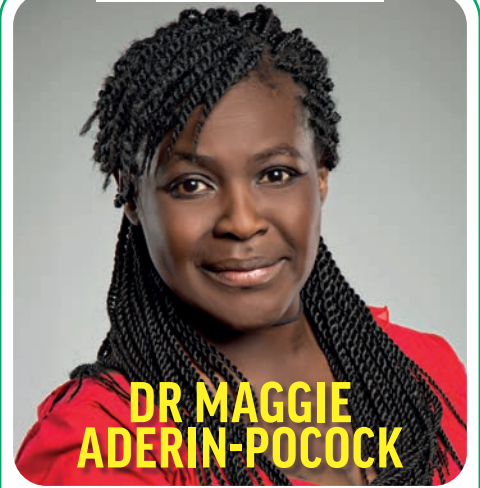


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INTERVIEW



**DR MAGGIE
ADERIN-POCOCK**

"I went to 13 different schools"

BETTER SOONER

When should ECTs think about CPD?

Why Ofsted is broken – and how to fix it

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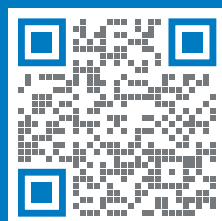


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FROM THE EDITOR

“Welcome...”



How are the dark, wintry days of the academic year’s second term treating you so far? It’s a time of year that can leave us feeling somewhat adrift and demotivated – the festivities and overindulgence of Christmas gone in a flash, replaced by an acute awareness that those restorative summer months are a very, very long way away...

The tradition, of course, is to try and tackle that sense of inertia head-on by making some high-minded New Year’s Resolution with the best of intentions, only to experience the disappointment of failing to make much of a dent in the challenge we’ve set ourselves by early February.

Now, far be it from me to offer the trite suggestion of making a mini-resolution to examine your current CPD arrangements and improve them – but genuinely, now really is a great time to set yourself some specific CPD goals, touch base with colleagues and online acquaintances, and hopefully add another string or two to your bow.

Before you do, though, be sure to check pages 27 to 33 of this issue for some friendly advice on when ECTs should think about commencing their CPD journey, and those ways in which CPD efforts can sometimes fail to deliver in the way we want them to.

It’s not just teachers who could benefit from some self-reflection at the moment, though. With teacher recruitment rates still giving SLTs across the country sleepless nights, Jennifer Hampton examines how other countries have responded to their own recruitment issues, and whether the wider profession in England might be able to learn from their example (page 48).

Elsewhere this issue, Adrian Lyons shares his thoughts on Ofsted’s widely-publicised listening exercises, and queries whether the regulator is taking on board the right messages. With single-word judgements consigned to history and new ‘report cards’ on their way, your school’s next inspection could well be a very different experience to those in years gone by – or potentially business as usual, accompanied by the same old concerns around stress, accountability and public perceptions, albeit dressed up in slightly different packaging...

For all that, though, there will be one reliable bright spot in January, when the annual Bett show rolls into the London ExCel. Our preview coverage of the event commences on page 37, with details of some of the show’s key features and presentations worth looking out for. I should also mention that we’ll be there too, exhibiting at stand SS62 – so if you’re planning on going, why not pop over and say hello?

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser
callum.fauser@theteachco.com

On board this issue:



Meera Chudasama is an English, media and film studies teacher



Michael Power is a PRU headteacher, author and education researcher



Helen Tierney is a freelance music teacher



Martin Matthews is an English, media and drama teacher



Rebecca Leek is a primary and secondary teacher, SENCo, headteacher and MAT CEO



James Saunders is a headteacher

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

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Other countries have teacher recruitment issues too – so what can we learn from them?





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Ofsted has made much of its recent listening exercises, notes Adrian Lyons – but are they taking away the right lessons?

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Give your struggling readers the support they need with Meera Chudasama's engaging literacy activities

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For some students, KS3 drama lessons will entail constant efforts at avoiding the embarrassment of the spotlight – but it doesn't have to be that way, reasons Martin Matthews...

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Music lessons are as much about listening as performing, writes Helen Tierney – so here's how to help your students really open their ears...

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teach
SECONDARY

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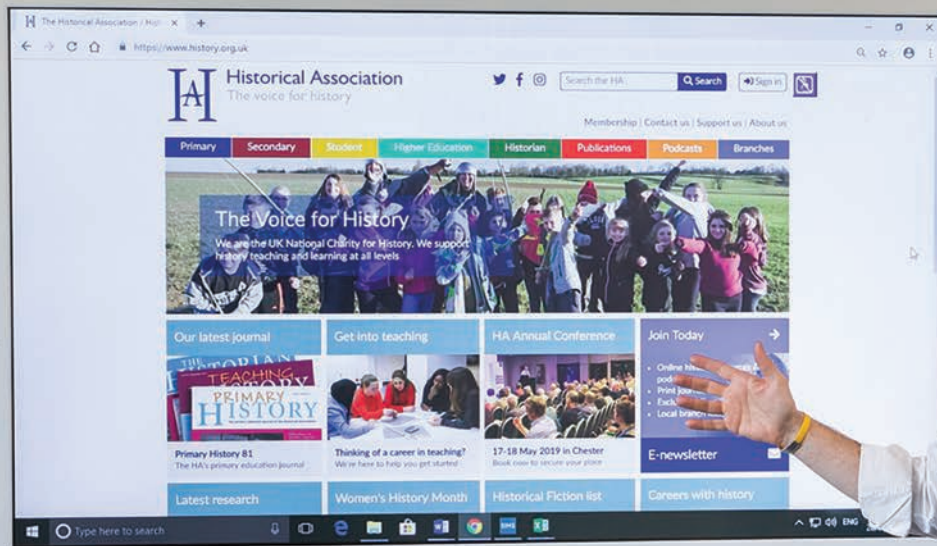
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The newsletter

Teach Secondary's digest of the latest goings-on in the profession...

The UNINFORMED teacher's guide to...

BLUESKY

Following its purchase by a divisive multi-billionaire, abrupt renaming to the gnomic 'X' and – depending on your outlook – descent into untrammelled barbarism / liberation from stifling censorship, it's fair to say that the microblogging platform formerly known as Twitter's been on quite the journey these past few years.

Historically, Twitter/X users have encompassed pretty much anyone with a smartphone and/or presence in the public consciousness, but historically, its most notably active groups have tended to include media insiders, politicians, arty types, academics and educators. Its user base was always small compared to the likes of Facebook, but often wielded lots of cultural capital.

Now hoards of said users are seemingly flocking to the chirpily-named Bluesky – a browser- and app-based microblogging platform that's pretty much a carbon copy of the Twitter/X interface everyone knows, with a few interesting twists – including a function that lets users instantly batch follow or block lists of other users at the tap of a button.

