT WAS THE LAST THING YOU DISAGREED ON AND WHAT POINT OF VIEW DID YOU PUT FORWARD?

We don't disagree much, we do openly discuss issues and may come at them from different viewpoints, but we will always go with policy or what is right for the children.

WHAT ONE CHANGE WOULD YOU MAKE TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM?

Enable headteachers and trusts to have more of a say in education policy. Policymakers don't really understand the challenges.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP IN THREE WORDS – AND WHY?

Committed, supportive and fun. Claire and I have definitely been committed to improving our school and we have done this with the support of one another. Without a sense of humour none of this would be possible.

WHAT SPECIFIC ROLES DO YOU PERFORM AS PART OF YOUR JOBSHARE AND WHAT DO THESE INVOLVE?

I work the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. The Wednesday overlap allows us to do a handover but we keep in touch on the days we're not in school. When we set up our co-headship, we created clearly defined roles and responsibilities. I oversee and quality assure SEND, attendance, pupil premium, health and safety and premises and we both cover teaching and learning. However, we will make individual decisions if the need arises.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT INITIATIVE/PIECE OF WORK YOU'VE UNDERTAKEN TOGETHER?

Moving Salfords from special measures, when Claire and I took over, to the solidly good school it is now. We were able to do this as we both have different strengths but, together, we make a dynamic team. We put in place rigour and high expectations to drive the school's improvement forward.

WHAT WAS THE LAST THING YOU DISAGREED ON AND WHAT POINT OF VIEW DID YOU PUT FORWARD?

The last disagreement we had was around special leave and we both had our personal views which we expressed. However, we referred to the school policy and agreed the way forward from that.

WHAT ONE CHANGE WOULD YOU MAKE TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM?

Get rid of OFSTED gradings. Inspections should be about school improvement. An improving school can easily be set back 18 months by a negative grading and the momentum that is lost as a result. There must be a better way to support schools.

“We bounce ideas off each other, laugh a lot and sharing the role means the school benefits from our energy”

Y1-6



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WHAT BOTHERS your staff most about pupil discipline?

LESS EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

Just 27% of primary teachers think that the balance of professional development is right in their school. Primary teachers need to be a jack-of-all-trades, so it's no surprise that what respondents would most like to see is more subject professional development. A similar percentage, 31%, want more key stage professional development too.

85%

Pupil absences have remained high - not least because Covid has still been rearing its head. But there were other factors too. Teachers said that absenteeism was far worse in the past year than in 2019. Disruption due to absences was worse in more socially deprived areas, where 85% of primary teachers said lateness and absence interfered with teaching.

19%

One way of supporting less experienced staff is to help them enforce behaviour. When primary teachers were asked whether leaders at their school consistently enforced behaviour management, nearly 20% of primary teachers said they do not.

Furthermore, 28% of less experienced teachers said they wanted leaders to support them more in behaviour management.

IS BEHAVIOUR GETTING BETTER?

A single metric won't tell the whole story when measuring behaviour. It remains unclear whether the pandemic led to a deterioration in conduct. In 2019, 39% of teachers admitted they had to stop a lesson because of pupil disruption. We asked again recently and the figure had decreased - just 33% of teachers now said they had to stop a lesson for this reason.



8%

Overall, just 8% of teachers thought behaviour had improved since they started their teaching career - and more than half of primary teachers said it had deteriorated. Even those who have been teaching five years or fewer said this - so it's fair to say that it remains unclear how the pandemic has really affected behaviour.

Many teachers think heads don't do enough to support them with poor classroom conduct. Teacher Tapp shares its findings

The last 12 months were the most 'normal' year for some time and the first in the past three that wasn't interrupted by at least one full lockdown. But despite this, pupil behaviour continued to be a challenge, with teachers struggling to manage this in the classroom.

At Teacher Tapp, this prompted us to ask the question, "Do headteachers need to do more to help their staff?" Here's what we found out.



Iain Ford is senior data and reporting analyst at Teacher Tapp. You can take part in and see the result of regular teacher surveys by signing up to the Teacher Tapp app (teachertapp.co.uk)



“Working alongside Early Excellence has been an incredible experience and one with far reaching benefits. The review of our EYFS was really helpful and led to honest, open and informative advice to help us move our practice forward.”

Helen Stevens
Assistant Head & EYFS Lead
Marriott Primary School

Investing in your team



Phil Armstrong,
Head of Regional Development
Early Excellence
www.earlyexcellence.com

Does your whole team have the knowledge and skills to fully meet the needs of your children? Do your curriculum leaders have the understanding to translate their subject appropriately for the youngest children in your school? As a senior leader, do you feel confident in supporting and developing your early years?

Here we take a look at three areas of professional development that will impact on quality outcomes for children.

Powerful Interactions

We know that adult child interactions lie at the heart of high-quality practice. These require not only knowledge of each child's interests and needs but crucially, a deep understanding of how children learn and their developmental steps through each area of learning. It is this knowledge that enables adults working with young children to become the best possible partners in learning.

This makes adult interaction and it's interconnection to curriculum, planning and provision, an essential area of focus for staff development, to help all staff recognise how central their interactions are in supporting a child's learning journey.



Curriculum Right from the Start

As many schools continue to work at making their early years feel more connected to the rest of the school, curriculum development has become another key strand of professional development, especially for Subject Leaders.

To make curriculum continuity a success, those in a subject leadership role often require greater knowledge of how their subject is best approached in early years so that they can meaningfully support their EYFS colleagues. Early years can be 'unfamiliar territory' to many and with Ofsted's new focus on curriculum right from the start, senior leaders will need to invest in good quality CPD and motivate cross-phase collaboration

Confident Strategic Leadership

The ability for senior leaders to fully articulate learning across the whole school is essential. Therefore, exploring the pedagogical approaches used by early years colleagues, understanding the 'what' and the 'why', are key conversations leaders need to be having on a regular basis with their teams.

Leaders may also need external support to ensure that they can talk about the journey and experiences their children make as they progress through their school; gaining help to feel secure in their own understanding of indicators of high-quality practice and child development.

Contact Early Excellence for Advice & Support

To gain help in developing your practice and provision, talk to one of our Curriculum Consultants today.

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we test out their knowledge, views about the provision and what could be better. We challenge and support you, but remain fully objective.

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4 PEACE OF MIND

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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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Chaos in the classroom?

How one school restored calm and peace to lessons

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Making the case for stronger

RE LESSONS IN THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM



W

hat are the benefits of an education in religion and worldviews through RE?

As an RE teacher who became a senior leader, I know that the

subject, at its best, is academically rigorous, personally enriching and necessary preparation for life in diverse and multi-religious Britain.

We sometimes forget to celebrate its input into successful careers in law, medicine, politics, and journalism – though young people themselves often say how highly they value the subject.

What struck me most in the State of RE research report (tinyurl.com/REreportNATRE), released by the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) in May, were the student voices that brilliantly articulated the value of the subject. Among them was Shreya, who said “RE is the one time at school we get to talk, listen and try to make sense of people, events and beliefs in the world.”

Key Benefits

- Develops children mentally, cognitively and linguistically
- Offers a safe, structured place for discussion, debate – and even disagreement
- Promotes moral, spiritual, social and cultural development



1. “PREVENTING IGNORANCE AND ARROGANCE”

Struck by the positive student responses gathered in the research, I tasked some of my own primary pupils to produce a written response about why they valued RE. The best was Elliot: “Learning RE helps prevent ignorance and arrogance in young people, with the purpose of reducing discrimination against beliefs and life style choices. RE gives young people an opportunity to explore and discover themselves.”

Shreya and Elliot can confidently make these statements, because throughout their education they have engaged in high-quality RE lessons that teach a broad, modern and inspiring curriculum, based on the suggestions made in the 2018 Commission on RE report Religion and Worldviews: The way forward (tinyurl.com/REForward).

However, the NATRE research also shows that not all pupils are as fortunate. There is often not enough time on the timetable and too many schools – especially secondaries - continue to break the law by not teaching RE at all.

At primary level there is a mixed picture. Even though time



2. MAKING SENSE OF THE WORLD

spent on RE is improving, the subject’s cause is not helped by a gulf in government funding and a lack of training for teachers.

A recent Ofsted Research review endorsed the subject from a curriculum perspective, stating that RE ‘allows students to make sense of their place in the world’.

While the government shows no sign of changing the legal requirement for schools to teach a ‘broad and balanced curriculum’ under its plans for the future of education, it frequently states that RE has a vital role to play. Not only does it complement their learning in other areas of the curriculum with its focus on analytical and questioning skills, it also contributes to the



development of young people as they take their place in the diverse world around them.

So, what can senior leaders do to support the subject and ensure it receives adequate curriculum time and is properly taught?



3. HOW TO CREATE A SHARED VISION

Ensure there is a shared purpose for RE in your school. The CoRE report (tinyurl.com/CommissionRE), which recommends teaching religion and belief to students through the lens of a worldview, appreciates that religious identity may be just one part of the way in which a person seeks to understand, experience and think about the world around them. A shared vision also allows your school to think about its

community and to accommodate a curriculum that reflects the different beliefs and worldviews encountered by pupils beyond the school gates.

Secondly, primary leaders need to ensure that staff have the right amount of training to deliver a modern and relevant RE curriculum. Investing in high quality CPD through NATRE can be a good way of levelling up teachers' knowledge, skills and subject pedagogy in line with the latest research on teaching the subject.



4. TAKE TIME TO EVALUATE YOUR PROVISION

The RE Quality Mark (reqm.org) is a good means of evaluating your provision before taking steps to make improvements.

An application for the award, endorsed by the Religious Education of England and Wales, will allow you to evaluate the place of RE in your school in the widest and most thorough sense. There is also an opportunity to consider pupil voice in your evidence, with a proforma specifically for canvassing the views of students.

Why are these approaches to the RE curriculum at primary level so important? I've always been passionate about my subject because to me its effects are the most visible - and memorable. I cherish the moments when some of my students had the opportunity to bring a part of their religious identity to a classroom discussion. It is wonderful to witness the level of maturity shown by students when listening to their peers and given the opportunity to think in depth about the rich and diverse stories taught by the world's great religions.

Alongside this, the NATRE research also suggests we have a clear mandate from the public and parents to revitalise RE in our schools, with two-thirds of the adult population believing that an education in religion and worldviews (or RE) is an important part of the school curriculum. More significantly, in the same survey, when asked to assess the importance of certain qualities an education in religion and worldviews hoped to teach among young people: mutual understanding, evaluation of their own beliefs, the chance to learn about different cultures and worldviews, that two-thirds rose to an even greater majority.



5. DON'T BE HESITANT

Primaries are not helped by the government, as there is a gulf in funding and performance measures. The journey can be difficult, but it need not be a lonely one and it can be a rewarding legacy for the entire school. **HT**

WHAT WE LEARNT

RE can be one of those 'marmite' subjects that pupils either love or hate. You can make it feel more relevant by engaging them in conversations and debates, and using the subjects as a 'safe space' to articulate their own perceptions and views, even on controversial subjects.

- Make the pupil's voice the focus of the lesson by discussing the idea that they all have a worldview. Encourage them to give their opinions throughout the lesson in response to any material, weaving these into a more sophisticated classroom debate at the end of the lesson. This will ensure it is knowledge-rich and make students' learning more purposeful. Classroom debates help to provide 'teachable moments' for modelling respectful and informed discussion.

- Include a variety of different 'worldviews,' particularly those relevant to the school's community. It is important to ensure that non-religious worldviews such as humanism are included. Teaching students a variety of worldviews (both religious and non-religious) will deepen an interest in developing their own understanding and teach that the nature of belief is complex and ever-changing in response to the world around us.

- Focus on the 'lived experience' of religious and non-religious worldviews by using 'real world' examples in action. This can be through video clips, other media, or a range of artefacts that can prompt deeper enquiry and show the diversity within the worldviews that children are studying. Ensure that when the resources are used, they are introduced with the appropriate prior knowledge to increase student engagement and avoid misconceptions.



Kate Penfold-Attride is deputy headteacher of St Matthew's C of E Primary School in Redhill, where she is the RE subject lead. She co-leads the Leadership Network of the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education MAT.



How to empower your staff to

BUILD A CURRICULUM THAT MATTERS



Stemming the flow of talented young people out of the north west city of Warrington was the key driver for a major reappraisal and redesign of the entire curriculum at Bruche Primary School.

We wanted the children to be ‘bothered’ and to be interested in where they live. We wanted them to develop the abilities and character they need to succeed in the jobs market in our area. Ultimately, we wanted the skills we teach our children to stay in Warrington and not shift to London, Liverpool or Manchester. We wanted to build Warrington as a city.

In order for the curriculum to have the desired impact on pupils it needed to be carefully sequenced, broad, coherent – and, most importantly, authentic. Being authentic to the area your school serves is crucial because it has to be something your whole school community will buy into. That led to the development of a three stranded curriculum that aims to promote resilience, career pathways and an appreciation of the community in which the children live.



1. INVOLVING STAFF IN PLANNING

Making sure that, from the start, teachers were involved in the planning of knowledge and skills across the school was vital. We didn’t want our staff to feel that curriculum development and sequencing was something imposed upon them by senior leadership; we wanted it to be created by them.

We used consultants as well to support our staff on subject knowledge, planning and assessment but, fundamentally, it was driven by our staff.

We used a backwards model to construct the curriculum, which meant we started off with what we wanted the enduring learning to be. This was led by the subject leaders, with input from staff across the MAT. For example, all the history leads got together to plan a topic which was then checked several times to make sure that the narrative was correct. Then, as a training opportunity, we asked the subject leads to take the topic back to their own schools and deliver it to their staff.



2. CREATING A COHERENT CURRICULUM

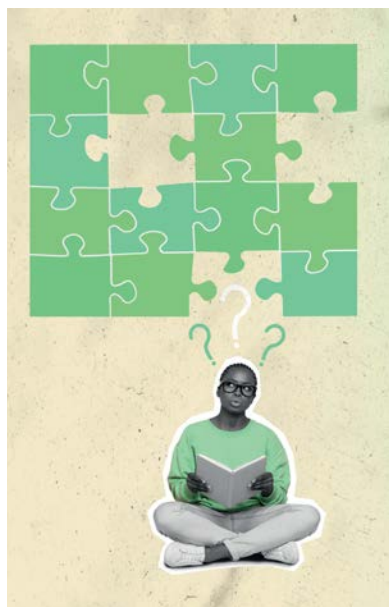
Giving teachers a holistic view helped us to create a broad

and coherent curriculum. The mentality used to be that if you taught in Year 2, you just needed to be very familiar with the Year 2 curriculum. But it was important to us that a Year 2 teacher knew what children have learned in Year 1 and also what they were going to learn in Year 3 and beyond. This would help them to understand where the children came from and what they needed to know to access the next year’s work.

The holistic view was developed in a range of ways. One was to encourage teachers to get in the habit of sharing their schemes of work and teaching approaches at staff insets and meetings. At every Tuesday afternoon meeting there is a set agenda, including an opportunity

Key Outcomes

- Children will be academically and physically prepared for their future careers and for life in their local community and the world.
- Pupils will have a clear understanding of complex values such as equality, resilience, trust and responsibility.
- Children are highly motivated to succeed and achieve and are equipped with the skills to do so.





to get feedback and to reflect upon a lesson. We quickly run through the narrative of history, for example; what we've done that term and how each class contributes to that. It's a case of constantly drip-feeding to staff what learning comes before and after learning in their year group.

The majority of our teachers are also subject leaders who work together in 'quality teams'. For example, the humanities team will consist of subject leads for geography, history and RE. They support each other in monitoring and assessing work, often spotting similar issues emerging in different subjects.

Subject leaders visit classes regularly to speak to children and monitor their learning, checking that what is being delivered in

that classroom is exactly what is on their curriculum plan.



3. ENSURING CONSISTENT DELIVERY

If we are going to spend 18 months developing a curriculum that we've shed blood, sweat and tears over, then we can't have a situation where staff are deviating from the plan. There are lots of conversations between the subject leaders and teachers about ensuring the narrative stays on that straight line.

We ask our colleagues to check that the children are focused on key concepts, knowledge and skills through regular retrieval exercises.

This can be done through a questionnaire or a quick whiteboard test. If we are teaching a topic over six weeks we'll retrieve week one's learning at the end of week two and so on. By the time we get to week six we will retrieve learning from weeks one through to five. By the time we get to weeks three and four there should be less emphasis on retrieving knowledge from week one because the key concepts should have stuck with the children.



4. RESEARCHING AND REFINING OUR METHODS

Research plays a vital role in giving our teachers the chance to reflect on and revise their delivery of the curriculum. For example, I asked our English subject leader to investigate research-backed approaches to the teaching of reading after he told me the guided reading sessions for small groups were preventing some children from reading at a greater depth. The subject leader took ownership and came back with a whole-class shared reading approach recommended by the Education Endowment Foundation. We knew that the adoption of this different approach would be a big change, but the evidence suggested that it would have an impact on progress, so we rolled it out across the whole school.

The curriculum may now be fully bedded in but that doesn't mean the development and refinement work stops. We've budgeted for an artist in residence, who visits the school every Friday to work with a different class. This allows each teacher with subject leader responsibility to leave their class for the whole day once a term to carry out monitoring visits across the school, while still getting time to observe and work with the art specialist, supporting and improving their own professional development in art. **HT**

WHAT WE LEARNT

Creating a new curriculum with specific aims in mind isn't a quick or easy task. But it can work effectively if you give your staff - and pupils - the time and space to get on board and gradually put it into practice.