Your own Bluesky experience will obviously depend on who you follow, but on the whole, it feels less ad-heavy and algorithm-y compared to modern day X, and closer in spirit to the freewheeling whimsy of Twitter's early days. It's much quieter too, with lower follower counts all round as a result. But, if you're curious and fancy dipping a toe in its (for now, mostly US-centric) #EduSky conversations, there's no time like the present...



DO SAY

"Anyone here got a good #EduSky starter pack?"

DON'T SAY

"SuCK it up libz lol #maga #based"

BEAT THE BUDGET



Who is it for?
Learners aged 8 to 18

What's on offer?
Access to Adobe editing software and professionally shot media footage produced by Sky, alongside a range of lesson materials for use in the classroom



How might teachers use the resources?

The Edit gives learners the opportunity to create a 30-second film trailer or 90-second TV news package, alongside supporting lessons that cover storytelling, narrative and digital literacy

Where is it available?

skyup.sky/the-edit (Sky Up registration required)

What are we talking about?

The Edit – a free digital challenge themed around media production developed by Sky and Adobe

WHAT THEY SAID

"Youth unemployment went down, school standards improved. That is the record of the Conservative government and it is one we are proud to defend."

Shadow Education Secretary Laura Trott, speaking in the House of Commons

Think of a number...

305,000

children were missing from education in 2023 – a 41% increase since 2017

Source: 'Children Missing from Education' report by the Education Policy Institute

62%

of the 2024/25 ITT recruitment target for secondary subjects has been reached (compared to 48% in 2023/24)

Source: DfE

56%

of the British public are concerned about the safety and maintenance of the UK's school buildings

Source: SFG20 Building Safety Survey 2024

ONE FOR THE WALL

"Hope is telling the truth. Hope is taking action. And hope always comes from the people."

Greta Thunberg



Feeling the pressure

Education Support has published the latest edition of its annual Teacher Wellbeing Index – and the key takeaways would seem to be that a majority of school staff feel stressed, that student behaviour is worsening, and that parental attitudes are becoming more challenging – all while little in the way of support or assistance is provided by public bodies such as CAMHS and the NHS.

Based on a survey of 3,025 education staff around the country, the 'Teacher Wellbeing Index 2024' report states that 78% of all staff feel stressed, and that 77% have experienced physical, psychological or behavioural symptoms due to their work. 57% meanwhile perceive that disruptions in lessons have become more frequent compared to last year, with 70% stating that challenging behaviours from parents and guardians is on the rise.

This year's respondents paint a fairly bleak picture of the public bodies ostensibly there to provide support and assistance. Just 26% felt that CAMHS, the NHS and other such bodies were able to provide 'considerable' or 'some' support; among those regularly working with such organisations as part of their role, 69% felt they provided 'little' or 'no' support.

Education Support's CEO, Sinéad Mc Brearty, commented, "Disturbingly high rates of stress, anxiety, and burnout continue to affect education staff, exacerbated by pupil and parent behaviour, and a lack of support for students from public services. The impact on teachers' mental health is profound... These issues point to deeper societal problems that extend beyond our schools and colleges."

Download the full report via tinyurl.com/ts141-NL1

SAVE THE DATE

SPEECHES AND CORRESPONDENCE

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



THE SPEECH:

[Education Secretary addresses Confederation of School Trusts](#)

WHO? Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education

WHERE? CST Annual Conference 2024, Birmingham ICC

WHEN? 7th November 2024

"Now is the time for bold reform. And let me be clear – the direction of that reform is inclusive mainstream.

That is why we will bring a new focus on improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream education settings. I have been really encouraged to see some great examples of mainstream schools delivering specialist provision and showing what is possible – including through the use of SEN Units and Resourced Provision.

And our actions will go deeper. The Curriculum and Assessment Review will look at the barriers which hold back those with SEND. Early intervention is vital – so there's increased training for early years providers to identify and support children sooner.

We're making progress to support the workforce in mainstream to increase SEND expertise, including through changes to initial teacher training. We will strengthen accountability on mainstream schools to be inclusive, including through Ofsted inspections.

And I'm pleased to announce that we are bringing together leading neurodiversity experts – including those with lived experience – to work closely with my department. They'll help us to understand how to improve inclusivity and expertise in mainstream, in a way that works for neurodivergent children and young people. And they'll work closely with the NHS England ADHD taskforce.

We have to get this right – a comprehensive system of support from birth to age 25."

THE RESPONSE:

[ASCL responds to initial teacher training census](#)



FROM? Pepe Di'Iasio, General Secretary of ASCL

REGARDING? The DfE's publication of its initial teacher training census for 2024/25

WHEN? 5th December 2024

"The problems in recruiting trainee teachers clearly continue to be grave but this is only one of the issues behind teacher shortages across the country. Another is that many teachers leave the profession early in their careers. The only answer to this is a significant improvement in pay and conditions..."

22-24 JANUARY 2025 Bett | 15 MAY 2025 Schools & Academies Show | 27 JUNE 2025 The Northern Education Show

22-24 JANUARY 2025

Bett
ExCeL London
uk.bettshow.com

January will once again see this long-running stalwart of the education calendar set up shop in ExCeL London for three days of keynotes, workshops, meetings and encounters with cutting-edge edtech around the events' extensive exhibition space. With this year marking Bett's 40th anniversary, visitors can expect an even more positive and celebratory air than usual.

15 MAY 2025

Schools & Academies Show
ExCeL London
schoolsandacademiesshow.co.uk

If you're a school leader looking to boost student outcomes while managing costs, you'll find plenty of innovative ideas, informative discussions and inspirational talks taking place at this day-long event, which is set to include an extensive exhibition floor, a packed CPD agenda and opportunities to obtain one-to-one practical advice from representatives of the DfE.