- Empowering staff to take the lead, researching and recommending alternative research-based approaches, will help to deliver a high-quality curriculum true to your aims.
- Development doesn't stop at the point of delivery. Give subject leads time away from teaching so that they can monitor curriculum delivery in other classrooms and spot any issues and success stories.
- Regular retrieval exercises will help to track the children's grasp of key curriculum concepts - and ensure that teachers aren't going 'off-piste'.
- Avoiding subject and year group silos will help to deliver a coherent curriculum. Giving a Year 2 teacher an understanding of Year 1 and Year 3 curricula supports joined up thinking.
- Clearly setting out what learning you want the children to achieve as a result of a new curriculum was a great starting point.
- Involving staff from the beginning of the process increases the chances of success because they will be invested in the process. Imposing a new curriculum from above rarely works as effectively.



Chris Jones is executive headteacher of Bruche Primary School in Warrington, part of Warrington Primary Academy Trust (www.wpat.warrington.sch.uk).

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D 25

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School Profile



Name: Gaggle Brook Primary School

Headteacher: Emily Holloway

Location: Oxfordshire

Ofsted rating: Due a first inspection

Size: 210 pupils

Extra info: The school opened only a few years ago, in 2018



EMILY HOLLOWAY, HEADTEACHER

“We are on an exciting journey, driven by sustainability”

A love and respect for nature flows through Gaggle Brook Primary School – from the design of the buildings to the curriculum – finds Dorothy Lepkowska



T

here is noticeable peace and tranquility around

Gagle Brook Primary, despite this being a normal school day. It could be because the Oxfordshire school is currently only populated up to Year 3 and some classes are still waiting to be filled with the joyful sounds of children learning.

Or perhaps it's because it is a lovely warm day in early summer and most pupils are doing activities outside. But it could also be the environment in which these students and teachers go about their teaching and learning. The innovatively designed buildings make Gagle Brook a one-off, ecologically-speaking.

Regardless, there is a sense of purpose here underpinned by an evolving curriculum that is strongly focused on a love and respect for nature, awareness of local ecology and a deep understanding of the challenges facing the planet.

Gagle Brook is situated on Elmsbrook, the UK's first 'eco-town' – a sprawling zero-carbon housing development being built on former farmland in Bicester. The school opened in 2018 with just the nursery and reception class, and by the time it reaches capacity in two years' time, it will have 210 pupils.

"The driver here is the environment and sustainability and we are all on an exciting journey which is guided by that," says Emily Holloway, the headteacher. "Our curriculum has four main streams – enquiring minds, rich vocabulary, knowledge and skills and the One Planet Principles.

"The last one is particularly important and encapsulates 10 points that are threaded through our curriculum, so we live and breathe these in our learning and in the children's play."

Enquiring minds

Staff at Gagle Brook believe that children should be able to talk about, and question, their learning, to express and encourage their curiosity about the world, and to have an opinion.

Lessons often begin with a quiz to recap on previous learning and to help children to understand what they've already covered, to give context to what's to come.

"Teachers model enquiry and the language that is needed to the children so that they become effective at doing this themselves," explains Matt Street, Year 3 teacher and sustainability lead.

"We celebrate this in every class and if a child is seen to be using their enquiring mind, they move their peg along a chart, so they soon understand that they're using this method and it has had a



positive effect.

"The children are taught that no question is a daft question. If they don't understand something, then they should ask.

"Einstein asked daft questions and he became a brilliant scientist."

Rich vocabulary

Developing a rich vocabulary is also an important step in helping children express themselves. "We try to ensure the children are exposed to high

quality words in every lesson, so this focus is not a standalone or separate subject," says Chloe Burrige, who teaches Year 2.

"We choose reading texts carefully so that the language used is exciting and stimulating, and this in turn encourages the children to use this vocabulary themselves. Successful readers always know a lot of words."

The school uses Tales Toolkit, a story-telling approach with four mystery 'bags' – one for character, one for the setting, a problem bag and another containing an outcome. Children pull one object out of each bag and create a story from what they have chosen. The teacher then helps the pupils to build on their ideas to stimulate their imagination, and to learn and use new words.

"We also have opportunities for encouraging and modelling oracy in our early years setting through methods like role play, so it starts from a young age. This is particularly important for the pupils from more disadvantaged backgrounds, so they have the same chances in life as everyone else and can reach their potential," says Chloe.

"It is really noticeable that our children can talk about their own learning."

THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Gagle Brook believes it is unique in the UK. Even taking into account the use of building materials such as the concrete foundations and the use of heavy machinery, the school site is net biodiverse, meaning its construction has had no impact on the local ecology.

Inside, the walls are lined with cross-laminated timber, meaning the school is highly insulated from the heat in the summer and the cold in winter. Sections of the roof have solar panels, which provide all of the school's electricity needs and also feeds into the local grid that powers the housing estate. Another has a 'green roof', allowing for plant and flower growth to attract bees and insects.

Horizontal beams on the south facing side of the school stop summer sun from hitting the classroom windows but allow lower winter sun in to help with heat and the provision of natural light.

Rainwater is captured in underground tanks and used for toilet-flushing – a detail that is particularly fascinating to the pupils – and there is a mechanism for cleaning it so it can be used in the sprinkler system.

Secure night-time vents allow a constant stream of fresh air with high level skylights pulling the draft through. Staff believe this has been particularly effective during the pandemic in keeping the school well-ventilated.

Knowledge and Skills

Gagle Brook's curriculum design is sequenced carefully, so that children always learn in manageable steps, building on content they have covered previously.

This system also allows pupils to make sense of their learning, seeing its relevance and making links and connections. Encouraging them to ask questions means they are always finding out more, and even two years down the

line, they still remember what they've learned.

The curriculum is designed to ensure that learning is relevant to the diverse school population and the wider community, and is rooted in the unique opportunity that the eco school delivers. Gagle Brook's enquiry-based curriculum hooks children in, embracing cross-curricular links, to enhance learning experiences and give context to the knowledge acquired and skills taught. Where this is not possible, other high-quality texts, visual stimuli and experiences are used to make the knowledge and skills as accessible as possible.

Children are given regular opportunities to reflect on their learning and to share what they know, too. This happens in the forms of quizzes, presentations or discussions during lesson time.

One Planet principles

The One Planet principles around which the curriculum is structured, originated from Bioregional, the global sustainability company responsible for the development of the school and local housing. These sustainability goals are contained in Bioregional's own mission statement and have been adapted by Gagle Brook to be more accessible and understandable for young children.

The idea behind the principles is that while we live on one planet, in the UK and other European countries we are exhausting the equivalent resources of three planets. We all need to scale back and live more sustainably.

"When the school first opened, Bioregional worked on site and they supported us in integrating those principles into our curriculum so that children could understand them," says Emily.

"The principles are visible through wall art in our library, so the pupils

MEET THE STAFF



JAMIE IZZO

Primary support and learning mentor

My role is very fulfilling and gives me value. All our children are seen as unique individuals, and we support and encourage them to reach their potential, breaking barriers to learning along the way.



LISA ROBINSON

Early years teaching assistant and parent

It is such a warm, nurturing environment. I love the focus on nature and the fact we are a Forest school. I have children in Years 1 and 3, and there is a real family feel with everyone looking out for everyone else.



VICTORIA BOND

Teaching assistant

There are plenty of opportunities for professional development and I've been training to become a Level 3 Forest school practitioner. I have been supported by colleagues in doing this, and my confidence has grown so much.



LUCY WHISKERD

Early years lead reception teacher

The school is unlike any at which I've ever worked, and I love it. The focus on the eco-friendly, and outside learning really feeds pupils' imaginations. The children are developing important values through this curriculum.

"We did a lesson on Greta Thunberg and the pupils were amazed to learn that such a young girl claimed her voice and had so much influence"

are constantly reminded of our ethos, are able to talk about them and to see how we absorb these into the life of the school.

"The children learn these principles from an early age and understand why it is so special and unique to be a pupil and teacher in this school."

The One Planet symbols and principles are:

- A bicycle – sustainable transport
- Recycling – zero waste
- Raindrop – sustainable water
- A tree – sustainable materials
- A butterfly – land use and wildlife
- A child – health and happiness
- A wind turbine – zero carbon
- A group of people – culture and community
- A handshake – equity and local economy
- An apple – local and sustainable food

Building sustainability into the curriculum

The next step at Gagle Brook is to create a sustainable curriculum, with the One Planet principles woven into every subject.

Sustainability is already a feature of school assemblies and classroom discussions, and Gagle Brook is a Forest school. It is not unusual for children to debate, for example, the pros and cons of being a vegetarian or meat-eater in the context of environmental impact. In doing this, pupils are given a voice for their views and are able to form opinions.

"We did one lesson on Greta Thunberg and the pupils were amazed to learn that such a young girl claimed her voice and had so much influence," Chloe explains. "It's so important for the children to understand that, even though they are young, their opinions matter. This is their world, too. They don't have to wait until they're adults to have an impact."

With a quarter of children currently eligible for pupil premium funding, the school has employed a learning mentor to work with pupils and their families with everyday challenges and needs, to identify, support and help remove any barriers to learning.

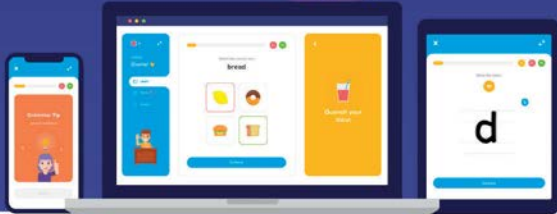
"We can already see the impact of our sustainability learning. Our children ask questions that many children of their age won't have considered because of our ethos. It is really paying dividends," adds Matt Street.

"We sometimes ask ourselves in lessons: 'if we don't do that now, what could happen?'. Often, we don't know the answer, so we look it up." **HT**



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WHY DATA SHOULD BE INFORMATIVE AND MEANINGFUL TO GOVERNORS



WHAT GOVERNORS NEED TO KNOW

- Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR):** Ofsted's view of school performance and it's vital that all governors get sight of it.
 - Demographics (1 page):** a brief summary of the school's context showing percentages in key groups, attendance figures and mobility compared to national figures. A by-year breakdown will explain why some cohorts may perform better than others.
- Results summary (2-3 pages):** headline figures (key stage results) for the past 3 years compared to national averages, to give an idea of trends.
- Current attainment overview (1-2 pages):** percentages of current cohorts working at or above expectations compared to prior attainment, or on track for certain grades compared to targets. Focus on reading, writing and maths.

RAISE reports are obsolete but their legacy casts a long shadow. Those detailed documents of school performance were once over 100 pages long and even after a crash diet still reached 60 pages.

Later versions had a G stamped on pages believed to be useful for governors. And guess what? Nearly every page was marked with a G. As an LA data analyst, I trained governors on the dark arts of interpreting RAISE data, and it was painful. It wasn't governors' fault; it was the report.

The size of RAISE meant we couldn't see the wood for the trees - but we clung to the belief that the numbers must mean something, so we ploughed on. Governors and senior leaders set priorities and targets on the basis of a report that almost certainly wasn't telling them what they thought it was.

RAISEonline was scrapped in 2015 and replaced by Ofsted's Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) the first version of which was 22 pages long. Subsequent versions were trimmed down to 11 pages in 2018, and to six pages in 2019. What do we take from this? That, when it comes to school data, we can do more with less.

Pages of numbers have been replaced by

criteria-driven statements drawn from a master list and - perhaps most striking of all - there is little or no data on pupil groups. Why? This was best explained in a speech given by Amanda Spielman, HMCI, in 2018 who said she did not believe "there is merit in trying to look at every individual sub-group of pupils at the school level. It is important that we monitor the progress of under-performing pupil groups. But often this is best done at a national level, or possibly even a MAT or local authority level, where meaningful trends may be identifiable, rather than at school level where apparent differences are often likely to be statistical noise".

This is a key issue with school data: the groups are often too small, with overlap between groups and outliers skew averages. Yet governors still expect data to be broken down in that way.

Governors need to know what's happening in the school but are not in the classrooms. They therefore rely on data to provide that picture. But what if the data is not reliable?

Beyond the issue of statistical noise there is the additional problem of bias and distortion. We know that the pressures of

accountability can compromise the integrity of data, that using data not only to monitor and support pupils' learning but also to report standards to governors and others, can cause data to become bent out of shape. As the final report of the Commission on Assessment without Levels suggests 'School leaders should be careful to ensure that the primary purpose of assessment is not distorted by using it for multiple purposes'.

Avoid breaking data down into numerous sub-groups. Governors should be asking about the effectiveness of the support provided to meet the needs of pupils who are working below expectations or falling behind. An update from the SENDCO or subject leader at a governors' meeting is far more insightful than a data analysis.

Data is essential - and unavoidable - in schools; we just need to be honest about its limitations. [LIT](#)



James Pembroke is a former data analyst in a local authority school improvement team and co-author of [Dataproof Your School](#).

USING NURTURE TO CREATE A CALMER SCHOOL

With permanent exclusions on the rise, SEND leader Kate Tokgoz developed a solution that made a huge impact on pupil behaviour

Persistent disruptive behaviour continues to be the main cause of permanent exclusion. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with ADHD and autism, are more likely to experience behavioural issues while in the school environment, especially after the school shutdown – including, in our case, attempting to abscond from classrooms and causing damage to property. The impact on staff and other children was highly damaging.

Many pupils were simply struggling to cope and imposing sanctions proved only to exacerbate the difficulties.

We needed to find ways of managing these challenges, and to put measures in place that were protective, nurturing and supportive, rather than punitive. What was needed was a complete re-think of our strategies and policies to meeting pupils' needs, and a change of priorities.

When all our pupils returned to school in March last year, we realised that the lockdown had caused significant rises in behavioural issues amongst a number of children, most of whom had needs that staff were struggling to meet in the main classrooms.

After experimenting with a 'time-out' option, where disruptive pupils were asked to sit in the headteacher's office for a set amount of time, we realised that a much higher level

of attention was needed to help improve these children's behaviour.

What we failed to anticipate, however, was just how high the level of disruptive behaviour would rise if these pupils were left in the main classroom. Children from Years 1

through to 6 were frequently running out of classrooms, damaging property and even attempting to leave the school site altogether. Not only was this causing major disruption to

teaching staff, but it was also having a negative impact on the rest of the children in the class, who were witnessing poor behaviour on a daily basis.

Fixed term exclusions became a temporary solution, although the school also trialled reduced timetables and one-to-one lessons with learning support assistants. Despite our attempts to re-direct these children into the correct learning area, the rest of the teaching staff and I were still seeing significant behavioural issues amongst SEND pupils.

Creating a new environment

It soon became apparent that many children were displaying an inability to cope in a classroom setting, which is why I suggested the possibility of creating an entirely different environment for these pupils to continue their learning.

Over the next few months, I worked closely with several other members of the senior leadership team to set up the Base, a unit in the school which has been designed to meet the needs of children whose social requirements were not being met in the classroom.

It was a far cry from a time-out in the headteacher's office. The provides nurture-style provision with a more relaxed timetable. Key skills

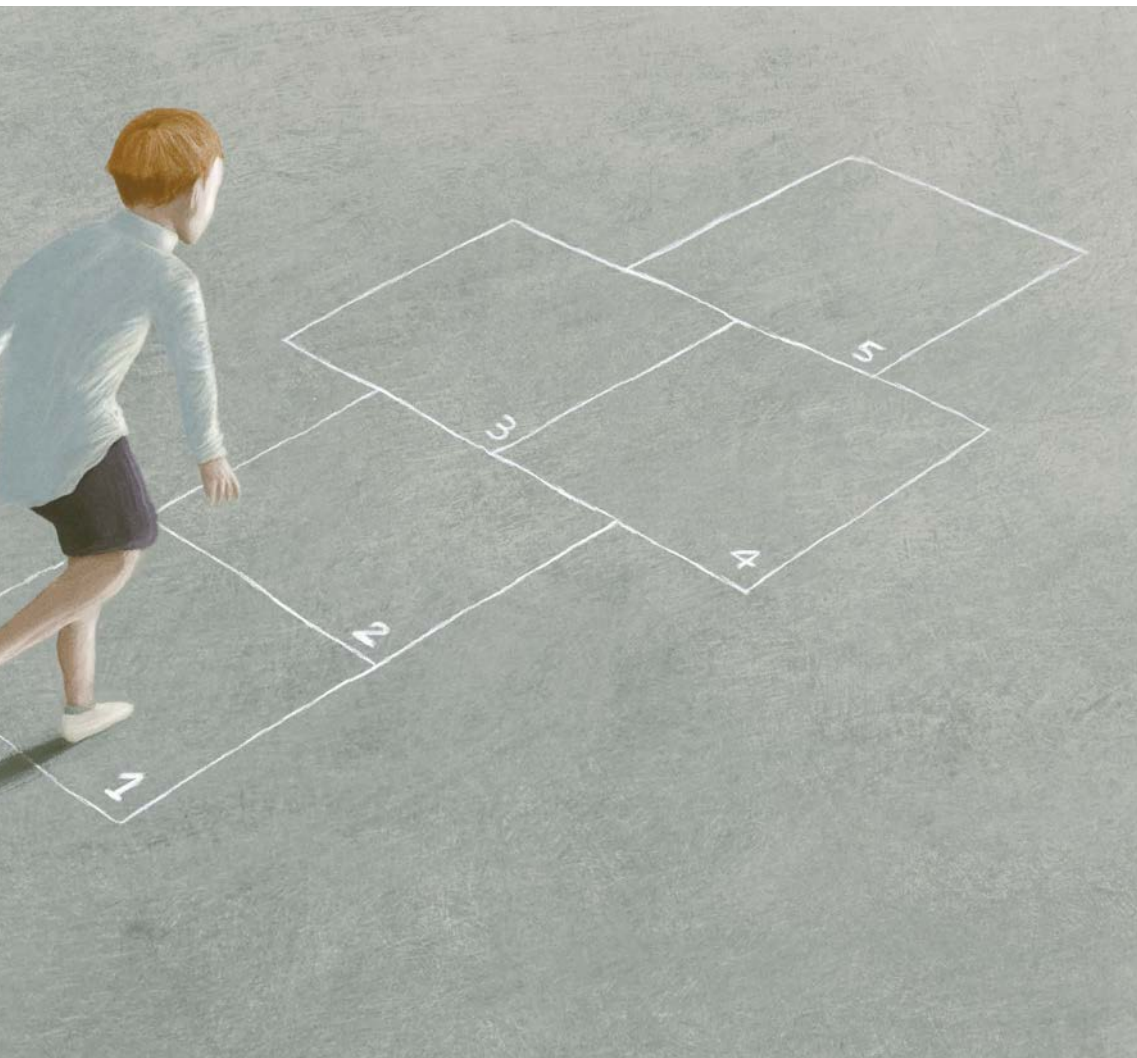


such as reading, writing and mathematics are interspersed with more creative activities such as craft and cooking.

We also quickly solved one of our main problems. We installed a purpose-build play area that pupils could visit at any time of the day and by allowing continuous access to the outdoors, we found that pupils were much less likely to run out of the Base during a disruptive episode.

Instilling a culture of nurturing

As part of the Base's culture of nurturing, teaching staff make the children's social and emotional needs the highest priority, without neglecting their academic needs. One of the newest measures we've put into place is the introduction of individual reward charts for good behaviour, which can include the option to invite a friend to the



Base for snack time. The children also enjoy some quiet ‘down time’ at the end of each day, which usually involves a short amount of cartoon watching.

Sensory stimulation is an important part of nurturing SEND children, which is why we equipped the Base with a wide range of appropriate objects such as weighted blankets, wobble boards and fidget toys. Our teachers have been using Gym Trail to support their lesson plans, a programme that helps improve several social skills such as turn taking, waiting in line and following instructions.

Communication is key

We’re acutely aware that being told your child would benefit from an education in a separate unit isn’t easy to hear. However, parental response to the programme has been overwhelmingly positive. In fact,

a recent survey revealed that 80% of our parents strongly agreed that their child’s needs were being supported effectively in the Base – with the remaining 20% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Parents felt that they understood why it was necessary for their children to learn in the Base and how the new nurture-style is supporting their needs.

Turning over a new leaf

Since opening the Base in June 2021, the school has seen major improvements in its behaviour. Classes have gone from being widely disruptive and somewhat chaotic, with behaviour growing volatile and often dangerous, to far more calm and constructive learning environments. Our teachers have been incredibly supportive of the Base and the atmosphere when you walk through the school is so much

more positive.

As already mentioned, permanent exclusions were beginning to become a worrying issue in the school prior to our opening of the Base. The students we placed in the Base adapted to their surroundings a lot sooner and better than we expected and are now reaching the stage where they can be integrated into the main classrooms for a couple of hours each day. The work that the team has been doing to increase these hours in a supportive and encouraging way has significantly reduced the likelihood of permanent exclusions, and two of our children have already been fully re-integrated into mainstream classes.

Given the success of its first year, the school is keen to use the Base to support several other children who we feel would benefit from this style of

HOW TO SET UP YOUR OWN BASE

- When it comes to educating SEND pupils with behavioural issues, supportive not punitive behavioural policies are the best way forward. Sanctions and punishments such as ‘time-outs’ can cause undue stress and may encourage further isolation and poor conduct.
- Transferring struggling pupils into a different unit isn’t the same as admitting defeat. Reassure them that a separate learning environment is only temporary and is to be used as a stepping stone for re-integrating them back into mainstream classrooms with their friends.
- Communicating with parents is the key to success. Checking in with parents or carers on a regular basis and explaining the benefits of a different learning environment is an important part of supporting the children.
- Supporting a child’s social and emotional needs is just as important as developing their academic skills, so take the time to evaluate each child’s sensory requirements and create an environment that will make them feel comfortable and safe.
- Re-integration won’t happen overnight. Gradually exposing pupils to mainstream classroom settings over a long period of time can be a long process, but it is certainly worth the wait. Some children will make the transition faster than others.

provision. Although this may be a challenge, with children who are currently accessing the Base continuing to need support over the next academic year, we’re hoping that introducing more reduced timetables with additional time in mainstream classes will allow us to do so. **HT**



Kate Tokgoz is the SEND Leader and Chair of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Team at Southminster Church of England Primary School, Essex

GIVING CHILD REFUGEES A FIRM FOUNDATION

Make newcomers' early days in school less daunting by being creative in how you communicate, says **Sue White**

S

tarting a new school is challenging for any child and every school leader has effective strategies in place to make it easier for children entering an unfamiliar learning environment for the first time – making sure they feel comfortable, can make friends and be ready to learn.

But for a child refugee, who could potentially have left family and friends in their homeland, who may have experienced severe trauma - and who may speak no English - there will be multiple hurdles to overcome in addition to learning a new language.

Currently 1.6 million children who do not speak English as their first language are being supported by UK schools. And with child refugees arriving through Afghan resettlement schemes or escaping conflict in Syria or Ukraine, this figure is likely to increase.

So, what can school leaders do to help these children develop the English language they need to access the curriculum and engage in school life?

Here are some strategies to help school leaders meet the needs of child refugees and pupils with English as an additional language (EAL).

Launch a learning buddy scheme

Children with limited English can be quickly overwhelmed by an unfamiliar classroom, but providing a learning buddy can be a simple way to reduce anxiety and help them be ready to learn.

A friendly child with good communication skills will help a new pupil to feel welcome in unusual surroundings. A learning buddy will also be able to show the child where to store their belongings, find the equipment they need for lessons and locate the lunch hall or nearest toilets, supporting them to settle in and become more independent.

It can be useful to advise teachers to seat children who have yet to develop a wide range of English

vocabulary close to the front of the class, where they can see facial expressions more clearly. This will improve their ability to understand the English being used by their teacher and help them to pick up on the subtle physical gestures that are the building blocks of a new language.

Promote simple changes to teaching practice

Encourage teachers to add simpler language, where appropriate, in lessons which include child refugees who have little English. This will help to prevent pupils from disengaging if they don't fully understand what's going on.

Using a phrase such as 'hotter world' alongside 'global warming' in a geography lesson, for example, will give EAL children a starting point from which they can develop more complex language without missing the context of the learning.

You may want to ensure more time is factored into lessons for pupils who don't speak English to process instructions or respond to any questions they are asked.

It can often take longer for a child to translate from English into their home language and then back into English before they respond. Allowing them some extra time will reduce stress, encourage them to take part in classroom activities and help to ensure lessons continue to run smoothly.

"It may seem counter-intuitive but allowing children to use their first language can be positive"



Encourage children to speak their own language

It may seem counter-intuitive but allowing children who are in the process of learning English to use their first language can be very positive.

Teachers could encourage children with refugee status to answer questions in their first language in lessons, for example. This may simply help to put a child at ease if they are in the very early stages in their development of English and prevent them from feeling isolated from the rest of the class for fear of responding incorrectly.

But as their spoken and written English improves, they will gain the confidence to use more words or form more complex sentences. They will then be more likely to participate not only in lessons, but also embrace the extra-curricular opportunities the school offers. Engaging fully in every aspect of school life is vital for sparking new friendships and uncovering a child's individual talents and interests whether

they love to play chess, take part in team sports or get involved in the arts.

Pre-teach vocabulary

Using symbols to pre-teach some of the words and phrases which will be used in a forthcoming lesson is a great way to give a child with limited English a head start in their learning.

Teachers could provide a visual representation of concepts, idioms or common English vernacular, which a child refugee may not be familiar with, in advance. So, if the class is due to discuss a story featuring 'the rainbow-coloured broom', a symbol of a rainbow alongside an umbrella could be shared in advance to help explain the topic in a very visual way.

Similarly, subject-specific language could be taught prior to a lesson using symbols to explain words such as 'friction', 'gravity' and 'battery' that a child might come across in science, for example. These resources would work for all children, not just those with EAL, helping to ensure classrooms are inclusive places to learn.

Build home-school links

Another way for schools to support EAL pupils is to make it easier for parents and carers with limited English to provide effective support from home and symbols have a role to play here too.

When used in and around school, symbols help parents navigate their way around easily. So, you might include a symbol of a book on directions to the library or a plate for the dinner hall. Symbolic imagery can also be included in the school's policies or in the newsletter, making them simpler for non-English speaking families to interpret.

Every child deserves the best possible education, wherever in the world they happen to come from. With a few minor adjustments, your school can better support child refugees, help build their understanding and learning of English and open up the very real possibility of a much brighter future. [HT](#)



Sue White is a former teacher, local government advisor and senior educational specialist at Widgit. For more information on using symbols visit www.widgit.com/eal

MAKE SCHOOL LIFE MORE VISUAL

Once words are spoken, they disappear. Instructions written in English are difficult for children with limited English to interpret too, so they are less likely to engage in learning or group tasks.

Using visual prompts such as symbols in school can be a quick and easy way to help pupils with EAL to build the vocabulary they need to progress. Symbols reduce anxiety by giving children a permanent reminder of language that is focussed on the specific message you are trying to get across. They give a child a sense of independence and belonging too, as they can join in activities without requiring as much adult support.

You could create vocabulary charts containing essential school phrases such as 'copy', 'underline' or 'I need the toilet', for example, and include a symbol to represent each phrase. Adding the words in English as well as the child's home language will help them communicate and better understand what you are asking them to do, as in these examples (see image) designed for supporting children whose first language is Romanian.

Symbols can be used to help scaffold learning tasks too, providing structured activities children can complete independently, boosting self-esteem



SUPPORTING THE STEPS TO SECONDARY

It's never too early to start talking to pupils about moving on from primary, says Emily Weston



In theory, your Year 6 children won't be starting their transition for another year. However, it is a process that should begin from the moment they walk into the classroom in September. To give them the best start in the next phase of their education, we need to give them a secure foundation during their last year at primary.

By creating an atmosphere that has similarities to secondary, we are creating a more horizontal move for the children, which is much less daunting than a vertical one. I like to think of my class as being Year 6.5 where I can give them the best of both worlds.

There are a number of low-effort, high-impact ways we can enrich the transition process for our pupils. I've discovered that these sit under three main areas: curriculum, community and collaboration - all of which are vital.

Curriculum

This is probably the area which needs the most planning and input before it can be successfully delivered to the children, with events put into the calendar ahead of time and - where possible - visitors invited to join the process. The curriculum we provide during the summer term allows the pupils to get a secondary experience before they reach the school itself, and can be delivered through a number of sessions including a 'secondary week', 'careers week' and 'Year 7 ready' lessons.

The 'secondary week' is very adaptable, depending on the setting of your school. In a small school, this may be a single 'secondary timetable' day, whereas larger primary schools can accommodate up to a fortnight. Not only does it provide the children with an experience that has similarities to their transition days, but it does so in a safe environment with familiar faces and therefore limits the cognitive overload they will experience when the official move up days arrive.

To make it even more beneficial, you could speak to

one - or all - of your feeder secondaries and invite them to send a teacher to complete a lesson in a more specialist subject. Pupils will benefit from an authentic secondary lesson whilst getting to know a familiar face for September. We were lucky to also have a local dance company complete a taster session as part of this timetabled week.

When my first class had been in Year 7 for a few months, I received letters to say how helpful they found this process and that they felt they were more prepared than their peers during the transition days and their initial few weeks in September, which let me know that all the hard work was worthwhile.

Community

When our pupils move to a new school, we often focus on the needs within the classroom or academic achievements. However, one of the biggest changes for the children is moving from a school where they often

and this can have the biggest impact on their transition.

A lot of transition activities happen at the end of the year, but one of the most beneficial sessions our local secondary held happened in October. I asked our largest feeder secondary to give our Year 6 cohort a taster secondary session; the deputy head came and he was fantastic.

know the familiar adult faces around them, and could draw a map of the grounds from memory, to a large unknown space where the staff and pupil cohort has tripled. Often, they can find it difficult to feel immediately part of the community



The session focused on what secondary is like, including the equipment pupils need, taking the bus to school and how to be an independent learner. Some past pupils, who were now attending the feeder secondary, also attended the session; often, asking their peers questions can make the answers feel more personal and their attendance enhanced the experience for my class.

Holding this event towards the start of the year was a huge benefit as it allowed the students to see what they were aiming towards, both in lesson content and learning expectations. The move to secondary can often feel like an abstract concept - it's too far into the future for them to think about. But making it more tangible can minimise

any anxiety they may feel. Their learning behaviour through the year was brilliant as they could visualise where they were heading - even in the summer term!

Collaboration

When I started to teach Year 6, I, like many other teachers in this position, had not experienced secondary school since my own time there. Yes, there are some huge similarities but there are differences, too. In order to understand these better, my headteacher gave me release time to visit my local secondary and take the opportunity to understand exactly where my class were heading at the end of the year.

When I visited the local feeder secondary I watched

sessions of maths and English. I found this to be hugely beneficial as I was able to see the structure of the lessons, behaviour management used by the teachers and how some of my past students had settled into their new school. There were many similarities, but it was the subtle differences that I wanted to introduce into my classroom in order to create a Year 6.5 environment. This included having transition times when children could go to the toilet, more independence when accessing resources and using more 'no hands up' in class.

However, this wasn't a one-way observation. I

also had secondary staff visit my classroom to observe Year 6 lessons - it was safe to say they were shocked at the high level of challenge students were expected to, and could, complete. Through our conversations, it led to me creating a transition pack (which consisted of a self-portrait, letter to staff and 'I Am' outline of each student) to forward to the pupils' new school in order to demonstrate their artistic and academic ability and to set a clearer baseline.

This was a really important CPD experience for not only myself, but the secondary teachers, too. Now, having also taught a year of secondary, I am even more certain that collaboration between phases needs to be encouraged in order to allow children access

CONSIDER WHAT THE CHILDREN WANT

- When planning transition, it is so important that we include pupil voice in our decisions. So we need to ask: what events do the pupils think will best help them?
- Asking children at the start of the year means you can factor in transition activities which are not only useful in our eyes, but in those of the class, too. The activities with the biggest impact are the ones which have the most meaningful learning point - such as a secondary week - and allow students to have an insight into what they can expect in the future.
- Furthermore, giving children a voice to speak to staff and pupils at their new school allows them to feel ownership of their transition. For example, what do they think their new teachers will want to know? This could be their favourite subject or sport; what subject challenges them most, and why; and what their hobbies and interests are.
- Supplying photographs in advance - putting a face to a name - can make the transition process smoother for both staff and new students.

to the best transition possible.

By beginning transition early in the year and focusing on curriculum, community and collaboration to enhance the experience for the children, we are ensuring that we are not only allowing them to survive their transition - we are giving them the tools to thrive when they finally move to secondary. **HT**



Emily Weston is a Year 6 teacher at Lea & Garsdon CE School, Malmesbury, and has experience as a 'Transition Teacher' in a secondary school.



Collaboration between phases needs to be encouraged more in order to allow children access to the best transition possible

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ABOUT ME:

NAME:
Kevin Barnett

JOB ROLE:
Executive
Headteacher

SCHOOL: Freemantle
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Southampton

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- + Our flexible offers support Primary, Secondary, 6th Form and SEN Schools

The Head's Guide To...

FACILITIES & FINANCE



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Why you can't see Braywick Court Primary until you stumble upon it

THE MISSION:

TO FIND MORE EFFICIENT WORKING PRACTICES ACROSS THE FINANCE TEAM

MAT: *The Bosco Catholic Education Trust, Sussex*

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER: *Jill Alcorn*

Despite receiving funding for the exceptional spending associated with COVID-19, the uncertainty and unexpected costs of the past two years have left many schools in a precarious financial position. Last May, it was reported that while education had received £138 million worth of COVID-19 expenses, the Department for Education had rejected £42 million in claims.

The promise of additional funding, announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Budget, was welcome news for the education sector, and should go some way to plugging the financial blackhole many schools, academies and trusts are now facing. The £4.7 billion of investment could be just what's needed to help them get back on a stronger footing, although the reality is that most school budgets remain tight and will remain so in the immediate future.

£ 1. Develop robust financial processes

COVID-19 was a sobering reminder that we never know what is around the corner, and as school finance teams and business managers will know, budgets and projections often had to be re-written overnight.

This only makes the case for developing robust financial management processes to drive efficiencies more compelling. With the right tools, you're able to set budgets and forecast quickly and accurately, and adapt them as income and expenditure fluctuates.

This is key to delivering value, and ensuring better opportunities and learning outcomes for pupils.

2. Adapt in line with growth

Unexpected events aren't the only reason why academies and trusts should regularly review their financial management processes, of course.

Growth increases complexity and can make tasks such as reporting and ensuring compliance far more time-consuming, especially if budgets won't allow the recruitment of more people in your team. With visibility of the trust's finances, staff can spot opportunities to make savings, share resources across academies and achieve economies of scale when procuring goods and services. They're also able quickly to model a number of different scenarios, based on changes to spending and income.

It's a journey we've been on



“Without the right tools, it is near-impossible to set balanced budgets, minimise unnecessary workload and get the most from limited resources”

Jill Alcorn
Chief Finance Officer

at the Bosco Catholic Education Trust. When the trust was established in 2017, we quickly realised that our current systems weren't geared up for the job anymore. Switching to the Access Finance and Budgeting software allowed us to transform our accounting processes, with real-time budgeting and forecasting capabilities.