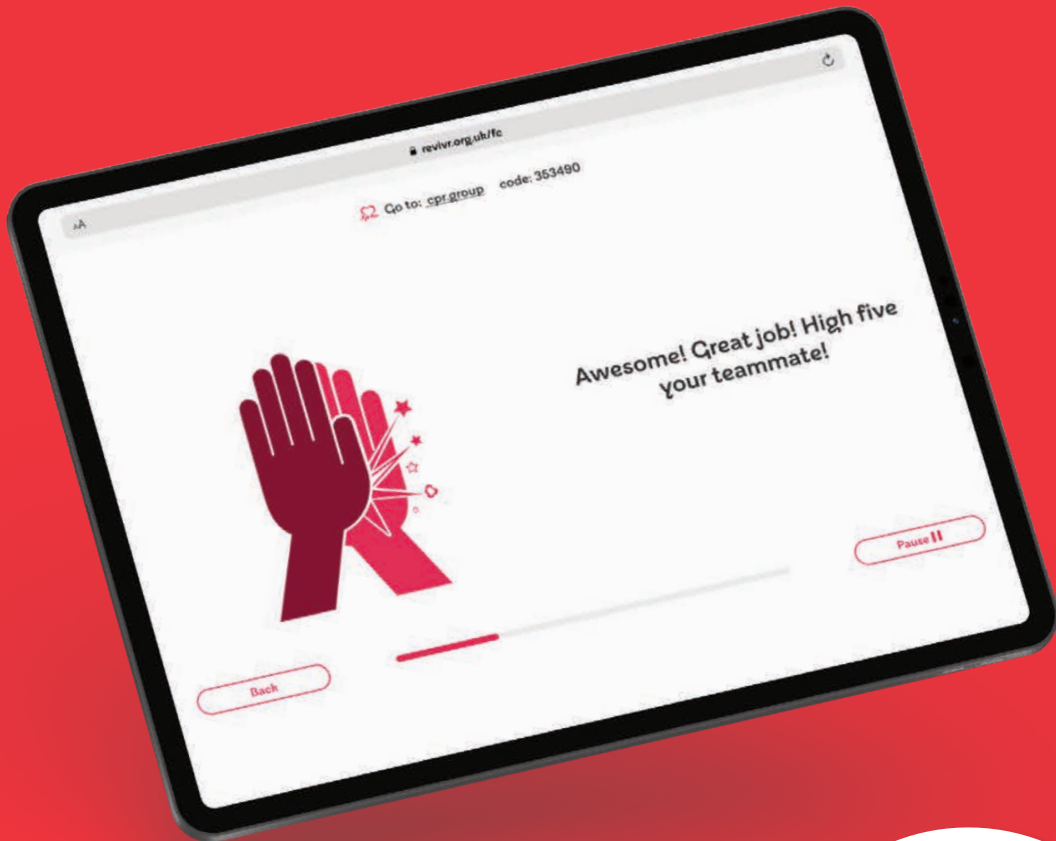
26 JUNE 2025

The Northern Education Show
Bolton Stadium Hotel
northerneducationshow.uk

Free to attend for school leaders, administrative staff and local government representatives, The Northern Education Show will give key education decision-makers the chance to meet directly with educational suppliers, and hear first-hand from government officials about the latest policy trends and developments set to shape the profession.



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To enter scan the QR code or search Classroom RevivR



Terms and conditions: Competition closes 31 January 2025. Open to all teachers in UK schools who teach 11–16 years old. Must use work email address to enter. Terms and conditions apply. British Heart Foundation is a registered charity in England and Wales (225971), Scotland (SC039426) and the Isle of Man (1295). Registered office: Greater London House, 4th Floor, 180 Hampstead Road, London NW1 7AW. *Image for illustration purposes only. Classroom RevivR is funded thanks to employee fundraising from our charity partner, Royal Mail.

TEACHER TALES

True stories from the education chalkface

An inspector calls...

A meeting was in progress, attended by the school's head, members of SLT and an Ofsted inspector - who was there as part of a pre-inspection visit, seated with his back to the window.

It was therefore only the senior staff who witnessed a dramatic classroom evacuation into the grassy area outside the head's office, after (it later emerged) a student released the noxious-smelling contents of a small gas canister while a lesson was in progress.

The window's double glazing fortunately prevented those present from hearing the coughing and spluttering of the classroom evacuees, or indeed smelling the noxious odour in question. The SLT members immediately proceeded to engage the inspector in a protracted and somewhat intense conversation to keep him from

turning round and witnessing the drama unfolding behind him.

Alas, however, he was made all too aware of the situation not long after, when the local Fire Brigade arrived on site with full blues and twos fanfare, to determine what the gas was and duly dispose of the canister safely...

University challenge

I once came upon a heated break time exchange between some Y11s that threatened to descend into violence. I cautiously approached them, only to hear one say to the other, "No, you have to do your *Masters* before you can do your *PhD*!"

Have a memorable true school tale or anecdote of your own? Share the details, and find more amusing stories, at schoolhumour.co.uk

A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

#33 PICTURE THIS

A Few Minutes of Design **PICTURE THIS**

The average annual **chocolate consumption** per person:

Switzerland 8.8kg

Population: 8 million

Germany 8.4kg

Population: 81 million

Russia 7.3kg

Population: 144 million

United Kingdom 6.8kg

Population: 64 million

United States 5.5kg

Population: 319 million

Look at the information on the card below. How could it be understood at a glance?

Using pictures, symbols, shapes, lines and/or colours, as well as words or numbers – or instead of them – make the information clear and quick to understand.



Clarification

A notice concerning our recent Teach Secondary Awards coverage

As part of our recent Teach Secondary Awards coverage, SAM Learning was named the overall winner in the Assessment category for the second consecutive year.

We would like to address a comment in the original publication suggesting SAM Learning carried a 'high cost.'

To clarify, SAM Learning is widely recognised for its cost-effectiveness and exceptional value, offering measurable impact on student outcomes. On average, students achieve two grades better with just 30 minutes of weekly use, with disadvantaged students seeing even greater gains.

SAM Learning is competitively priced relative to similar products, making it an affordable and proven solution for schools seeking to enhance their students' academic achievements and teacher efficiency.

We apologise for any misunderstanding caused by the previous wording, and invite schools to explore why SAM Learning continues to win awards and deliver outstanding results year after year.

For more information, visit samlearning.com or follow [@samlearning](https://twitter.com/samlearning)



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Who's been saying what on the socials of late?

GCSE MACBETH @GCSE_Macbeth

If your students struggle with GCSE English Language because they don't have the wider reading experience and the mental library to draw on, you need to bring that wide reading INTO CLASS in KS3. Breadth over depth at KS3. Shared experience of texts that everyone can draw on.

Marcus Luther @marcusluther.bsky.social

To be very clear, as a teacher I don't want "time-saving AI tools." I want time.

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David Voisin is a head of MFL

DICTIONARY DEEP DIVE

Join **David Voisin** on a rich, and sometimes surprising journey through the points at which literacy, language and vocabulary intersect...

PARDON MY FRENCH

Meaning is sometimes lost in translation, particularly when it comes to feelings and emotions. There aren't any satisfactory synonyms for 'zen' or 'schadenfreude', for example.

French has its fair share of exports to the English lexicon. You may be 'nonchalant' - navigating the vicissitudes of modern life with a carefree attitude. If you have an implacable 'joie de vivre' (joy to be alive), then your 'insouciance' (literacy bereft of worry) may well define you.



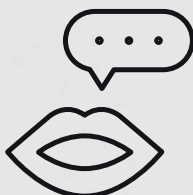
TEACHING TIP: LET'S HAVE A WORD

The 'Word of the Week' is a well-known literacy activity. Some use it enthusiastically, while others will see it as a waste of time. So which is it?

Students are meant to be learning thousands of words during their teenage years. Hypothetically, proficient readers (those who understand at least 98% of the words they read) can encounter dozens of new words within a single chapter of a book - far more than a whole year's worth of 'word of the week' sessions.

Teaching vocabulary, however, is about more than just numbers. Not calling those Tier 2 words 'posh', or 'better' words would be a good start. A more judicious approach would be to teach a lemma (words that are morphologically linked), or lexical fields (words organised around a shared theme or meaning).