As well as keeping spending in check, it empowered us to work



4. Taking the pain out of auditing

The rise of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) over the past decade has, without a doubt, increased the focus on auditing, with stringent rules and regulations now in place that must be adhered to.

Academies are legally obliged to submit an annual audit to the ESFA by 31 December and have this published on the trust's website by 31 January the following year. Anyone working in a school will understand the stress this brings.

It's common for smaller trusts to rely on their school business managers to undertake much of this work. However, as a trust expands so teams must adapt. It is therefore becoming increasingly common for medium and large trusts to employ finance professionals to manage the auditing process and oversee the purse strings.

For example, an effective reconciliation process can help avoid a lot of additional work in the weeks leading up to the annual audit. Without good reconciliation, there's always the chance that you will find yourself in a very different position to the one you were expecting, significantly increasing the work required when it comes to auditing.

Our team is able to effectively manage the reconciliation process on an ongoing basis. As the vast majority of the information required is saved on the system, this is a straightforward task and saves a huge amount of time when we come to compiling the full annual audit.

Staff are also able to scan and attach PDF versions of invoices, receipts and proof of funding, ensuring that when it comes to the annual audit, we don't have to task someone with uploading and inputting a huge amount of key data.

but time-consuming tasks such as reporting.

The fact that we're able to generate reports quickly and easily saves us a huge amount of time, and it's something I know the trustees and governors really value. Using the most up-to-date data contained within the system also provides assurances that reports are accurate and consistent. They have a clear view of what is happening, which informs and improves decision-making.

From my perspective, it enabled us to transition to proper financial accountability, which is essential for any trust, and something I was keen to establish as soon as possible.

collaboratively with schools across the trust. The strength of these partnerships helps us to understand their needs better, so we can allocate resources strategically, which benefits both staff and pupils.



3. Better reporting

This way of working is only possible if finance teams use technology to complete essential

In numbers

£138 Million

Was received in total by schools in Covid-19 expenses

£42 Million

In schools' expenses claims were rejected by the Department for Education

2000

Claims for PPE expenses in schools were not approved

250

Claims for food for children and their families - totaling £475,691 - were rejected

£4.7 Billion

Amount of investment announced in Autumn Budget for education

These figures were released by the DfE following a Freedom of Information request

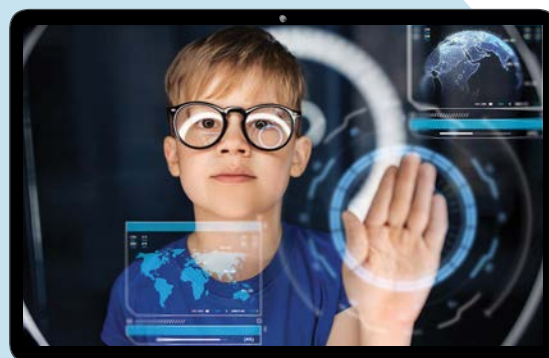
Nobody is under any illusion that the road ahead will be easy for schools, but without the right tools, it is near-impossible to set balanced budgets, minimise unnecessary workload and get the most from limited resources. By using technology to refine your financial management processes, you'll be better placed to navigate the challenges with greater confidence and make every penny count. **HT**

ICT IN ACTION:

EDTECH IMPACT

Three software packages that will help to support teaching and learning – and the wellbeing of your staff

1



2

3



1 | QTROBOT



Philippa Whipp,
Headteacher,
Acorn Park School,
Norfolk

**“NON-VERBAL CHILDREN
HAVE BEEN RESPONDING POSITIVELY
AND MIRRORING HIS MOVEMENTS”**

Aim

To support the development of emotional literacy and self-care skills for autistic pupils.

Why did you choose QTrobot?

Here at Acorn Park School, part of Options Autism, we are extremely interested in exploring ways to use technology to enhance our pupils' learning and support the development of socially empowering life skills, so we were excited to be part of a

pilot research and development project for QTrobot. The robot offers the pupils engagement opportunities and interactions - speech, facial expressions, and movements - that are predictable, consistent, and non-judgmental.

How is QTrobot used?

QTrobot is extremely simple and intuitive to use, including by non-specialists. It has a variety of games and routines, alongside programming tools to

build new content which opens up many more possibilities.

Initially QTrobot, or 'Roger' to the pupils, stayed in my office. We introduced him gradually and soon the children were coming to visit and interact with him. Even the older pupils got involved, which surprised us. Since then, he has been visiting classrooms.

Over the summer he will stay with the therapy team so they can develop his potential for supporting their sessions.

What impact has QTrobot had?

He connects with all our pupils - non-verbal children have been responding positively to him and mirroring his movements.

QTrobot creates a third party in the learning experience. He celebrates correct responses and helps children give the right response through verbal and visual prompts. Our staff have observed how his deliberate and precise teaching style helps our pupils progress.

2 | SANDBOX AR



Marie Beale,
Deputy Head,
Whitefield Primary School

“CHILDREN CAN BUILD AND INHABIT THE MOST INCREDIBLE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS”

Aim

To widen students' horizons with augmented reality software.

Why did you choose Sandbox AR?

The Edtech charity LGfL -The National Grid for Learning - invited us to pilot the Sandbox AR free augmented reality 'maker' iPad app. Our pupils come from a range of backgrounds, some with a poverty of experience and Sandbox AR opens up opportunities to explore outside their usual everyday lives.

How is it used?

We've used it primarily in clubs and with groups; our Digital

Leaders Afterschool Club are experimenting with it so they can be champions and share their knowledge with the other children. It's simple, versatile and creative. Using the app and an iPad, the children can build and inhabit the most incredible virtual environments.

It can also be used in conjunction with audio software which the children say is even more immersive.

Next term we'll be using Sandbox AR across the school from our youngest to our oldest learners.

What is the impact?

The app provides experiences our pupils would never

otherwise have - they can walk down the streets of Greek cities, or visit Grandma's house in Little Red Riding Hood. It's wonderful to watch them move around in the virtual worlds, ducking under trees and walking around boulders. It has lots of cross-curricular potential - we've used it to inspire our young authors to write about what they can see and extend their vocabulary. Peer-to-peer learning builds competence and confidence.

The app is free to download and can be used either 1:1 or with groups sharing devices.

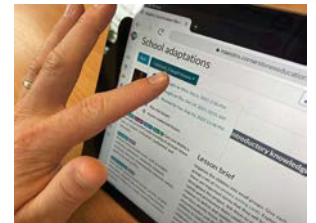
For information and to download visit www.discoveryeducation.co.uk/AR.

TECH TASTERS



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3 | WELBEE



Amanda Buckland-Garnett,
Headteacher,
Collingwood Primary School

“THE RESULTS PROVIDE INSIGHT AND A SPRINGBOARD FOR DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS”

Aim

To monitor and improve staff wellbeing.

Why did you choose Wellbee

The Wellbee staff wellbeing evaluation tool came highly recommended by other schools, as an all-in-one, easy-to-use solution to monitor and improve staff wellbeing. Previously, I spent vast amounts of time creating surveys and collating results - a real challenge. Survey uptake was patchy, with staff reluctant to share their views, so it was impossible to determine whether the results and actions were based on the 'true' picture.

How is it used?

The Wellbee survey guarantees anonymity to my staff with questions based on The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Management Standards. We also took the option to tweak the two open questions to better meet our needs. Wellbee collates the survey results within their online platform, highlighting focus areas and providing a presentation to share with all stakeholders.

The results provide insight and a springboard for discussions and decisions. Using Wellbee Voice, I can continue to hold anonymous conversations with staff throughout the year.

What is the impact?

Wellbee was a great support during the pandemic and highlighted my staff's resilience. The feedback showed pressures were mainly from outside school, so I knew we were on the right track supporting them.

Schools tend to be inward looking, so the survey comparison to other schools helps burst that 'every-school-is-like-this-one' bubble.

We can now identify topics specific to a few people and I can tailor questions and conversations to particular groups. It's quicker and easier to promote discussion, come to a consensus and make decisions.

DO YOUR SAFEGUARDING RECORDS HIT THE MARK?

When Ofsted judges schools to be ‘not effective’, it’s often down to a lack of detail, says James Simoniti

As a former police officer, I have seen at first-hand the importance of good record-keeping. I have attended strategy meetings where a school’s detailed recording of a child’s initial disclosure was vital in the subsequent police investigation. Clear recording of the child’s voice also ensures that they are not repeatedly asked the same questions during an investigation, needlessly re-traumatising them.

Yet record-keeping is not something that is spoken about often enough. After combing through Ofsted inspections reports between 2019 and 2022, where safeguarding was judged as ‘not effective,’ I found inadequate record-keeping was the most common reason listed for these failures.

Why is this such a problem for schools?

Poor record-keeping makes it difficult for schools to track trends in concerns, leaving them in the dark about current threats to their pupils

Unclear records cause confusion

Simply put, poor record keeping can be a barrier to safeguarding children effectively.

Unclear records may leave colleagues confused when trying to understand what has happened with a child. Although you might know a case inside out, you may not always be there to explain it to others. In a similar vein, sharing information with partner

agencies is difficult if the records are not clear. Countless child safeguarding practice reviews highlight the importance of information sharing. Can you really share information well if that information is poorly recorded?

Furthermore, inconsistently kept records may mean that you miss the build-up of minor concerns. Not rigorously

recording ‘nagging doubts’ can lead schools to miss more significant issues lurking below the surface. All staff must be aware of this need to record to ensure consistency.

Poor record-keeping makes it more difficult for schools to track trends in concerns, leaving them in the dark about current threats to their pupils. Effectively categorising concerns allows your school to track patterns among your pupils

and to address them in a robust fashion.

Poor record-keeping can, therefore, put children at risk.

Where schools go wrong

Let’s go back to those Ofsted reports mentioned earlier. Here are some quotes taken from reports where record-keeping was criticised:

- “Pupils’ safeguarding records lack detail and some leaders’ actions are not recorded.”
- “Records lack sufficient detail. They do not include the dates on which things take place.”
- “Leaders have not kept accurate records of the concerns raised about pupils’ welfare...Leaders have not analysed records carefully to spot signs of abuse.”
- “First-hand accounts are not recorded. Although concerns are dealt with satisfactorily, there is a lack of emphasis on the importance of first-hand reporting.”

Common themes include lack of detail and an emphasis on the responsibility of leaders to analyse and address the concerns, recording the actions that they take.

There is also a reminder to record concerns first hand – it is sometimes the case that a staff member raises the concern and then the Designated Safeguarding Lead records it. This risks vital information being missed in the record and would likely be scrutinised in any criminal investigation.

Helpfully, Keeping Children

Safe in Education (tinyurl.com/keepingsafeed) addresses record keeping. Notably, this is within Part One of the guidance, meaning that all staff should be aware of this information.

All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, should be recorded in writing. Information should be kept confidential and stored securely. It is good practice to keep concerns and referrals in a separate child protection file for each child.

Records should include:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- details of how the concern was followed up and resolved

- a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome

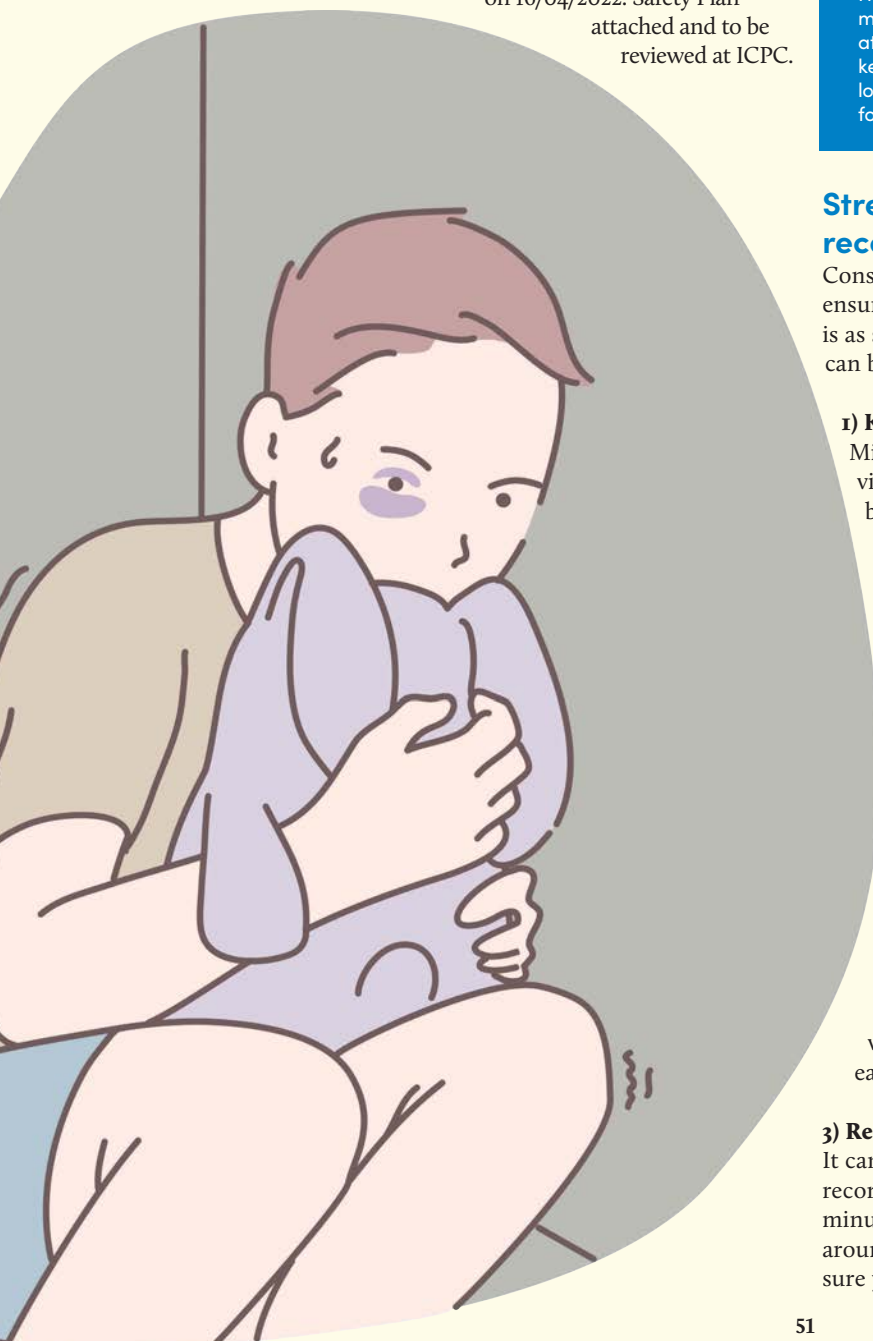
Remember the rule of three – summary / action / outcome. In practice, it might look something like this:

Summary – Class teacher: Joe has come into form time this morning crying. I took him outside and asked him if he was ok. He told me: “Last night my granddad hit me and it really hurt”. I asked him where he was hit and he showed me a large bruise on his upper left arm. I asked him if he was ok and he said “Yes, but please don’t tell

anyone about this because I’m scared.” I reassured him but explained that I would need to tell the DSL to ensure he would be safe. I immediately visited the DSL to explain my concern.

Action – DSL: I am concerned that Joe is suffering significant harm due to the disclosure and injury seen. Referral made to Children’s Social Care. Referral attached. Strategy meeting held. Minutes/notes attached containing information discussed and shared.

Outcome – DSL: S47 threshold met. Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) to be held on 16/04/2022. Safety Plan attached and to be reviewed at ICPC.



SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

One of the best examples of record keeping I have seen was in a primary school in Lincolnshire.

A teacher had overheard two pupils having an unusual conversation about the internet. The record had an extremely detailed summary of the conversation that the teacher had had separately with both pupils and had revealed that she had concerns that one of the pupils was being groomed. It was clear from the entry that the teacher had dealt with the situation in an exemplary manner and immediately flagged this to the DSL.

The DSL contacted the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) the same day and made a referral – all logged and attached to the digital record keeping system. The DSL had logged the concerns they had for the pupil and the information

that had been shared in the subsequent strategy meeting. A clear outcome was also recorded. The police had launched an investigation as a result of the concern, but thankfully found that the child was not being groomed. Advice was provided to the family of the child to support them in using the internet safely.

This was a great example of record keeping. It was crystal clear to me exactly what had transpired, who was involved and what the next steps were. Furthermore, the staff member raising the initial concern had used the child’s exact words, recorded the matter first hand and had responded to the disclosure in an appropriate way.

Record keeping like this is what schools should strive for.

Strengthen your record-keeping

Consider these five ideas to ensure your record keeping is as strong and effective as it can be:

1) Keep it detailed

Minor details may become vital later when you look back. Record in detail to avoid any ambiguity or missed information.

Remember that these records may be looked at by others who will need to know exactly what was going on simply by looking at the record.

2) Remember the rule of three

Summary/action/outcome - stick to this formula when recording concerns. This ensures that you always know what is happening with each concern.

3) Record it ASAP

It can be easy to forget to record concerns or important minutes when you’re rushing around making referrals. Make sure you record them as soon

as you get the chance. Time and date the entry if you are not using a digital system.

4) Use their words

Record exactly what the child said, even if the words they use may mean something very different to what you understand. Also, record what questions you asked them. Recording these will assist any future investigation.

5) Spot check regularly

Spot checking previous safeguarding records is important, especially when you have a range of staff who are updating records. Organise termly spot checks, where records can be reviewed to confirm that all the above is happening. Pick a certain student and try to read their record through a different lens. If a new DSL or another school were to read this record, would the chronology be clear? **HT**



James Simoniti is safeguarding consultant with Judicium Education.