The teaching of word structure can often be neglected. A further underexploited variance is the use of MFL translations. For instance, the term 'agitated' is obviously linked to the French 'agiter'. Yet beyond the fact that both words are cognates, the truly interesting thing is that *agiter* means 'to shake' ('agitated' meaning shaken, metaphorically). The French translation for 'agitated' might be 'perturbé' (cf perturbed), thus opening the door to lexical exploration even wider.



LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

In my teens, I remember being impressed by a French classmate's command of English after he'd spent a year in the US. What set him apart wasn't his vocabulary, but his natural use of '...you know?' Those two words gave his speech a sense of fluency, immediately rendering it more organic-sounding.

Fast forward a few years, and the modern equivalent - the discourse particle 'like' - doesn't seem to generate quite the same level of appreciation. Indeed, its rather overenthusiastic use by millennials on reality TV shows has prompted opprobrium and consternation from many viewers. In some schools, it's even been banned altogether. But are we missing a learning opportunity? The word is popular because of its practicality. It is, like¹, really rich. Even if you're not as like²-minded as those younger generations, we must recognise that 'like' is nothing if not versatile. Whether deployed as an adverb (1), adjective (2), preposition (3) or conjunction (4), it has many uses.

Christopher Hitchens once remarked that some were using the word like³ "A crutch and a tic." He had a point. 'Like' is a legitimate player - so long as it oils language, rather than clutter it up. Like⁴ some might say, eloquence stems from lexical choice and self-control. So let's give students the means to employ 'like' parsimoniously.

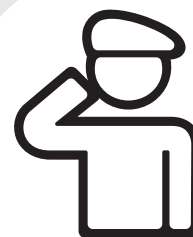
SAME ROOT, DIFFERENT WORDS



Even without my **spectacles**, the visual display looked **spectacular**



Introspection is akin to 'looking inside one's mind'



If you **respect** someone, you hold them in high '**regard**' (French for 'look')

FAMILY *friendly?*

Ian Mitchell sounds a note of caution regarding the relationships education now routinely taught within the country's secondary classrooms...

In recent months, politicians and media commentators have expressed concerns about falling UK birth rates. Between 2022 and 2023, fewer babies were born than at any time since 1977, with the ratio of mothers to infants at 1.44 – the lowest on record (see tiny.cc/ts141-TP1).

In some cases, individuals who chose not to start a family have expressed their regret publicly (see tiny.cc/ts141-TP2), and their self-reproach provides some food for thought. The reasons for falling birth rates are complex, and it's not necessarily wise for policymakers to instantly start pulling policy levers in response to what the statistics seem to indicate.

The decision to start a family is one that most people will typically make within 10 years of leaving school, which is why I believe that children and teens' experiences in secondary school may be a good place to begin the discussion. Schools aren't to blame for falling birth rates, but they do have a responsibility to ensure that children acquire accurate knowledge with which to make later decisions about starting a family.

At the same time, schools need to be very mindful of the implicit messages they may be communicating to impressionable children regarding issues of career and family.

The 'why' and 'when'

With the last Conservative government having introduced a mandatory relationships and sex education curriculum in

September 2020, children are now taught in school about what constitutes a 'healthy' relationship. I would maintain, however, that teachers may be wasting valuable teaching time in trying to define what 'healthy relationships' look like.

“The PSHE curriculum can paint such a bleak picture of human nature, it's little wonder that people are put off starting families”

Pupils are currently taught about the role of the family in creating a stable upbringing for children, and should indeed understand the importance of family stability – yet the existing guidance makes no mention of teaching children about *when* or *why* to start a family.

What's striking here is that we have an area of personal development – starting a family – that the government has chosen to completely omit. I would propose that pastoral tutors ought to, at some stage, have a conversation with pupils – even just informally – about why and when people choose to have children.

Temporal misconceptions

A 2012 Swedish study led by Maria Ekelin found that many high school students were naive to the realities of having children. Overwhelmingly, respondents expressed their intention to start a family,

but held a number of misconceptions surrounding important factors such as fertility and the success rates of IVF.

In short, participants thought that they had more time than they did for marriage and children. Every individual should understand

that starting a family isn't necessarily an option that can be easily accessed indefinitely. IVF treatment, for instance, is expensive and its success largely subject to chance.

Ekelin's participants seemed to think that they could essentially 'pause' having children in order to prioritise their careers. Of course, many people do enjoy pursuing careers before successfully starting families slightly later in life – but there will also be others who simply leave the



decision too late and suffer regret as a result. If we're going to have PSHE lessons, then they should be perhaps confined to verifiable facts that could empower future adults to make more informed decisions.

Moreover, it's clear that at high school age, young people's long-term aspirations rarely extend much beyond their education and career options. To confuse matters further, some parents may assume that teachers are already talking about such issues in the classroom, since teachers have now taken on responsibility for covering sex and relationships education.

A bleak picture

However, what often happens in mandatory PSHE lessons is that teachers are expected to ameliorate the problems caused by the latest moral crisis. Children learn about negative social trends, such as toxic masculinity and abusive relationships. By the age of 18, some children might even have formed the impression that human relationships are inevitably fraught with conflict.

The PSHE curriculum can paint such a bleak picture of human nature that it's perhaps little wonder that people are put off starting families.

Pupils don't express concern in survey feedback that they're not discussing starting a family in PSHE lessons, but then the need for starting such a discussion won't have even occurred to them. So much emphasis is being placed on informing children about what dysfunctional relationships look like, when they would instead be better served with

knowledge that will help them face those inevitable big life decisions.

Even when children do learn about the realities of starting a family, it can sometimes be presented negatively. Anne Fine's 1994 novel *The Flour Babies* depicts a school where pupils foster bags of flour standing in for babies to illustrate the endless responsibilities of parenthood. Many teachers have since imitated this by tasking their own charges with escorting flour bags from lesson to lesson. Childcare, this 'flour babies' exercise seems to imply, is a thankless chore. With birthrate statistics being what they are, it's a message that may have hit home perhaps a little *too* well.

Scrooge's lamention

In contrast, Charles Dickens' widely-taught novel, *A Christmas Carol*, contains the implicit message that having children is central to happiness and fulfilment. When Ebenezer Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Past visit Belle, Scrooge's ex-fiance, they see that she is married with several 'uproarious' children. As Scrooge is left to agonise over what being a father might have been like, his feelings are worsened all the more by his realisation that any redemption will come too late for procreation.

And yet, lesson resources and study guides for *A Christmas Carol* draw little attention to Dickens' evident belief that the presence of children provides meaning and fulfilment. Scrooge's lamentation at not having children, and Belle's joy in her family, provide an opportunity to remind pupils that life is short, and that decisions taken now can have far-reaching consequences.

Additionally, while there are genuine reasons for concern around climate change, schools need to

balance such pessimism with optimism. Yes, humans can cause profound damage to the environment, but they can also preserve and improve it – though the latter point often falls victim to climate alarmism.