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5 REASONS TO TRY... The Safeguarding Company: Mentor

Accredited training and safeguarding services



30 SECOND BRIEFING

All organisations responsible for keeping children and young people safe must ensure their staff can access high quality training and support, while keeping abreast of the latest safeguarding guidance. Mentor can provide accredited training and specialist support to help you exercise your safeguarding responsibilities.

1 SAFEGUARDING INSET PACK

Our team of safeguarding experts have put together an INSET pack that's perfect for annual all-staff safeguarding training before the new academic year starts. The pack contains a full slide deck, including trainer notes and different case scenarios for both primary and secondary school settings, as well as a 15-question quiz to ensure your staff have correctly digested all the information. With this resource, you will be able to ensure your team is fully safeguarding trained and ready for the new school year.

2 ON-DEMAND AND IN-PERSON TRAINING

Safeguarding leads in England are required to update their safeguarding training at least every two years, while other school staff should receive safeguarding updates at least annually.

Our Mentor services include pay as you go, on-demand safeguarding courses or online tutor-led courses run by one of our professional safeguarding trainers. Our range of accredited courses include training for all staff members, from safeguarding leads to governors, as well as volunteers.

We also offer courses on how to implement the government's Prevent duty and safer recruitment practices, plus introduction and advanced courses.



3 SPECIALIST RESOURCES

We have developed a range of safeguarding resources that can provide practical advice for different areas of safeguarding within your organisation.

Our current resource library includes a comprehensive guide to writing your organisation's safeguarding policy, a glossary of safeguarding terminology, a governor resource, an infographic on how to keep good safeguarding records, advice on handling child abuse disclosures and guidance on supporting the mental health and wellbeing of teenagers. We also have many other resources in the pipeline, including guides



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on low-level concerns and risk assessments.

4 STAY COMPLIANT WITH CURRENT GUIDANCE

It can be challenging keeping up to date with the latest government guidance and safeguarding policy developments when keeping children and young people safe.

With Mentor, you can be assured that all new updates and developments will be shared with you directly. Our team of experts will also share advice on preparing your safeguarding data for inspection by regulatory bodies such as Ofsted and ISI, which will make their judgements based on the latest government guidance.

5 SUPPORT FROM SAFEGUARDING EXPERTS

At the heart of The Safeguarding Company is our team of child protection experts, who have varied backgrounds in social care, education and policing. It's this level of expertise that sets The Safeguarding Company apart from software companies selling safeguarding systems. With our Mentor package, you'll have access to a team of safeguarding experts who are on hand to offer friendly, supportive advice and answer any questions you may have around safeguarding best practice.

KEY POINTS

World-class support and advice from a team of child protection experts who can help develop a deeper and richer understanding of safeguarding

We are developing a secure online community within Mentor, in which you'll be able to connect with other safeguarders and share resources, support and advice

Praise for our accredited training: *"This was one of the best CPD courses I have taken ... Really useful, informative, engaging and relevant"* – Bruna Gushurst-Moore, Worth School

Our comprehensive resource library spans many different areas of safeguarding, from policy document templates, to guides on how to handle emerging safeguarding concerns

“Maybe children will be inspired to become engineers”



Making the most of its location in a nature reserve was the driver for the design of Braywick Court Primary school, says headteacher Gemma Donnelly

Built in a nature reserve in Maidenhead, Berkshire, the one-form entry Braywick Court School was completed in 2019, after staff and pupils spent the previous five years in temporary accommodation and old buildings that belonged to a small closed-down, independent school.

The 210-pupil setting was created to fulfil a need in the local community for more primary school places, and a growing birth-rate. Plans to extend Crossrail to the area, and so attract commuters from London, also featured in the decision to build a school on the site.

Because of the lack of space for playgrounds, the school is comprised of two storeys and recreational balconies for play which have views over the trees and the nature reserve, giving pupils access to outdoor learning from their classrooms.

Clever positioning of the building, and its innovative ‘transparent’ design by ADP Architecture (adp-architecture.com), mean it is not easily visible from the nature reserve until stumbled upon, ensuring that it doesn’t impose on the surroundings.

LIGHT & BRIGHT

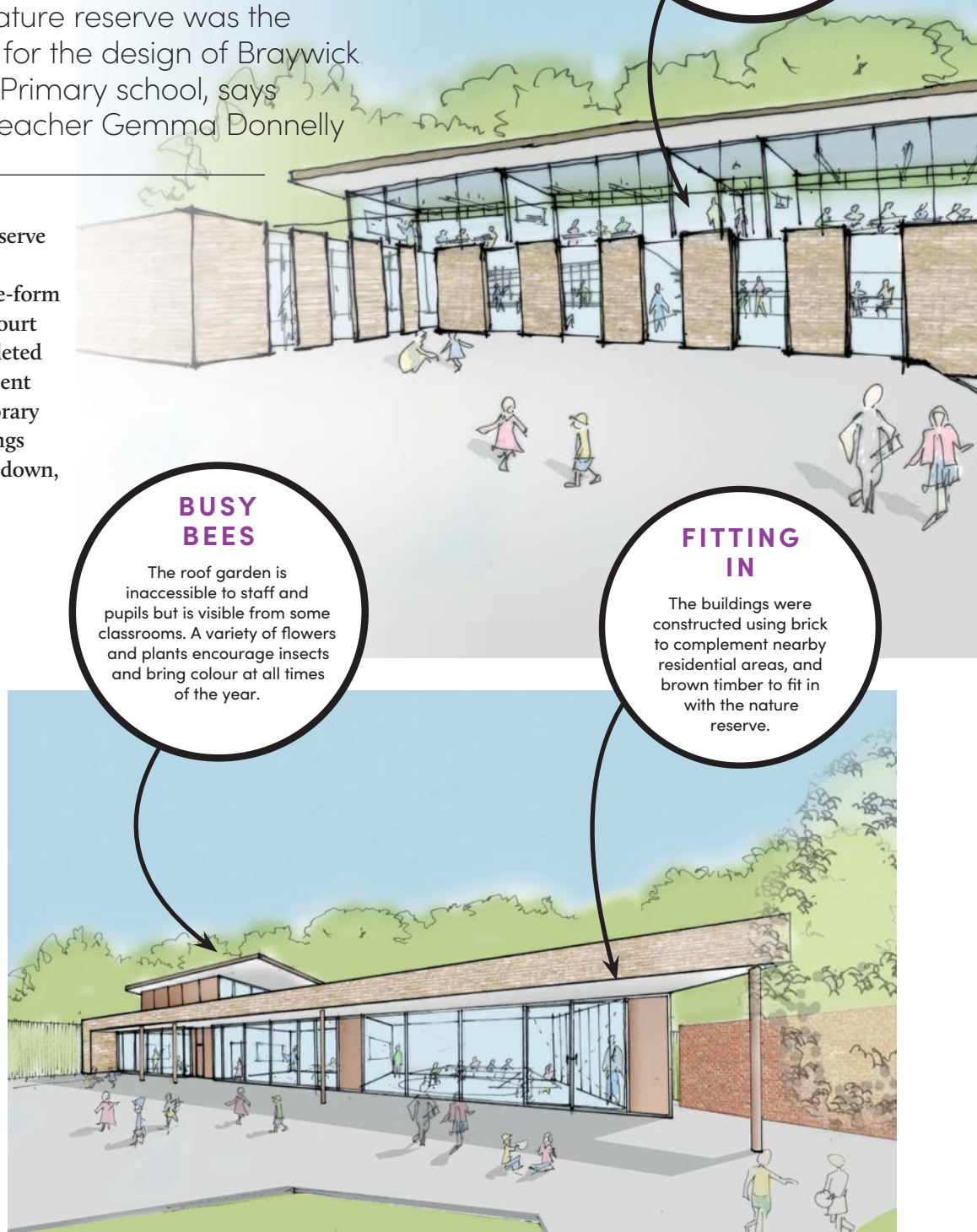
Floor to ceiling windows across the school take advantage of natural light and create an impression of space. Classrooms, whose dimensions are set to legal requirements, appear much bigger than the reality.

BUSY BEES

The roof garden is inaccessible to staff and pupils but is visible from some classrooms. A variety of flowers and plants encourage insects and bring colour at all times of the year.

FITTING IN

The buildings were constructed using brick to complement nearby residential areas, and brown timber to fit in with the nature reserve.



LOVELY VIEWS

Play balconies offer more recreational space for children as the site has limited space. They look out on to the nature reserve and the trees, creating a feeling of being at one with nature.

SUNKEN SPOT

The school hall is sunken by about five metres to meet the specified height restrictions. It is accessible via stairs and a lift and has its own access so it can be hired out and used by the local community.

SOLAR SAVINGS

Solar panels on the roof help to generate electricity for the school and meet the vision of its sustainability ethos, as well as helping to offset the cost of rising energy prices, as the school creates some of its own electricity. What is not used can be sold back to the grid, bringing revenue to the school.

EXTRA SPACE

Two storeys maximise space. One of the conditions of planning was that the height of the school was no bigger than the previous building, so it did not impose on the surroundings.

“THE FLOOR TO CEILING WINDOWS MAKE THE SCHOOL LOOK TRANSPARENT”



Gemma Donnelly reflects on the key features of the design

Q How much input did you have?

I went to every meeting; it took years to get planning approval and for the work to begin. I was involved in the way every window opens, the positioning of rooms, doors and every colour used. It helped having four years in temporary buildings so we learned how the school needed to function. The window in my office looks out onto the pupil toilets, which might not seem very nice, but that is often where the trouble is.

Q What is the best thing about the design?

The floor to ceiling windows make the rooms feel enormous and that is the thing everyone comments on when they visit. They bring in light, but the main reason was to get it through planning so that the school looked transparent and wasn't an eyesore in the nature reserve. We left the ceilings exposed to give the impression of space and make it interesting. Maybe some children, who spent their school life wondering what all those pipes are for, will be inspired to become engineers.

Q Would you change anything about it?

The early years outdoor area needs to be resurfaced as it was made of porous concrete which is with small holes for drainage, but they trap dirt and can be painful if the children fall over.

The staffroom is a whacky L-shape, so it's difficult to make it feel like a welcoming place to gather and have a break. With hindsight we should have designed this differently.

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5 REASONS TO... train as a senior mental health lead

State-funded, DfE-approved training with the Anna Freud Centre



30 SECOND BRIEFING

The Anna Freud Centre offers training for senior mental health leads that is easy to access, fully-funded by the DfE and will provide you with all the knowledge and skills you need to implement a whole-school approach.

1 GOOD MENTAL HEALTH AT THE HEART OF YOUR SCHOOL

As a teacher and school leader, you can do a lot to support the mental health and wellbeing of the children in your care. This course will give you the knowledge and skills to implement a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing, placing good mental health at the core of everything you do. Looking after the mental health and wellbeing of staff at your school matters too. Attendance on this course will provide you with a range of strategies to help you listen to your staff and support their needs.

2 QUALITY ASSURED AND FULLY-FUNDED TRAINING

The Anna Freud Centre Senior Mental Health Lead (SMHL) course has been assured by the Department for Education (DfE). If you work in a state-funded school in England, you can claim a grant of £1,200 from the DfE to attend. The course costs £800 and you can use the remaining grant for supply cover or to fund other activities to support mental health and wellbeing in your school.

3 ACCESS THE COURSE FROM HOME OR SCHOOL

Our SMHL course is accessible



to you wherever you live and work because it is delivered online via Zoom over two full days, with two optional twilight reflection sessions. There are a range of bookable dates available, meaning it is easy for you to find a time that works for you to attend. After the training you will receive both CPD



Find out more:
Book now at
annafreud.org/smhl

certification and membership of our Senior Mental Health Lead Alumni Network. Network members receive regular updates about new resources and opportunities for you, your colleagues, and the children and young people at your school.

4 EXPERT CONTENT

The course includes interactive break-out rooms as well as expert content that has been developed by teachers for teachers. The content has been rigorously evaluated to ensure it is rooted firmly in the best available evidence about what works in terms of mental health and wellbeing in schools. The Anna Freud Centre is a world-leading centre of clinical practice, research, education, and training in the field of children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

5 LEARNING TOGETHER

The course is facilitated by our expert trainers who are all former teachers or clinicians with extensive experience of working in schools. You will join a cohort of school leaders who are all facing similar challenges and you will have lots of opportunity to share experiences and ideas. Feedback from delegates has been amazingly positive. 99% say they would recommend the course to a colleague.

KEY POINTS

The Anna Freud Centre works to transform the mental health of children and families across the UK. We provide evidence-based training to school staff.

Our SMHL course is assured by the DfE and participants can claim a £1,200 grant from the DfE to cover the costs of attending.

Feedback to our course has been very positive: "Really interactive and practical support offered today. Found it exceptionally helpful" (SMHL attendee, Summer 2022).

Implement a whole school approach to promote good mental health and wellbeing. Book your place at annafreud.org/smhl

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The Head's Guide To... **LEADERSHIP**

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Flexi-schooling

Could pupils benefit from a mix of school and home education?



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Making time for yourself in a frantic schedule

WE NEED TO develop diversity in leadership

From lunchtime supervisor to headteacher – now **Reema Reid** supports BAME teachers to achieve their own career ambitions

T

here is a severe lack of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic leaders

in UK education. Data shows that only 7% of primary heads and 9% of secondary heads are BAME leaders and that a further 98% of top academy leaders are white.

My own journey to headship involved many challenges - including institutional racism, glass ceilings, too few role models, and a general disinclination to nurture people of colour into leadership roles. I went from being a meals supervisor and teaching assistant, to becoming a teacher and eventually headteacher. At the start, I didn't have enough self-belief, not least because I was raising four children alone, one of whom had a disability. Despite my enthusiasm, resilience and tenacity, I did not think I could ever truly contribute to education at the level of a teacher and especially not at the leadership level. This lack of self-belief is something that is common in many BAME teachers who find it hard to work

their way up the leadership scale due to the barriers they face.

There are, however, strategies being used to address the 'ethnicity balance' and treatment of BAME people within education. The Department for Education funds and advocates BAME leadership courses to develop resilience and readiness to undertake senior leadership roles. The impact of such courses has been positive and many participants have gone on to secure leadership positions.

Further to this, I have found coaching and mentoring to be extremely empowering. It fills the void of representation and role models that I, and other aspiring leaders of colour, have experienced.

Investing in diversity

I undertook a course called Investing in Diversity that coached BAME teachers seeking promotion. It empowered me and others to build on our existing skills and challenge the status quo. Not only did it prepare us to apply for leadership roles, it supported us in breaking through the glass ceiling.

During this time, I was fortunate enough to work with a fantastic mentor who encouraged me to engage in quality-first continuing professional development, which underpinned my successful journey to headship.

Have an equalities policy

Another strategy that schools should consider is having a clear Equalities Policy that addresses



A lack of self-belief is something that is common in many BAME teachers, who find it hard to work their way up the leadership scale due to the challenges

Reema Reid, headteacher of Hollydale Primary School, Southwark, and Gold Award Winner 2021 of the Pearson National Teaching Awards Headteacher of the Year in a Primary School.

the recruitment/ employment process. This would help BAME leaders to develop, build their confidence and challenge the racial discrimination that is inherent to so many institutions.

During my time as head, I have endeavoured to appoint as many BAME teachers as I could possibly support, because it was that guidance and mentorship that got me to where I am today.

What we do at Hollydale Primary

At Hollydale school, which has at least 70% Black minority



ethnic pupils, we have a diverse leadership team that reflects the school community and encourages other BAME leaders to aspire to senior roles.

We have a coaching scheme for staff that facilitates learning and identifies strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to be the best they can be. This is at the core of what we do to support potential leaders at my school. I have seen the powerful impact of this strategy and many BAME teachers from my school have successfully secured leadership positions. My current assistant head is, like many, a member of staff I have nurtured since she became a newly qualified teacher.

At my school, everyone has a voice – this ensures we have an inclusive workplace for both staff and pupils. Increasing BAME representation within education should be an objective that all schools strive to achieve. However, the focus needs to be on enabling BAME employees to continue and advance their careers and progress into leadership positions.

Our approach is reflected in pupil attitudes, too. Children have said to me: “Miss Reid, I want to be a headteacher like you.” They see what is modelled and that it’s possible to be a teacher, or office manager, or head. It becomes real when you can see yourself in the community that you are in every day.

Stepping into Leadership

In recent years I have worked closely with the Southwark Teaching Alliance, which runs an empowering course called Stepping into Leadership. It aims to “equip ethnic minorities with the leadership skills, personal confidence and professional networks to make a successful application for promotion”, and offers high quality, relevant learning for BAME leaders. Participants receive coaching, mentoring and shadowing opportunities and are rewarded with a wealth of experience.

I am privileged to be a keynote speaker on the course, and to be able to talk about my journey into headship in order to support BAME teachers striving for leadership positions is very rewarding.

I hope that my experiences, and those of colleagues, will encourage others. Barack Obama once said “Yes, we can!”. For me, this meant that I could achieve headship or a senior leadership position through resilience and determination - and that I could overcome the challenges that institutional racism presented.

I hope that, as time goes on, an increasing number of BAME people are promoted to leadership roles within education, proving themselves to be the role models and successful leaders that they deserve, and have the potential, to be. **HT**



STAFF FEEDBACK



DANIELLE GAYLE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF AN ACADEMY TRUST

Four years ago, I was a burned-out teacher who was considering leaving the profession. Reema was the first black headteacher I had come across after being in the teaching profession for eight years. Hearing her story was the first time I was able to open up about my own career journey, as she understood some of my challenges and frustrations. She coached and mentored me on my leadership journey to assistant headteacher.



FATIMA AHMED KS1 PHASE LEADER, DULWICH WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Reema’s coaching has supported me and given me strategies to use for both interviews and beyond. She dedicated time and resources to supporting me and provided model interview questions to prepare me for a pending leadership interview. This led me to undertake the NPQLT leadership course to further my career. I am now a KS1 leader, and I feel so proud.



FARHANA SULTANA ASSISTANT HEAD, HOLLYDALE, SECONDED TO GRANGE PRIMARY

Reema takes a strong interest in her team’s personal journeys and careers, developing each staff member in a sustained process. I started off as a teacher, then became a middle leader, an assistant head and am now seconded as a deputy headteacher. Stories such as mine are not one-offs. Reema’s approach is an engrained culture that ensures all staff are supported to be the best that they can be.

HOW TO HIRE THE PERFECT...

ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

Kindness and a final million dollar question helped **Rebecca Leak** recruit a brilliant new leader

1 MAKING TIME

We planned the process meticulously, making sure we had mapped the complete timeline. This included the deadline for applications and the date for interviews, but we also thought carefully about the day. We wanted the activities to be unrushed with enough time for everyone involved to contribute and reflect. We also reserved times for pre-interview visits as these can be so important in attracting the right candidate. And time was set aside at the end of the day for proper consideration of the applicants.

2 COMMUNICATING VALUES

Every email you send and sentence you write has an impact. When someone enquires about a role, are they getting the right messages about your school? We are getting better in incorporating our values into our communications. We are kind and encouraging in the way we invite candidates to interview; we ask if there is anything we can do to help them through the process.



If we did not appoint you today,
what would we be missing out on?

3 SHOWING INITIATIVE

We were recruiting for a leadership position so we wanted the candidate to contribute to the process. We needed someone with initiative so we considered the ways in which they could show us how they step up, in real time. That is what a normal day in a school calls for, after all. We included a pupil voice session and let them plan and run it. We gave them a short brief but apart from that, it was up to them.

4 EARLY ONBOARDING

The recruitment process can be treated as part of onboarding. As this was a senior leadership position, I knew it was important that I was involved as all our senior leaders, over time, take on a Trust portfolio. It gave me a chance to speak to all the candidates about the Trust. Whoever was recruited would already know what we stand for and about our mission and vision.

5 MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION

I thank a headteacher I worked with for this and it has never failed to come up with the goods. As the final question in the interview, I ask, "If we did not appoint you today, what would we be missing out on?" In executive coaching, the secret is in the questioning and this really is a golden nugget. Ask it at the end. The candidate almost gets caught out and you often get a beautifully honest answer.

6 AFTERWORD

I send a personal note to every candidate that we interview - handwritten and sent by post. Not only in case I need to call them in the future if the selected candidate did not work out (don't burn your bridges!), but it is also my philosophy that we should look after, support and encourage every professional working in our school system. Ultimately children somewhere will benefit, which is what it is all about.



Rebecca Leak (@RebeccaLeak_) is CEO of the South East Alliance Multi-Academy Trust

THE PROBLEM

ONE OF OUR TEACHERS INSISTS ON WEARING STILETTOS. IS THIS APPROPRIATE FOOTWEAR FOR SCHOOL?



M

anaging dress code in a school can be a tricky HR issue, not least because it has implications for health and safety.

As a headteacher, the unpopular decisions I had to make often related to staffing issues that took on a personal aspect, and preferences around self-expression that staff hold dear. None of us likes to be unpopular.

One of these was about what to wear at school. We may like the idea of turning up wearing clothes that define us, but this is something worth unpicking for the sake of continuity, cost and the quality of your provision.

Let's consider the hidden repercussions of the humble shoe. I have to say that before I became a headteacher, I had never heard of a mule or killer heel, and I'd never assessed the open toe. One common misconception is that choosing to wear something that is knowingly impractical could only affect the wearer. This conveniently gives license to each employee to wear what they like. Sounds perfect. No work for you and a happy team, grateful for your blessings.

This is where a lack of clarity can have serious repercussions. The hazards within the school are many. Despite putting everything

possible into place to prevent staff injuries, I've managed quite a number of them over the years.

Consider this. You're sitting in your office and there's a knock at the door to tell you that a colleague has fallen. Inside the classroom, the member of staff is sitting, holding their shoulder, dazed and upset. They are in serious pain and this far exceeds your medical training.

You sensitively enquire about the cause of the injury because you have a duty of care. You also begin to think about whether or not there could be negligence. It's confirmed

that this is a fall on a wet, grass bank/icy car park/lunch hall/staircase.

Looking at their footwear (and now is not the time to say this) you see a flip flip/kitten heel/mule/sandal/stiletto...

As they head off to hospital, you fill in the accident forms.

The diagnosis is not good - three months off with a phased return.

The LA will pay the teacher's wages during their absence but

your insurance does not cover

support staff and so you buy in supply. This means that the total cost of sustaining provision has been doubled one way or another. You will now embark on a process of personal and professional support for the victim. There may be long-term physical consequences as well as legal proceedings. This is deeply unpleasant, very worrying and time consuming.

We have to start by assessing the hazards of the job together, then we can make decisions based entirely on safety. This is hard to argue against, especially if you share these potential consequences with your team. Let's not forget that this also affects you. You will have to lead by example, which may compromise your personal preferences, so let's take a moment to consider the implications if you were to be absent.

We can create a win/win decision from this situation if we can be seen to prioritise the health of our staff and the health of our provision at the same time. We have to accept that some of the hardest decisions we can make as a school leader will be the ones that will be unpopular, so let's not confuse a popular decision with the right one. **HT**



David Rushby is a former headteacher and director of Nautilus Education

SCAFFOLDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR TAs

Support staff want to make an impact – so create a positive working environment for them to thrive, says **Anya Edwards**

The pandemic highlighted how integral support staff are, with 88% of teaching assistants (TAs) in school during lockdowns supporting vulnerable and key worker children. Already very stretched, support staff often managed classes single-handedly, prepared and delivered home learning packs, checked in on families and took children to and from school. Research by UCL, funded by Unison, reported 38% of TAs had been asked to take on increasing and varied responsibilities

Now seems a good time to reflect on how to ensure support staff are supported themselves, and how this contributes to the overall learning environment for the children.

Start by asking

Senior leaders spend a lot of time thinking about how children might learn best, and this is knowledge that can be transferred to supporting your team. A good place to start the conversation is to ask your staff about the training or support they would find useful. For instance, as a teaching assistant, I would have valued a range of input:

- Observations from a senior leader providing constructive feedback about my practice, whilst also gaining a better understanding of the children I was supporting
- Regular check-ins with the teacher and support staff team to understand how we were supporting children, what challenges we faced and what we felt was working well
- Specific training on supporting

neurodivergent children, children with physical disabilities and children with social, emotional and mental health needs.

More broadly it is also worthwhile to ask your support staff what they want to get out of their role, or more specifically, the next term. What are their personal goals and how can you support them to achieve these?

It's possible they have ambitions to move into teaching, or they might be content to remain as learning mentors or teaching assistants, but you won't know unless you ask. You may have a brilliant future teacher among your staff.

Building a learning community

Last year the Education Endowment Foundation updated its Teaching and Learning Toolkit to note that teaching assistants do have an impact on improving children's learning and development. However, the impact they have is inconsistent, and can be difficult to define and quantify:

"...there is good emerging evidence that TAs can provide noticeable improvements to pupil attainment. Here, TAs are working well alongside teachers in providing excellent supplementary learning support. However, importantly, this is happening inconsistently across classrooms and schools."

(Making the best use of teaching assistants, Guidance report, p.6)

This underlines the value in developing support staff to be as effective as possible and for their support to be consistent. Finding the time and budget for CPD is challenging, so use your INSET days. Staff meetings can also be utilised to provide group CPD for all classroom practitioners. Where a member of the support staff team participates in external CPD, can they run a school-based session for the rest of the team



sharing what they've learnt?

A good idea is to build a library of resources on topics that will support the development, understanding and skills of your staff. Share videos, podcasts, books or articles on topics such as how trauma impacts brain development, metacognitive strategies and the impact of intersectionality. Make this library easily accessible and regularly updated, encouraging everyone to contribute to it too.

The power of language

Rethinking the language you use for, and around, your support staff can have a powerful impact on how valued they are and their status within the school community. The University of Cambridge Primary School has renamed its support staff 'Learning Coaches' which is a fantastic example of how a school can empower its workforce. The senior leadership

team also includes a support staff member, and this ensures all voices are heard in discussions about the school's development.

Where a team member participates in external CPD, can they run a session sharing what they've learnt?

Making sure staff feel heard and valued is integral to building and maintaining a positive working and learning environment. Giving space to hear the voices of *all staff*, and changing the language you use to empower others, will have a positive impact on the school culture.

Contributing to teaching and learning outcomes

The partnership between the

teacher and support staff is essential for ensuring both are as impactful as possible.

For senior leaders this means reviewing the ways in which teams communicate and share plans. Do the teacher and support staff just have a quick exchange at the beginning of the day? Or do they have time to look through plans together to discuss the learning?

Support staff spend so much time focused on the children and can often provide invaluable observations and insight into their learning. This input can be incredibly useful for feeding into planning and thinking about effective support, so don't miss out on the possible benefits of these perspectives.

A collaborative community

Building a community where support staff feel confident to contribute to discussions about teaching and learning means they will feel valued and respected. An ethos that is about celebrating and hearing 'many voices' can create an environment where support staff feel comfortable to lead.

As a senior leader it's important to reflect on the role you play in helping to create an open and accepting space where collaboration can flourish. How do you stay connected and ensure all staff feel you are approachable, supportive and constructively honest?

The pandemic has underscored the value of support staff and I hope many senior leaders are rethinking our role. Part of this is ensuring that we instill a culture where everyone feels safe to learn and develop. Researcher and author Professor Brené Brown talks about 'shame resilient classrooms' where something going wrong is seen as an opportunity to learn. It's as relevant to supporting and enabling class teachers and support staff, as it is to pupils. We learn best together. **HT**

NEED RESOURCES? HERE'S A GOOD PLACE TO START

There is a lack of resources and information aimed specifically at support staff, but the following may be helpful:

1 Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)

The EEF has been influential in shaping, and reshaping, attitudes to support staff. Its latest, updated, *Teaching and Learning Toolkit* (October 2021) includes teaching assistants, and finds that TAs add an additional four months of pupil progress over a school year.

As well as the Toolkit, the EEF also produced specific guidance on the best use of teaching assistants – the latest being *Making best use of teaching assistants* (November 2021).

2 Aimme Durning MBE

Aimme is director of inclusion and community at University of Cambridge Primary School, and has featured on the Tapestry/FSF podcast discussing her strategy for using support staff at their school. Articles on Unlocking Research to Power Practice, and Reflecting on The Role of Support Staff can be found online (eyfs.info).

3 Suffolk TA Network

This is a network of more than 200 TAs across the Suffolk area that regularly share useful resources via Twitter ([@SuffolkTAN](https://twitter.com/SuffolkTAN)).

4 UNISON

As the main union for support staff, Unison lobbies government and organisations, such as the EEF, about the value of its members. It also commissions new research such as *'Unsung Heroes – The role of teaching assistants and classroom assistants in keeping schools functioning during lockdown'*, which was undertaken by UCL.



Anya Edwards, is education advisor at Tapestry, the online learning journal, and a former teaching assistant



DEVELOPING BETTER PRACTICES TO SUPPORT LGBTQ+

Al Kingsley advises on how to tackle the rise in discrimination against trans and gay pupils

Despite the legalisation of homosexuality decades ago, discrimination against LGBTQ+ people is still unacceptably common. To a certain extent, LGBTQ+ children are open to bullying in the same way as any other child, but their gender or sexual identity makes them easier to target.

A school's policy on any form of bullying should never start at the point of a child being bullied, nor should the outcome be limited to discipline of the perpetrator. It must include educating children to understand why discrimination is wrong; we must dismantle ways of thinking that reinforce gender dichotomy and heteronormativity.

The Relationships Education, RSE, and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, which made relationships education compulsory in all primary schools, was a step in the right direction. The regulations call on teachers to deliver this with sensitivity and with each individual pupil's circumstances in mind. The regulations state that primary school students should have an appreciation of LGBTQ+ families and that 'differences' - whether in image, preferences or beliefs - should be respected.

While legally parents can choose to remove their child from RSE classes, schools should ideally work closely with parents when planning and delivering these subjects. It's important for parents to know what will be taught so they are prepared to answer any questions appropriately when their child comes home from school.

A teacher's initial response matters

Statistically, the odds are that all classrooms include LGBTQ+ students, although many aren't ready to be open about their sexuality or gender identity. With this in mind, it is likely that a child may approach their teacher as someone in whom to confide.

They should respond as calmly and respectfully as possible. The child may have been worried and spent a lot of time building up to this day, but the fact that they have chosen their teacher means they feel they have a supportive ally. Comments such as 'Are you sure?', 'It's just a phase' or 'I thought so' should be avoided. It's also wrong to rush in with support that may not be wanted or needed.

The first step is to show an appreciation of their courage in coming to tell you and assure them of your respect for their feelings. The next step is to listen, and only offer advice and support if they ask for it.

Should you tell their parents? Schools need to acknowledge that parents are the primary care givers for their children and their role in the development of their children's understanding about relationships is vital.

Therefore, ideally, there should be a partnership between home and school. However, this is something that should be discussed with the child.

Have they told their parents? Do they want their parents to know? This may also be an appropriate time to bring the school counsellor into the conversation.

Educating their classmates

Another important part of a school's support is based on ensuring pupils don't face bullying, and this can only be done by educating other students about anti-LGBTQ+ bias and the broader issues surrounding diversity.

Research from Stonewall found that 42 per cent of LGBTQ+ school pupils have been bullied in

the past year, which is double the number of non-LGBTQ+ pupils (21 per cent). The debate on how LGBTQ+ issues should be treated in schools has become the subject of intense controversy after a primary school in Birmingham faced months of protests from parents.



In terms of introducing lessons on LGBTQ+, the Department for Education leaves this decision up to teachers, depending on when they feel it's appropriate. The recommendation is that it is 'fully integrated into programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a standalone unit or lesson'.

Language

When teaching RSE and specifically LGBTQ+, the use of the correct vocabulary has always been

a challenging conversation for teachers. However, it is important that consistent age-appropriate words are used to ensure students feel comfortable with related discussions. Take care not to use language that makes moral judgements, shames or alienates students.

The odds are that all classrooms include LGBTQ+ students, although many aren't ready to be open about their sexuality or gender identity

Set boundaries around language used in the school, reassure students that any conversations in class will be in general terms and that explicit descriptions are unnecessary and discouraged. It is also important to remind them about respecting everyone's views and feelings and that negative, defamatory comments will not be tolerated.

Answering questions

During any lesson a teacher will inevitably be faced with a lot of questions, so preparation is vital.

If you are familiar with the content you're discussing and know the facts, you will be better placed to professionally and respectfully answer any related questions. A question box placed in a quiet part of the school is a nice way to invite questions from students who are not comfortable asking them in front of the whole class.

Of course, some children will deliberately ask awkward questions. At this point it's important to consider whether they did it deliberately to make others laugh or if it is a valid question. It's best not to be immediately dismissive. Ask them to clarify their question and respond carefully using the correct language. Also consider how much information they want. A primary aged student may not need a long, detailed answer, so give a broad answer to see if that is all they wanted. If they want more details, they will ask.

LGBTQ+ Club

Some schools establish extra-curricular clubs and there should be opportunities here for all students. Consider creating a LGBTQ+ club which can help shape the school approach to inclusivity and gender and sexual identity, as well as providing a forum for peer-to-peer support. **HT**

THE CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media requires a special focus because of the specific challenges it presents.

The increasing use of smartphones and social media offering the opportunity for online bullying from anonymous accounts can follow a child everywhere they go. Sadly, most information communicated electronically is permanent and public, if not reported and removed.

While the use of social media by primary aged children is illegal, the RSE curriculum includes an awareness of the different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult) and how to get help.

Because bullying via social media is less easy for safeguarding leads, teachers and parents to detect, schools need to address their online systems to ensure they are keeping all their students safe.

Given the scale of this challenge and the growing prevalence of the online world, EdTech solutions that provide this support are a must for schools. Most schools will have a sophisticated approach to ensure the appropriate staff can proactively monitor and track issues between pupils, addressing them before they become a major issue. These solutions can provide safety toolkits, which help keep schools' online environment safe at all times – monitoring concerning activity, identifying students at risk and spotting online safety trends.

What's more, these tools can also help inform schools' online safety policies while also meeting the latest safeguarding requirements.

We have a long way to go but a combination of education, online monitoring and safety tools, we can start to steer things back in the right direction.



Al Kingsley is Chair of Hampton Academies Trust and CEO at NetSupport

THE FLEXI FUTURE OF EDUCATION?

Could you offer every child the option of learning from home two days a week? Headteacher Janette Mountford-Lees has been making it work for over 13 years



Society has changed dramatically, and our education system needs to do the same.

The present set up was devised to meet different times. These days, parents are in general better educated, often to degree level and beyond, and want to have a greater influence on their child's education.

They are also often frustrated by the inflexibility of school hours. Parents themselves frequently work to a less iron cast timetable, yet the school day seems to be set in stone.

Rise in home-schooling

The number of families who are choosing home education is increasing. But it doesn't have to be all or nothing: we have proved there can be a middle ground between full-time in-school, and home, education. The answer is flexi-schooling.

At Hollinsclough Church of England Academy we began offering flexi-schooling in 2009. There are numerous reasons why flexi-schooling meets the modern needs of educated working families but, in our case, we didn't actually begin flexi-schooling because there was a gap in provision. At Hollinsclough, necessity was the mother of invention.