It's therefore little wonder that more young people are consciously staying child-free to absolve themselves of guilt for increasing their carbon footprint. As reported by the BBC ([tiny.cc/ts141-TP3](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-61411111)), a 2022 online survey of adults in 11 countries conducted by Nottingham University found that nearly half of the respondents cited 'climate anxiety' as a reason for avoiding, or later regretting not having children.

A sense of perspective

Between having a career and having a child, many are prioritising the former, which in turn increases competitiveness for university places and jobs. Following the government's introduction of educational league tables in 1992, teachers began placing greater emphasis on grade attainment. Students thus found themselves under enormous pressure to perform academically, encouraged as they were to see their worth mainly in terms of academic success.

Teachers, though, can provide children with an important sense of perspective. When a former student becomes, say, a CEO or a doctor, their story will often be (rightly) celebrated on the school's website. In addition to celebrating career achievements, maybe schools could also acknowledge former students and role models who have succeeded as parents. After all, many parents will say that raising children was the most important and valuable thing that they have ever done.

Somewhere in their schooling, it would be good if children get to hear that

IN BRIEF

► WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

The introduction of statutory PSHE in schools has led to children and teens being consistently taught about the risks of adult relationships, with comparatively less focus on the personal and societal benefits of starting a family.

► WHAT'S BEING SAID?

Surveys are appearing to show young people starting families later in life, if at all, often citing career concerns, and sometimes wider societal issues, such as the threats posed by climate change.

► THE TAKEAWAY

While additional factors will be involved, there's an argument to be made that the decline in birthrate observed in recent years could be at least partly attributable to the relative paucity of encouraging messaging directed at young people as to why raising a family can be personally fulfilling and socially advantageous.

message. I understand why many would argue that schools ought stay out of the issue of falling birth rates entirely. Schools are, however, in a position to develop the character and values of children who may one day be grateful for the lesson that staying child-free doesn't necessarily make everyone content.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ian Mitchell has worked as a teacher of English and psychology across both the state and independent sectors



ASK THE EXPERT

Switching on savings

Tim Lee shares his advice for schools and MATs when it comes to energy procurement, making short-term savings and long-term investments

What key energy procurement trends have you observed among schools and MATs in 2024?

Schools naturally want to know what they're going to be paying, so they budget accordingly - but this can be hard to do when markets become volatile. We're increasingly seeing schools wanting to mitigate longer term price risks, which is where flexible energy procurement approaches come in.

Flexible procurement involves purchasing energy on the wholesale markets in multiple segments, prior to the point when it's consumed, thus mitigating the price risks of volatile energy markets. I've found this helps to reassure our school and MAT customers that our experts are closely tracking the markets, and buying their energy at the best times. By comparison, fixed price procurement contracts rely on setting energy costs at a single point in time to control your energy spend, which can amount to a much higher rate over the contract's duration.

There are also challenges around time and resource, which would explain the growing preference among schools and MATs for fully managed services via trusted and compliant frameworks. These help to reduce schools' administrative burden, while giving them access to expert advice and support for handling complex queries.

What simple energy-saving measures can schools enact today to lower their bills?

Practical changes I'd recommend schools make straight away would include aligning heating schedules to match their hours of operation. It's a simple adjustment that avoids heating empty spaces and saves on costs. Also, lowering thermostat settings by just 1°C can cut heating costs by up to 8%. Our customers have successfully done this without compromising on



EXPERT PROFILE

NAME:

Tim Lee

JOB TITLE:

Senior Education Account Manager

AREA OF EXPERTISE:

Energy procurement and sustainability for schools

BEST PART OF MY JOB:

Helping schools find effective ways to save energy and reduce costs while focusing on their educational priorities

their levels of comfort.

Finally, sealing draughts in doors and windows can reduce heat loss by up to 15%. This is a straightforward, low cost step that can have an immediate impact on energy bills.

How can schools quickly identify and reduce their energy wastage?

Once they see the data, many schools and MATs need help spotting energy inefficiencies. Heat maps can highlight unusual energy usage patterns, such as high consumption out of hours during evenings or weekends. Our Bureau Service has helped schools better understand their energy use by providing detailed reports that pinpoint areas where improvements can be made - thus reducing waste and saving money, without any significant upfront investment.

What long-term energy efficiency investments provide the best return for schools and MATs?

Our customers are achieving incredible results by upgrading to LED lighting and installing rooftop solar panels. LED illumination can reduce lighting costs by up to 70%, and lasts much longer than traditional bulbs. Rooftop solar enable schools and MATs to generate their own renewable energy, significantly lowering their electricity bills.

ASK ME ABOUT

- **ENERGY PROCUREMENT** - How schools can navigate complex markets and make informed decisions about their energy contracts
 - **COST SAVINGS** - Practical strategies for reducing energy bills through flexible purchasing and efficiency measures
 - **SUSTAINABILITY** - Implementing solutions like LED lighting and solar panels to reduce carbon emissions and support schools' environmental goals
- educationteam@laserenergy.org.uk | laserenergy.org.uk

A tale of two cities

Daniel Harvey shares his experiences of two school trips – one successful, one less so – to illustrate the importance of good planning and careful execution...

GOOD TRIP THE Y7S VISIT LONDON

To help our Y7s better understand 'British Values' and what the Houses of Parliament are, we planned four trips across the academic year, so that every student had the chance to visit the capital, see inside the Palace of Westminster, walk past Downing Street, take a river cruise down the Thames and see London from the London Eye.

I'd forged links with our local MP at the time, Dame Caroline Spelman, and her office was able to secure us free tickets for a guided tour of the Houses of Parliament. By acting as early as possible, we were able to select from four different dates to help plan our visits, and give every Y7 a chance to see inside Westminster.

Good collaboration with our coach driver, plus some local knowledge enabled us to be dropped off near Downing Street, see where the PM lives and then walk on to Westminster for the tour. The tour lasted around 90 minutes, and remains the best historical guided tour I've ever been on. The tour guides all possessed a wealth of knowledge, yet still managed to tell a unique version of our Parliament's history, meaning no two tours were ever quite the same.

A river cruise addition to our London Eye experience allowed us to provide a full day of history, sightseeing and fun before the coach finally met us by the London Eye for our journey home. Arriving at Westminster for 11am had entailed making an early start, but we'd had a great time. We'd made the most of all the opportunities the location offered, and combined these with our own local knowledge to ensure that the students got to enjoy a full day of history, sights, culture and fun.



BAD TRIP WASTED OPPORTUNITIES IN REYKJAVIK

The worst outcome for a trip where the itinerary has been completed safely and successfully is that everyone sees it as an underwhelming and ultimately boring experience.

Iceland is a great location for geography-themed trips, and for instilling a love of the natural world's awesome power. However, a lack of attention paid to itinerary planning, a poor choice of accommodation, a general absence of local knowledge and lack of challenge to the tour company planner meant that our four days staying in Reykjavik ended up being tediously slow.

Imagine hostel staff asking where you're going that day, explaining you're going whale watching, and being told, with a surprised look, "*Normally, that takes place in six months' time...*" Then picture lengthy coach rides out to the frozen waterfalls and black sand beaches, where we meet other schools staying somewhere much more local, and thus in a far better position to visit more of these natural wonders than we were.

Imagine your headteacher *being on the trip with you*. With her son. Imagine the head then telling you she's just bumped into

someone from the school next door, who happens to have flown there from Birmingham Airport – which surprised her, since she'd been assured by the trip leader (YES, YOU) that there were no flights from Reykjavik to Birmingham (just 10 mins from the school), which was why everyone had met at 3am that morning to catch a morning flight from Heathrow...

This was *such* a missed opportunity, looking back, but it actually helped me. I now regularly support others in ensuring that itineraries for trips abroad are informed by excellent local knowledge, and awareness of the best times to visit and the best places to stay. Itinerary gaps of several hours will place strain on any trip location if there's little to do – so ensure that there's plenty to keep students busy each day and fully engaged.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

5 REASONS TO INTRODUCE... 5 Mandarin Chinese at your school

From boosting your students' employment prospects to broadening their global perspective, there are many good reasons to start teaching Mandarin Chinese



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Mandarin Chinese offers students unparalleled opportunities in business, education, and cultural exchange. With free resources like the UCL IOE's MARS platform to support Mandarin teaching and learning, schools can empower students to stand out academically and gain skills for the future.

1 UNLOCK BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Mandarin Chinese is spoken by over a billion people, making it the most widely spoken language globally. As China continues to be a key player in international trade, understanding Mandarin gives students a competitive edge in the global job market. Careers in fields like business, technology and diplomacy increasingly value bilingual or multilingual individuals. By introducing Mandarin, your school can help students develop a practical skill set that employers seek. As trade between the UK and China continues to grow, Mandarin has become an increasingly valuable skill.



2 HELP STUDENTS AND YOUR SCHOOL STAND OUT

Students who learn Mandarin gain a unique skill that helps them stand out in university and job applications. Mandarin proficiency demonstrates adaptability, resilience and the ability to master a challenging language - qualities highly valued in competitive fields. By offering Mandarin, your school positions itself as a leader in preparing students to be global citizens. This not only enhances your students' futures but also boosts your school's reputation, setting it apart as a forward-thinking institution committed to global education.

3 SUPPORT TO GET STARTED

Supporting Mandarin teaching has never been easier. The UCL IOE's free Mandarin Resources for Schools (MARS) platform provides an extensive repository of high quality materials designed for educators, including lesson plans, activities, and assessments. These resources cater to teachers delivering both the Mandarin Excellence Programme or general Chinese

language instruction.

Additionally, the British Council offers teaching materials, such as Chinese New Year resources, to enrich classroom learning and celebrate cultural traditions. These classroom resources ensure your school can deliver engaging and effective Mandarin lessons with a range of activities.

4 EXPLORE STUDY OPPORTUNITIES IN CHINA

Learning Mandarin can unlock life-changing opportunities for students to study in China. With a wide range of government-sponsored exchange programmes, scholarships and partnerships between UK and Chinese institutions, students can immerse themselves in the culture and develop their language skills, while gaining valuable academic and personal experience. These experiences provide students with a global perspective, enhanced problem-solving abilities and language fluency that will serve them throughout their careers. By introducing Mandarin, your school can enable students to access these exciting international study opportunities.



Mandarin Excellence Programme

This article was produced by the Mandarin Excellence Programme.

Find out more at ci.ioe.ac.uk/mandarin-excellence-programme/

The Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP) is delivered by the IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE) and in partnership with the British Council

5 BOOST STUDENTS' CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Learning Mandarin lets students immerse themselves in one of the world's oldest and most fascinating cultures. Chinese civilization spans over 5,000 years, offering a rich tapestry of traditions - from Confucian philosophy and classical literature, to artforms like calligraphy and Chinese opera.

Learning Mandarin also provides access to contemporary Chinese culture, including music, film and cuisine. Learning Mandarin can be the gateway to developing new cultural understanding and acquiring a more globally-minded perspective.

Highlights

Future business and career opportunities: Equip students with the language skills to thrive in a globally connected economy, with China as a key UK trade partner.

Student success: Mandarin proficiency boosts confidence, future opportunities, and enjoyment in mastering a unique language, helping students stand out academically and professionally.

Global experiences: Mandarin opens doors to academic programmes and learning opportunities in China and enables students to explore one of the world's oldest and most fascinating cultures.

Free teaching resources: Access UCL IOE's MARS platform to support effective, engaging Mandarin instruction in schools.

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5 REASONS TO USE... Academy21 for Enhanced Services

Keep track of where your students are and boost their progress with the help of Academy21



30 SECOND BRIEFING

As the leading online alternative provision specialist, Academy21 is focused on delivering a comprehensive package of enhanced services that equip all learners with the skills and confidence to thrive both academically and in life.

1 TARGETED ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Academy21 provides targeted academic support for Key Stages 3 and 4, focusing on core subjects essential for student progression. Our courses include EAL Support to enhance grammar and fluency, and Literacy Support for students with learning gaps or challenges affecting their spelling, punctuation, grammar or reading skills. We also offer Numeracy Support to improve foundational maths skills, and Maths Support - a more challenging Key Stage 4 course that prepares students for their GCSE exams. All our courses align with the National Curriculum and are led by qualified teachers.

2 WELLBEING FOCUS

Academic progress is just one puzzle piece; our students' wellbeing is just as important. Academy21 offers a range of wellbeing courses for students to take control of their mental health and become happier and healthier individuals. Our courses include anxiety management, social skills, one-to-one counselling and wellbeing mentoring, covering topics such as how to develop a powerful set of wellbeing coping skills, understanding stress symptoms and improving communication and social interactions. Our counselling and mentoring sessions are a safe space for students to share their feelings and receive the support that they need.



Academy 21

Contact:
0800 208 8210
info@academy21.co.uk
academy21.co.uk

3 FLEXIBLE AND TAILORED SCHEDULING

Timely student support is crucial, which is why our courses are open for enrolment all year round. Schools can book our courses at any point in the course cycle, with the option to purchase as few as five sessions, and up to 10 sessions (one session per week). We recommend students attend each session, so they can get the most out of them. Importantly, Academy21

works closely with schools to ensure that the course truly fits students' needs, and is the right solution for them.

4 UNMATCHED EXPERTISE

Our subject-expert teachers are all UK-trained, DBS-checked and bring extensive online teaching experience, ensuring that students receive comprehensive support in their courses. This expertise and experience extends to our SEN team, who are dedicated to building an inclusive learning environment and finding new ways of assisting learners. We have designed our courses with students' needs at the forefront, drawing on the insights and expertise of SEN leaders to provide tailored educational experiences that foster growth and learning for every student.