During the first term of my headship, we had only five pupils, and were dubbed the smallest school in England. The future looked uncertain.

Fortunately, I was approached by a home-ed family, who enquired into flexible schooling, and this began our journey into experimenting with alternative ways to educate – and to look more deeply into why parents often home educate.

Why parents like home-ed

The reasons, I found, were diverse, with nearly every family having a different perspective.

Broadly, it seemed that reasons were either philosophical - with parents having strong views on approaches to education - or because of the mental health of their children. Some had chosen home education out of desperation, as their children were unhappy at school or unable to cope with long periods in a classroom environment.

We also began talking to home-educators, to find out what they would like from a school. From this we started experimenting with flexi-schooling, offering a menu of subjects that parents could opt in to.

Full speed ahead

I was given some direction from books written by Roland Meighan in the 1960s on flexi-schooling, which were kindly given to me by Peter Humphries, from the organisation Personalised Education Now. I also contacted Peter Traves, the then education lead in Staffordshire, about the idea and the legality of flexi-schooling. He gave me permission to go ahead.

From this, our offer of flexi-schooling developed dramatically. Our tiny school went from five pupils to 50 in just a few years, and, with the

help of my committed team, we developed a curriculum which not only met the needs of parents and their children, but also the National Curriculum and Ofsted. Pupils would come from up to 20 miles away in

Many children cope more easily with the rigours of school life when they attend only for three days

order to 'flexi-school', so great was the need and appetite for such provision.

At first pupils started our school in key stage 2, after they had tried other schools, or had been home educated for various reasons. But younger siblings also began to arrive with them, with some parents choosing flexi-schooling from day one, as five days a week can often be too much for four-year-olds.



Our curriculum

In practice, flexi-schooling isn't so far removed from more usual education. By having three core days we developed a curriculum that covered all essential learning. We also have 'awe and wonder' days, with invited guests or special activities, to inspire the children.

Pupils come into school from Tuesday to Thursday as a minimum – but can come every day if they wish - to ensure that we fulfil curriculum needs, and pupils don't fall behind their peers. On Mondays and Fridays, they have the option

of learning with their parents, and we can provide work to be done on these days. We were able to cover all subjects by concentrating on those that need most teacher intervention on these three core days - such as English, maths, science, history, geography, PHSE and religious education.

Other subjects such as music, drama, computing, art, craft, design and technology, were then taught on a rota system, and also on the non-core days; and we took advantage of special occasions, such as harvest, Easter and Christmas to teach creative skills and drama.

For physical development, we put on a free after school club, and developed

the playground so it had a climbing wall, trim trail and forest school area. We also had a whole school outdoor week which included water sports such as canoeing and raft building.

We offered 'flexi-swimming', meaning that all our parents could take their children for swimming lessons near to where they lived, and school paid for the lessons. In the summer months we provided Forest School lessons.

Viability

Surprisingly for a tiny school in the Staffordshire Moorlands, we began to have enquiries about flexi-schooling from all over the country, and even from abroad. It seemed that we had somewhat accidentally stumbled on a gap in the education system.

Friends from Personalised Education Now started a Facebook 'flexi-schooling' page, which soon had thousands of followers. At Hollinsclough, we began to help other small village schools with falling numbers to set up their own flexi-schooling offer, from as far afield as Erpingham in Norfolk to the Welsh Education board.

Flexi-schooling was not only meeting a modern need, but also helping small rural schools to become more viable.

Outcomes

We have had three Ofsted visits since starting flexi-schooling, all of which were good, and Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) rated us as outstanding. Pupil attainment is broadly average compared with other schools, although the progress pupils make is often better, as many children cope more easily with the rigours of school life when they attend only for three days, and find it less emotionally exhausting.

Flexi-schooling not only meets a gap in our education system, but ensures that pupils are not disadvantaged from not being in school full-time - and often thrive and develop their full potential. [HT](#)

PERSONALISED LEARNING FOR ALL

Our aim was to make school enjoyable, and to encourage pupils to be more interested in school and in education

- We tried to personalise the education we offered. Our mantra was 'stage not age', and with mixed-age classes it was easy to give a pupil work related to their ability rather than their age, without them feeling 'different' in any way

- We celebrated making mistakes; and were enthusiastic about this being an opportunity for us all to develop and discussed how we could learn from each other.

- Additionally, we concentrated on reading ability, employing a teaching assistant whose role it was just to hear the children read, to make reading enjoyable, and ensure that they understood what they read.

- We also spent a lot of time outdoors. One of our staff was Forest School trained, but we also had lots of outdoor equipment, and the most amazing countryside around us. We were lucky that the situation of the school itself, in an area of outstanding beauty, was both restorative and recuperative, and I'm sure that this alone made children with anxieties calmer and more receptive.

- While our main aim was to engage rather than pass tests, this engagement and contentment resulted in our pupils making very good progress. One girl, for instance, came to school hating maths, but later achieved amazing marks in private school entrance exam, and was one of the top candidates. It just proves the point that you don't fatten a pig by weighing it!



Janette Mountford-Lees is head of Hollinsclough Church of England Academy, Buxton

plazoom

Years
1-6

REAL GRAMMAR

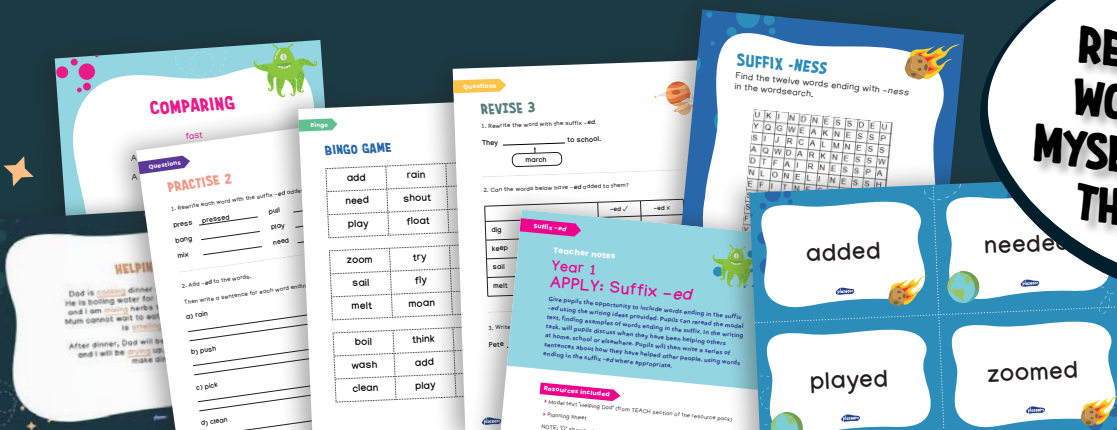


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Alice Griffith, Peppard
CE Primary School



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Can be used flexibly to suit the needs of your class

HELPING DAD

Dad is cooking dinner and I am helping him. He is boiling water for the carrots and peas and I am mixing herbs to go on the chicken. Mum cannot wait to eat it. She said the food is smelling great!

After dinner, Dad will be washing the dishes and I will be drying up. I love helping Dad make dinner.

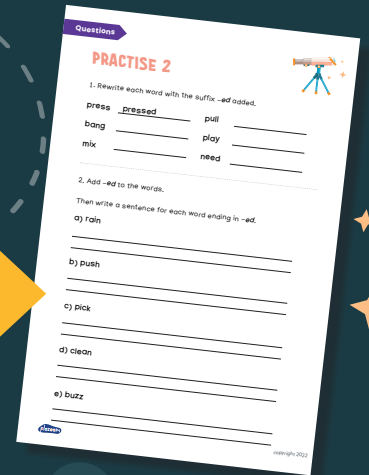
1 TEACH

Comprehensive teaching sequences ensure your pupils grasp every concept and can apply their learning in context



2 PRACTISE

3 differentiated practise activities that can be used flexibly to consolidate learning and identify any gaps or misconceptions



3 REVISIT

A range of games and activities that will ensure your pupils embed their learning



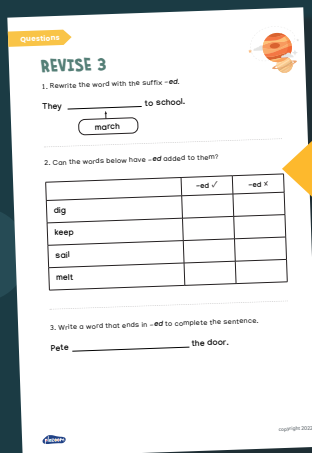
4 APPLY

Extended writing tasks are used to encourage children to identify and apply the skill in context

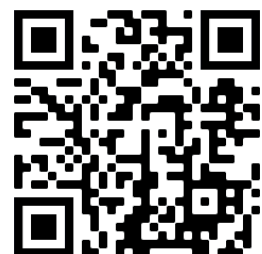


5 REVISE

3 differentiated revision exercises to prepare your pupils for their end of year assessments



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Negative publicity is a real cause of stress

Classroom discipline expert, Sam Strickland, shares three real-life scenarios that can lead to staff struggling with pupil – and parent – conduct

1 An ECT in their second year of teaching is struggling with a particular class. A small pocket of pupils constantly disrupts the lessons, with what is cited by one middle leader as low-level disruption. The school's view is that the ECT should deal with this, using their own toolkit of classroom management strategies, but the staff member is desperate for help

Low-level disruption is one of the trickiest challenges to solve in a classroom, and hard to eradicate. It is a challenging position for any teacher, and issues here suggest that it is time to carefully consider your classroom culture.

Tackling this requires as much thought and consideration as much thought and consideration as the academic curriculum. First, read over the school's behaviour policy,

to make sure you are fully informed about school expectations.

Carefully devise a set of expectations, routines and norms for this particular class. At the start of the next lesson with this group, line the class up outside the room, and invite the pupils in one at a time, telling them where they are going to sit. Once all the pupils are quietly seated, speak to them

openly and honestly about the conduct which is unacceptable, and why, and what your expectations are.

Ensure these expectations are displayed in the classroom so the children can be easily reminded. Then comes the hard part – namely following through on your expectations with absolute consistency.

2 An upper primary pupil has been sent out of class by their teacher for being poorly behaved. Knowing that they will be isolated for the day, the pupil decides to go to the toilets and use their phone - which is against school policy - to call home. They complain to their parents that they are being put into isolation for the day for no actual reason. The parent contacts the school, demanding to speak to the head of year, in what could escalate into a confrontation

This is not an unusual scenario. Often a pupil will pre-empt contact from the school about a behaviour violation, by putting forward a story to their parents first. And until that parental phone call comes through, you may be completely in the dark about what has happened.

Most school reception teams act as a 'firewall' and know not to put parental calls straight through to staff, but rather take a message, with a clear expectation that you will get back to them as soon as possible. Ideally, in this situation, it is advisable to get back to the parent on the same day, once you have thoroughly

investigated the matter.

Firstly, locate the whereabouts of the pupil and put them in an office or room with another member of staff. This boxes off any safeguarding issues for you and the school – you do not want a pupil wandering around unsupervised. Next, speak to the class teacher to ascertain what the pupil was doing and why they were sent out of the classroom. Make notes so you have a clear chronology of events.

Then talk to the pupil. Be clear why you're unhappy about their poor behaviour and the choices they've made in breaking rules of conduct. Talk to them about the

consequences: and you could ask them to write what happened, and what they think about it now that they've had time to reflect on it.

Be clear that the problem was not only that they misbehaved in the lesson, but that they also absconded and made the call – both of which are against the school rules.

Once you have all the information you need, call the parent back. Let them speak first and give them air-time, so they can get their concerns off their chest. This not only shows you are empathetic, but you also avoid being drawn into an argument. Calmly explain what you've



discovered about the situation – the version of events from the teacher and the pupil – and if there is a written account from their child, read it out. Normally, at this stage most parents will understand the whole situation, and realise their child is at fault.



Most reception teams act as a 'firewall' and know not to put parental calls straight through to staff

3 It is the start of the new academic year. A pupil comes into school in the incorrect uniform, wearing a pair of trainers and a pair of black jeans. The pupil is isolated, the parents are notified but are unsupportive and, by the end of that same school day, the school is reported in the local media for its inflexible policies

This needs a response from a senior leader – and preferably the headteacher. They say there is no such thing as bad publicity but this isn't always the case. Negative media reports are a real cause of stress and anxiety for school leaders and can also create a lot of tension among the school community.

Firstly, try not to allow this to sour relationships with parents. Keep in perspective that this is one parent and one pupil. It is worthwhile calling the parent to clarify what the policy is on school uniform, and to establish why their child was not in the correct attire.

Try and be supportive – offer appropriate uniform if there are financial barriers at play but, by the same token, don't weaken your expectations or compromise your policies and approaches. Keep firmly in mind that if you bend the rules for one pupil then you are setting a precedent for all.

The local media usually contacts the school for a statement so the story has balance. You can refuse to comment, which may or may not work to your advantage. If you decide to engage with the journalist, keep your commentary factual. Have a running order of when/how the school has communicated its behavioural, and uniform, expectations and policies to parents, and share this with the media. Do not pass any personal comments or opinions about the parent or pupil.



Sam Strickland is principal of all-through Duston School, in Northampton and author of *"The Behaviour Manual: An Educator's Guidebook"*

KEY POINTS

OUR BEHAVIOUR STRATEGY

A school-wide behaviour policy is a vital part of any school's culture. You must be clear about your expectations and ensure pupils understand the school's collective values:

- Develop a universal approach that every child can achieve, regardless of their age
- Explain rules and expectations in language that is clear and easy for all children to understand, and explain why it has to be this way
- Use role play to promote good behaviour so the children actually see and understand what is expected of them
- Display the expectations clearly in all classrooms, so they serve as a constant reminder and no-one can claim they didn't know
- Pick one element of pupil conduct as a focus each week to help children understand what is expected. This might be around bullying, or the need to show kindness
- Ensure all staff are trained in meeting the demands of explicit behaviour
- Consider opportunities and examples provided by the curriculum to promote positive character traits
- Review regularly how effective the school's current correctional approaches are, and whether any need to be adapted to reflect the needs of staff and pupils
- Involve pupils in the drafting of their school rules on behaviour via a student council or specially-convened group comprising children of all ages
- Consider how praise and rewards complement the school's approach in supporting positive behaviour
- Model and explicitly teach positive behaviour and good manners. Consider whether your expectations go beyond what you would be happy to do yourself.

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NAHT defends and promotes the rights of all school leaders, so together they can create a better education system. Its members include head teachers, deputy and assistant heads, school business leaders, SENCOs, phase and subject leaders, in primary and secondary

education. As a trade union and professional association, NAHT works to support school leaders so they can deliver the high-quality education pupils deserve and make sure their voices are heard. It also provides them with a professional community to drive change. naht.org.uk/joinus

2 GET THE MESSAGE

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6

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8 SAFEGUARDING IN STYLE

Visitor management is an area of great interest to schools, not just because of GDPR but also for safeguarding purposes. Many schools highly recommend idXtra's visitor management system, VisiTapp, which is user-friendly, flexible and affordable. Using VisiTapp, schools can deal with visitors, contractors and supply teachers – keeping track of who is in the building. If the 'big red button' is pressed, a list of everyone on the premises is instantly sent to key members of staff.

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Finding new ways to get parents on board

The Covid shutdown forced Andrew Chadwick's school to get creative with staying in touch with its community

W

e have come a long way since I arrived at Wilsden Primary School five years ago. As in every school, the pandemic hit us badly, forcing us to develop our practices to benefit the children in our care.

Chief among these developments has been a particular area of continued improvement - how to maximise parent and carer engagement. The more that parents and carers are engaged in the education process, the more likely it is that children will succeed, and we felt increasingly conscious that there was more we could do to encourage this involvement.

Like all schools we have encountered pitfalls when it comes to communication with parents and we have spent a great deal of time using a variety of methods, across all sorts of platforms, to ensure all parents are reached, regardless of their varying circumstances.

Being surrounded by a wonderful, supportive community, with parents willing to go the extra mile for their children, we realised it was up to us to push ourselves to make community engagement even better.

With parents willing to go the extra mile for their children, we realised it was up to us to push ourselves to make community engagement even better

Lost letters

Do any schools still rely on paper letters to communicate with families? Our experience was that letters didn't reach parents and reply slips never made it back to school. We were stuck in a grey area of communication, which just wasn't working.

To try to combat this, we dabbled in switching to a text service. It felt like a good idea at first, but we found we were just increasing the amount of information going out, with no result. Parents were receiving several texts a day with various bits of information but these were often missed, misinterpreted or lost, resulting in many feeling frustrated and disconnected from the school.

A eureka moment happened when we introduced our newsletter system, called 'Update', which we disseminated by email, and

uploaded to social media and the website. We also moved all school forms, such as permission slips requiring signatures, to an electronic system. This meant that, as parents signed them online, we had live, real-time updates on responses.

Video messaging

The pandemic forced us to look at more creative ways of working to maintain effective communications. We moved to more interactive versions of

Update, which included video messaging, so that parents and carers could see us. At a time when personal interactions were minimised for public health reasons, we worked on the basis that emotions played a huge part in how people retain information. Research has shown that video content is more accessible and memorable for those watching than other means of engagement.

The incorporation of video conferencing services was a



gamechanger for the school throughout COVID. This included performing a virtual Nativity play, and some parent and carer meetings were moved online, including webinars and Facebook Lives.

A forum for discussion

More recently, we have introduced 'The Parent Forum' – a group of parents who meet with me and other staff, at least half-termly. The members represent our community generally and deliver messages from parents, carers and families on all aspects of school life. We have found this a great way of getting a general consensus from the community.

We have continued many of these practices which have proven a huge success, mainly as they support parents who would otherwise be working when these meetings were taking place.



WHO WE ARE

WHAT'S THE CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL AND ITS COMMUNITY?



Location:

Wilsden Primary School sits in the small village of Wilsden, in west Bradford. It has a wide catchment area, and a diverse roll of just over 300 children. It is by no means a disadvantaged area, with a very small proportion of Pupil Premium children.



Our community:

Our local community is close-knit and it really supports the school, whether it's donations from shops, money, or spare laptops in lockdown. We are currently involved in a Linking Schools Project with a local care home. Wilsden is part of the Focus-Trust, which is based in the North-West of England and West Yorkshire and seeks to provide great schools at the heart of communities where children thrive, achieve and succeed.



Vision:

We aim to provide an engaging and challenging learning environment where children are happy and confidently explore the world around them. We encourage and empower them to challenge the norm and to ask questions, to aim and climb high and, above all else, to shine. To realise this, school life is based around key aims and values including: the happiness of children, families and staff; raising aspirations; the praise and celebration of the achievements of everyone; and cooperation, collaboration and teamwork. As a result, earlier this year, we were awarded the Leading Parent Partnership Award, for a period of three years.

them onboard was vital.

The Update now goes out every Sunday morning, and the stats show that it is viewed a lot - a huge win after all the work that went into finding the right way to engage with families.

It was a testament to our efforts this year when we were commended for our work and awarded with the Leading Parent Partnership Award (LPPA) - a nationally recognised accreditation supporting schools who deliver effective parental engagement. It provides schools with a valuable framework for continued improvement.

LLP commented in their report that Wilsden Primary demonstrated "many strengths" with regard to parent partnership and that its communication methods were reported to be "effective and really embrace and utilise modern technology".

Ultimately, parental engagement is important – we know this. But so is looking after the environment and saving money. The various measures we have put in place, including The Update, have allowed us to tackle all three by saving on paper wastage and the cost of producing the newsletter. With a little trial and tribulation, we have managed to find our groove and positively engage the community as a whole.

The saying "it takes a village" is very pertinent. I believe the involvement of the community contributes to the making of a great school and, ultimately, to improving the success of its students. [HT](#)

Increased participation

Improved communication saw a significant increase in parental involvement across all events, with more parents attending and many volunteering their time. This included breakfast events, such as our 'French breakfast' and assemblies, where they

could celebrate the children's achievements regularly. Parents became happier to speak to the school, and as a result, had more information about their children's learning, enabling them to get more involved.

Some of our biggest events

included Remembrance Day and our Christmas gift drive for the charity CLIC Sargent. Parents banded together for the gift drive at the end of 2021, as they did in 2020 when families donated hundreds of presents to children in local hospitals. The community spirit we felt during this time was truly uplifting and we knew we had started something incredible by engaging with the local community.

Getting into the groove

It is thanks to our office staff that these changes have been possible. They were the ones who experimented with different communication methods, and it was often a pain to keep switching. Getting



Andrew Chadwick is head of Wilsden Primary School, Bradford



RESOURCES 

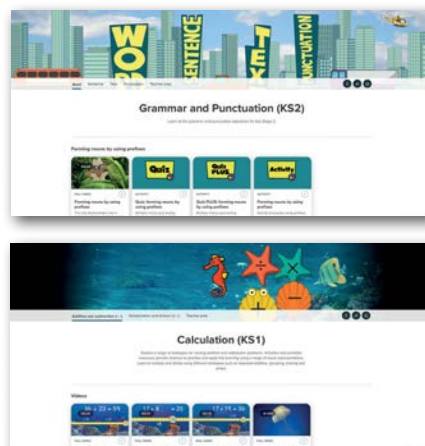
Discovery Education: Espresso

A cross-curricular service that offers a treasury of digital content, tools and materials for creating memorable learning experiences



AT A GLANCE

- Easy to find, save and retrieve content
- Empowers teachers to generate engaging resources creatively and collaboratively
- Flexible quiz tool for assessing understanding
- Blends seamlessly with other educational technology tools



REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES

Everyone likes to offer exciting lessons, packed with memorable experiences. The trouble is, tracking down suitable ones can take forever. Online videos have a nasty habit of disappearing. And even when you do find the perfect thing, can you always remember where it was? Espresso, from Discovery Education, offers a neat solution to these perennial problems. It allows you to select what you need from an extensive bank of carefully curated audio, visual, interactive and text-based resources, conveniently organised by Key Stage and subject. It also promotes a breadth of learning by offering other features such as current events and news bulletins.

Use it to find inspiration for lessons, find new content, and get recommendations based on areas of interest.

For those who have encountered Espresso before, it is well worth taking another look as they have added an impressive range of improvements. The upgraded infrastructure includes enhanced navigation, so that you never fear getting lost. The My Content function allows you to save and organise your work and resources in your own personal space. There is also a Quick List, into

which you can drop things you like as you go along, eliminating the age-old 'Now where did I see that?' dilemma.

The Studio tool allows you to mould resources and activities into engaging lessons or allow pupils to create their own content. The new quiz function enables you to generate interactive assessments in a variety of formats, including embedding them into videos. It is also designed to work with other educational technology packages so you don't have to ditch everything you've done before.

The new student experience, also released this September, includes customisation and personalisation options, better search capabilities and a more intuitive assignments section.

On the face of it, this might seem like a virtual classroom platform. After all, the learning materials you create can easily be assigned to individuals, groups or the whole class remotely. Indeed, it could easily be used that way, should we ever need to resume hybrid lessons.

However, this is primarily being used in the classroom by the thousands of schools that are already enjoying its benefits.

the headteacher

VERDICT

- ✓ Visually appealing and user friendly
- ✓ A treasury of content from video to audio that spans all key stages
- ✓ Well-pitched resources
- ✓ Clever new tools
- ✓ Allows scope for creativity and individuality
- ✓ Promotes collaborative working

UPGRADE IF...

You want your teachers to have easy access to a wealth of engaging teaching resources to enrich lessons

Typical subscription: £7.65 per pupil. discoveryeducation.co.uk/espresso

MATHS



Agata's Outdoor Maths Box

There's no need to restrict your teaching to the classroom

AT A GLANCE

- An outdoors Early Years maths resource for natural play
- A crate full of wonderful mathematical learning possibilities
- A box of natural goodies to engage children in rich and meaningful activities
- Perfect for creative maths exploration, embedding mathematical thinking and developing the understanding of concepts

REVIEW BY JOHN DABELL



We need to offer children a banquet of maths delicacies in different contexts and settings in order to engage and excite their senses. If maths is only taught indoors then children's diet can be bland and beige which is why going outdoors is essential.

Cosy direct offer a range of new products suitable for alfresco learning including their outdoor maths box - a crate of fabulous resources perfect for hands-on exploration and minds-on mathematizing.

In the box you get 120+ items made up of discs, sticks, and different weatherproof boards which can be used in a multitude of ways - from simple counting to maths investigations. They are especially useful when combined with other natural resources such as stones, pebbles, acorns, cones, feathers, seeds, leaves and flowers and more.

For example, the waterproof boards come as a five frame, ten frame and part/whole frame, so are perfect for sorting, counting and making patterns.

The bundle of sticks included can be used to create simple two-dimensional shapes and these can be combined with children drawing their shapes on the chalkboard discs included. Shapes made could be decorated with other natural materials, used to play a shape game, or you could inspire children to create some landscape art installations, a la Andy Goldsworthy.

The sticks can also be used for counting, sorting, measuring, making comparisons, or a game of natural noughts and crosses.

The mini chalk discs are great

stand-alone resources in themselves and can be used as play money, number counters, phonics counters or put to other creative uses.

The maths resources can be used as loose parts for children to move, manipulate, control, and change while they play. They can therefore create anything they can imagine and include found objects and other natural materials in their creations.

The part/whole board is an exciting resource to use because it can help children explore and identify functional and systemic relationships between objects or systems. This board can therefore act as a visual framework for helping children make sense of mathematical and scientific ideas and support their thinking when making connections.

This fabulous maths resource is in its element when being used outdoors, and doing so will help to foster physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. It will also forge a strong connection to nature and encourage lifelong pro-environmental and healthy behaviours.

The items can be incorporated into a range of play experiences which inspire mathematical learning and development and they will inspire lots of rich language related to size, shape, length, weight, space and patterns.

Maths surrounds us, so why not make the most of the natural environment and engage your younger learners in some practical, meaningful activities using this box as a springboard for a variety of maths moments.

the
headteacher

VERDICT

- ✓ Encourages natural connections with the outdoors
- ✓ Adds an exciting sensory element to maths learning
- ✓ Supports individual and group learning
- ✓ Provides rich opportunities for debate, discussion and language building
- ✓ Can be used for loose parts play and exploration
- ✓ Perfect for helping children problem solve, test out ideas and engage with challenge and risk
- ✓ A greener approach to maths and play

UPGRADE IF...

you are looking for ways to promote 'have a go' maths learning outside the classroom using resources with the environment and sustainability at their heart.

Cost: £76.79

www.cosydirect.com

SAFEGUARDING MyConcern



Stay on top of your safeguarding obligations and ensure any worries are promptly addressed with this user-friendly reporting system

AT A GLANCE

- Bespoke safeguarding software for creating customised reports
- Automated chronologies for identifying trends
- Allows for easier inter-agency information sharing
- Up-to-date advice and guidance resources, including templates

REVIEW BY JOHN DABELL



Child protection is a key priority for all schools but one that's become increasingly complicated to manage, as the safeguarding risks to which children are potentially vulnerable have grown over time.

Children spend around 7,800 hours in the care of teachers and other staff. The scale of this responsibility is enormous, and its challenges are complex. Staff are regularly informed that if they see something, they should say something and report it – but how? Schools need to ensure they have robust data and reporting mechanisms in place, so that effective action can be initiated in accordance with existing policies and staff can ensure procedures are being followed, while enabling different agencies to work together.

That's why I unreservedly recommend MyConcern – a Queen's Award-winning secure digital platform created by former police officers, designed to enable staff to easily record, report and manage all safeguarding, wellbeing and pastoral concerns.

The software is brilliantly configured to provide all the expertise school staff will need in one place. As soon as a concern is raised, it's assigned its own unique reference number and a Designated Liaison Person is alerted, thus kick-starting the process of triaging.

Concerns can be grouped under different categories and case owners easily assigned. Users then have the option to view an automated chronology, complete with filtering, redaction and export functions. Separate files can be easily attached to concerns, with all

documents securely stored. A main 'Concerns' dashboard will clearly display any filed, open and new concerns, while a 'Pupil Profiles' function can be made to show aggregated information across all concerns, including body maps, flags and level of need.

MyConcern can provide safeguarding leads with the confidence that they're meeting all statutory, legal and moral obligations. Its reporting tools are second to none, giving you detailed data analysis of the highest order, and the option to present all this data via easy to digest summaries, to help identify trends and deploy resources more effectively.

Crucially, MyConcern will help schools build effective, well-informed safeguarding teams that can respond rapidly when a child appears to be at risk. Accountability processes are baked in, with the platform keeping a thorough audit trail of who, when and what has been involved in any given concern.

Information sharing with external partners is therefore made more accurate, reliable and better able to withstand later scrutiny, allowing you to minimise your own risks and ensure compliance. Even better, any concerns you have can be securely recorded and case-managed on any internet-enabled device, either through a web browser or via the dedicated MyConcern mobile app.

The welfare and wellbeing of children is everyone's business. MyConcern can be a powerful ally to you in helping record and manage essential evidence as part of your whole-school safeguarding procedures.

the
headteacher

VERDICT

- ✓ An ultra-secure platform for recording and addressing safeguarding concerns
- ✓ Robust and sophisticated reporting tools
- ✓ Smartly designed, with an intuitive and easy-to-use interface accessible via multiple devices
- ✓ More accurate and reliable information sharing with external partners
- ✓ Keep an accurate audit trail
- ✓ Secure system, even when using a web browser to enter information
- ✓ Excellent value for money
- ✓ An innovative and outstanding piece

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to easily record and manage any safeguarding concerns, while saving time and facilitating early intervention. This is a powerful system that can materially improve your safeguarding provision.

For more information, visit thesafeguardingcompany.com/myconcern

LITERACY 

Plazoom – Real Grammar

A whole-school grammar resource, packed with plenty of pedagogical punch

AT A GLANCE

- Quality-first grammar lessons furnished with a raft of resources
- Follows a simple five-step structure
- Three levels of differentiation included
- Terminology definitions and modelled examples
- Superb teaching guide

REVIEW BY JOHN DABELL



Recent research suggests that what helps children to develop their writing skills at different points in development, is focusing on teaching approaches such as sentence-combining, strategy instruction and emphasising the processes of writing. For this you need innovative, interactive and expert literacy resources such as those by Plazoom. When grappling with grammar look no further than their new whole-school programme, Real Grammar.

This multimodal and visually-appealing set of resources follows a new approach to teaching grammar to ensure deep learning through meaning, creativity and choice. Real Grammar adopts a very structured approach and is taught as part of the literacy sequence 'teach, practise, revisit, apply, revise', so that learning can be spaced over time. The units have been organised to cover all the grammar and punctuation objectives and each has a specially written model text showing the objective in context.

The 'teach' section provides comprehensive teaching sequences so that pupils are able to get to grips with every concept and can apply their learning in context. There are impressive teaching scripts to follow, with key questions and prompts included for high-quality learning. The 'practise' examples are pitched at three different levels and so they should capture the needs of most pupils, and can be used to consolidate learning and identify any gaps or misconceptions. These sections can be adhered to as part of a classroom literacy

routine, but they can also be used flexibly rather than as a fixed route through grammar terrain.

A range of games and activities are included so that areas can be revisited and embedded. 'Revise' sections include differentiated exercises to help prepare pupils for end-of-year assessments. Embedded within these sections is an outstanding collection of teaching essentials, including detailed notes, editable PowerPoint lessons, model texts, practice worksheets, games, writing prompts, and more, all of which have suggestions for challenge and support, with opportunities to investigate and develop ideas.

The high-quality resources are child-friendly without being childish, age-appropriate and have plenty of pedagogical punch. These are genuinely outstanding materials that are expertly created for making grammar lessons easy.



the headteacher

VERDICT

- ✓ A sure-fire way of helping pupils to generate sentences and get in the groove with grammar
- ✓ Supports children apply their skills across the curriculum
- ✓ Grammar for fun, challenge, interest and creativity
- ✓ Helps to improve listening and comprehension skills
- ✓ Everything you need to introduce, explore and identify each objective in context

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to create cohesion in your grammar provision using effective resources underpinned by a robust teaching sequence so that children can achieve deep grammatical learning.

£4.99/month, cancel anytime plazoom.com



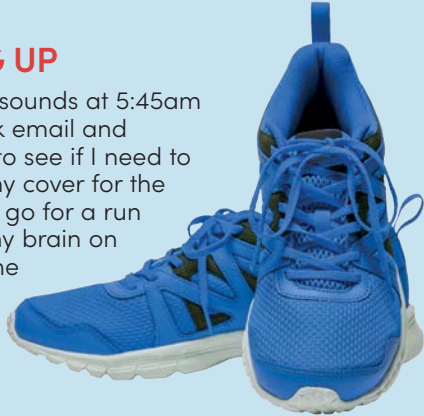
Rebecca Kayll is headteacher at Penketh Primary School, Warrington

A day in the life

A one-day diary from alarm to lights out

WAKING UP

The alarm sounds at 5:45am and I check email and messages to see if I need to arrange any cover for the day. Then I go for a run to switch my brain on and start the day on a positive note!



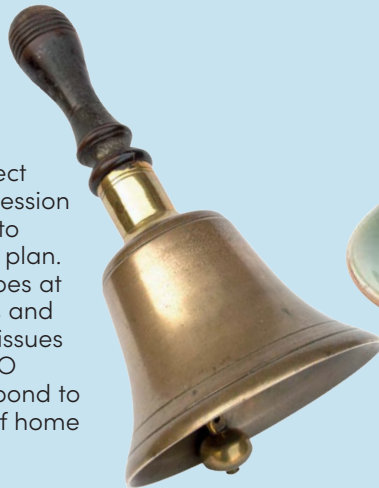
MY MORNING

I arrive at school at 7:30am, have a quick staff meeting at 8.30am to share updates and then welcome the children into school, 'checking in' with those who might need extra support. I work through my schedule, meeting parents and agencies and carrying out learning walks.



MY AFTERNOON

I might have a class assembly, or a meeting with curriculum or subject leads, then it's on to a session with the school council to review their new action plan. When the school bell goes at 3.15pm I'll meet parents and children to discuss any issues before delivering SENCO governor training. I respond to emails before I head off home at 6pm.



LUNCHTIME

A quick scroll through my emails and then it's onto the playground and lunch hall to check on the children and my leadership team colleagues. I grab a quick bite and a coffee to set me up for a busy afternoon.



MY EVENING

After an evening meal with my family, I crack on with report writing. I love reading all the reports teachers have written and how well they know the children's strengths and characters. I round the evening off with some data analysis and preparation for pupil progress meetings.



BEDTIME

If I can't fit in a morning run, I'll head out in the evening and then it's bedtime around 10pm. I might read or listen to a meditation app.

QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

- **Career plan B?** I can't imagine doing anything else as no two days are the same.
- **Must-listen?** Desert Island Discs on BBC Radio 4. I also enjoy the Headspace meditation app.
- **Must-read?** Alex Quigley's Closing the Writing Gap. The book explains seven critical steps to improve children's writing.
- **Twitter hero?** The EEF's Twitter feed @ EducEndowFoundn is a must follow as it helps me keep up to date with the latest research and evidence informed practice. @dylanwilliam is another Twitter hero.

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