5 FEEDBACK AND REPORTING

Academy21 provides comprehensive progress reports in Week 10, which detail each student's strengths, areas for improvement and upcoming course content. This information enables schools to accurately and consistently measure progress, while also ensuring students stay motivated. Weekly 'Apply' tasks help to consolidate learning, while assessments taking place in Weeks 3 and 7 offer measurable insights, helping educators make decisions around course adjustments and keep parents informed.

Need to Know

Comprehensive course offerings: Academy21 provides a diverse range of academic and wellbeing courses, including anxiety management, EAL, Literacy and Numeracy support.

Expertise of qualified teachers: All teachers are UK-trained, DBS-checked and experienced in online teaching, ensuring students receive exceptional support tailored to their needs.

Flexible booking options: Schools can enroll students in 5-session to 10-session blocks, allowing for immediate support that adapts to their individual learning requirements.

Detailed feedback and reporting: Progress reports and regular assessments help schools track student performance, celebrate achievements and keep parents informed.

Empower the COPILOTS

Students with dyslexia are being ill-served by assessment systems that overlook their increasingly important skill sets, says **Kate Griggs**

The government's impending review of the National Curriculum and statutory assessment system has come at a critical moment in education – and the world in general.

We're standing on the cusp of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) – a collaborative era in which the work of humans and artificial intelligence will combine to drive productivity and innovation.

As noted in Made By Dyslexia's recent Intelligence 5.0 report (see bit.ly/ts141-D1), to do this successfully humans will need to develop the skills that AI can't replicate, such as critical thinking, problem solving and creativity. The problem is, our education and assessment system isn't currently set up to do this. Instead, it largely measures and treasures those very things that AI is well-suited to.

The traditional view of 'soft skills'

For decades, schools have benchmarked intelligence via a range of traditional standardised tests and measures, using these to grade, select and filter applicants into further education, jobs and other opportunities. For decades, however, these tests have disadvantaged those who excel in creativity, problem solving and other soft skills, rather than rote memorisation and spelling ability.

One group that exemplifies this is dyslexic thinkers, who may struggle in standardised test measures, yet demonstrate exceptional creativity, communication



“We need to recognise that dyslexia comes with valuable thinking skills”

and problem-solving. Only 35% of dyslexics pass GCSE English and Maths, meaning 65% are labelled as ‘failures’. In fact, they possess *exactly* the kind of intelligence our future needs. Yet for these bright dyslexics, not having a pass in English and Maths can block them from pursuing further education.

A new era

Modern-day AI is rapidly reframing the type of thinking critical for success in adulthood. Where AI thinking *aggregates*, dyslexic thinking *innovates*, making AI and dyslexics the perfect copilots.

This is backed up by data from Randstad's latest in-demand skills research, as featured in the Intelligence 5.0 report, which shows how skills such as lateral thinking, complex problem-solving and creativity are among the most in-demand across all sectors, globally.

It's these skills that will be needed to move the world

forward, making it crucial that our schools support their development. As things stand, however, they're not currently measured via traditional assessment processes, nor are they being sufficiently nurtured under the current school system.

Andreas Schleicher, director of education and skills at the OECD, has similarly stressed the need to create education systems capable of fostering the social and emotional skills required to complement the use of AI: “[These] are what make us human in a world of artificial intelligence. Our assessment systems must make the invisible – the creativity, the curiosity, the empathy, the trust, the persistence – visible and tangible for educators.”

That's why Made By Dyslexia has partnered with Virgin to launch the world's first University of Dyslexic Thinking, DyslexicU – a free online platform hosted by the

Open University, designed to teach the world the power and value of dyslexia (and how to think like a dyslexic).

A new school of thought

The government must change and transform the outdated testing methods currently used in education, so that we can measure the intelligence the 5IR world now demands. This new system will need to blend learning tasks with real-time assessment, focusing on problem-solving and creative thinking. Maths and science should be taught as tools for inquiry and innovation – not material for rote memorisation.

We also need to recognise that dyslexia comes with valuable thinking skills, and take steps towards acknowledging how dyslexic thinking is capable of driving innovation in a changing world. Our education system should enable all children and young people to develop the knowledge and skills they'll need to thrive as citizens – in school, in work and throughout the rest of their lives. For us to succeed in this, we need to empower dyslexic thinkers.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kate Griggs is the founder and CEO of the global charity Made By Dyslexia, host of the Lessons in Dyslexic Thinking podcast and the author of the books *Xtraordinary People* (£7.99, Penguin Random House Children's) and *This is Dyslexia* (£9.99, Vermilion); readers can access free training for teachers and parents via tiny.cc/ts141-D2

GCSE (9–1) Maths – the importance of accessibility

by OCR Maths Subject Advisors

In GCSE (9–1) Maths assessments, it's essential all students have every chance to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do. To achieve this, at OCR we ensure our questions are clear and easy for students to understand. In other words, that they are accessible.

An accessible assessment:

- is easy to understand, so students know what they are being asked to do,
- assesses only what it is intended to assess,
- is fair, as far as is reasonably possible, to all students.

We make continual improvements to our question papers and supporting materials to improve their

accessibility. We constantly review new research, listen to your feedback and carry out our own research, to help make sure that no student is disadvantaged by not being able to access questions in our assessments.

We've developed a set of accessibility principles that inform how we write our question papers. They've been written in collaboration with relevant organisations such as BATOD (British Association of Teachers of the Deaf) and Colour Blind Awareness. You can read more about them in our GCSE (9–1) Maths 'Exploring our question papers' guide available from ocr.org.uk/gcsemaths, but several examples are below.

2 The diagram shows two straight lines crossing a pair of parallel lines.

Not to scale

(a) Write down the value of a .
Give a reason for your answer.

$a = \dots\dots\dots$ because $\dots\dots\dots$ [2]

(b) Work out the value of b .

(b) $b = \dots\dots\dots$ [3]

Annotations:

- Arial font is easy to read, making it quick to process.** (points to the question text)
- We read from left to right, so text is left aligned to help students spot and read given information.** (points to the question text)
- Key words and phrases are highlighted in bold.** (points to 'parallel lines' and 'Not to scale')
- Each instruction is on a new line. This allows the reader to clearly see what the question is asking.** (points to the question instructions)
- Sentence prompts are included within answer lines, to help students understand what is required and to structure their answer.** (points to the answer lines)
- Sentences are short and direct, using clear and familiar words. This reduces cognitive load, so students can focus on the topic being assessed.** (points to the question instructions)

Image: J560/05 summer 2023

You can view our past papers at ocr.org.uk/gcsemaths, or to see the most recent papers speak to your exams officer about setting up a Teach Cambridge account.

To discover more about our GCSE (9–1) Maths qualification, go to teach.ocr.org.uk/gcse-maths-for-all

WHAT I LEARNT AT SCHOOL

Dame Maggie Aderin-Pocock MBE on how her schooling was affected by constant change, undiagnosed dyslexia and a fierce determination to explore the mysteries of the cosmos...

What kind of student were you at school?

I went to 13 different schools. I do lots of school visits now where I speak to kids, and when I tell them that, they look at me and ask, 'How naughty were you?' It was actually due to my parents breaking up when I was quite young, so I was sometimes with my mum and sometimes with my dad, and some of schools unfortunately just closed.

I was quite disengaged with school at first. I have dyslexia – which I now see as my superpower – but I wasn't diagnosed until I was in my 40s, so I found reading and writing quite hard, and was generally put in what used to be called the 'remedial' classes.

I felt that school didn't like me and that I didn't like school – but I'd always had these dreams of becoming a space scientist, and finally decided to take advantage of changing schools again by trying really hard to get into the upper streams. For my last four years of schooling I was incredibly studious, barely even watching TV at home.

What impact did changing schools so often have on your social experiences of school?

13 schools works out as almost a new school for each year of my education. My way of dealing with all the chopping



and changing was to become the school clown – I used to love speech and drama.

I did make good friends, but often I'd have joined another school by the following year. I soon learned how to fit in quite rapidly, having become so used to frequent change.

To me, the primary/secondary transition was just a case of me moving to another school. I don't remember thinking 'Oh, this is secondary, 'big school' now,' or anything like that. It was just, 'Oh, here's another change.'

How did your interest in space first develop?

I can't remember a time when I wasn't interested in space. I

was born in 1968, so I don't remember the moon landings themselves, but I do remember the massive impact they had. Right from the get-go, I was fascinated with them, which was enhanced by watching things like *The Clangers*, and later *Star Trek*. That was big for me, especially Lt. Uhura. She was my role model. I wanted to follow in her footsteps by one day setting foot on the Starship *Enterprise*.

Who were your most memorable teachers?

I had a teacher called Colonel Andrews, who was ex-military and taught us what was then general science. We'd do

things like go out and use jam jars to collect marsh gas from a nearby pond and then set fire to it. Health and safety concerns might prevent that now, but it's those kind of hands-on experiments – dissecting a frog, making concoctions in chemistry – that really capture the imagination.

What are your general impressions of the ways in which science is now typically taught in schools?

I think there's been a tendency towards pulling back from those hands-on experiments and experiences, which is unfortunate. I'd far rather see that ramped up, because it's what people remember most from their science lessons, and what really helps to reinforce the theory that students learn.

Do you feel that enough progress been made in giving girls the freedom and encouragement to study physics, should they wish to?

I think things are improving, but too slowly. I've met girls who tell me themselves, 'Girls don't do physics'. When looking around their classroom, I'll notice that these girls will have been seeing posters of 'the great and the good' of physics – Newton, Einstein, sometimes even Professor Beaker from *The Muppets* – but not one female physicist.

We need to highlight more fantastic role models – women from the past and present who have done amazing things in physics and STEM more generally. We're getting there in terms of breaking those stereotypes, but we could be getting there faster.

Dame Maggie Aderin-Pocock MBE is a space scientist, having worked on the Gemini South telescope in Chile and the Aeolus Earth observation satellite among other projects, and a science educator, regularly visiting schools around the country. She is also an ambassador for the support organisation Made By Dyslexia, co-presenter of the BBC show *The Sky at Night* and presents content for BBC Bitesize, including a series of 10 GCSE science videos due to launch later this month – see bbc.co.uk/bitesize for more details

HOMework

as a motivator

Homework can be a frequent flashpoint in the relationships between teachers and students – but as **Jovita M. Castelino** observes, when approached thoughtfully, it can be a powerful tool for spurring students on

Rani loves playing the violin. She goes to violin lessons, practises regularly and plays in concerts, all of which take up a lot of her time outside of school.

In school, Rani struggles in science. In lessons, she feels lost most of the time, and on those occasions when she has an answer to share, her teacher will regretfully inform her that it isn't quite right. Her assessment scores are – in her own words – deplorable.

When it comes to her science homework, she rarely bothers. She simply doesn't have the time, nor the motivation, to complete a booklet of exam questions each week.

The motivation continuum

As teachers, we expect rather a lot of our students when we set them homework. We want them to plan their time well, remove distractions, attend to the task at hand and then immediately switch their focus to the next task on their list. That can be a tall order for anyone, but especially for students who lack motivation.

This motivation exists on a continuum, however. The same student can be highly motivated in one lesson but demotivated in another, or even during lessons on the same subject on different days. In a classroom,

teachers can guide and support students to focus their attention by employing a range of dynamic classroom strategies. It's less clear what teachers can do when students are working on their homework, away from such supports.

As counter-intuitive as it sounds, though, well-designed homework can actually serve to motivate students. When this happens, students start to feel more competent and begin building important life-long study habits.

To illustrate this, let us look at Rani's friend, Simran. Simran plays

time her teacher explains a tricky concept, Simran isn't clueless, because now she has some of the prior knowledge required to learn the new content.

Consistent routines

It can sometimes seem like motivating all students is an unattainable goal. In the past, teachers would be told that in order to motivate their students, they needed to make their lessons engaging and their homework 'fun'. There is, however, a considerable amount of research which tells us that motivation can be generated – or at the very

disproportionately short period of time in which to accomplish it? Now, imagine that this person has assigned you a series of different tasks, but done so sporadically, making it impossible for you to predict when the next task will be coming your way.

When this has happened to me I've felt stressed, as though I have little control over my own time and workload – despite me knowing for a fact that I was good at my job.

How, then, must it feel for students who don't see themselves succeeding at a

“Education isn't just about getting good grades and the attaining the highest marks; it's also about getting students to see the value in learning”

football and trains three times per week. Like Rani, she also struggles in science and finds the concepts quite tricky. But Simran makes time for her homework, because it's in a format she recognises, and includes some questions she has previously encountered in class. The result is that Simran feels more successful in the classroom; the next

least, influenced – through several key factors: consistent routines; a feeling of success; a sense of achievement and belonging; and perceived value of the task.

All of these factors apply to homework. Has anyone ever given you a task, told you how important it was, and then given you a



task? If we expect our students to organise their time well, then we need to make the process of completing homework, and our expectations of them in terms of time and deadlines, as straightforward, simple and reasonable as possible.

This can be partly achieved by establishing consistent routines. Setting homework on the same day each week is an excellent way of helping students predict when they will be receiving homework, and giving them a chance to plan their time accordingly.

Feelings of success

Once students know when to expect homework, the next step towards helping them feel motivated is to ensure that they can see themselves being successful, and achieving well in the homework they've been set.

That's not to say that their homework has to be easy. Homework that's too hard, to the point of being unachievable for a student is clearly bad – but the same can also be said of homework that's so easy it can be completed almost effortlessly, without much thought. Effort, in terms of the thought needing to be put into the task, can be an important lever for attaining success.

Teachers are the best judges of how much challenge should be presented by the work they set. Information gathered in lessons can usefully inform the homework that's later developed and given to students.

One key aspect of effective homework is the extent to which it's directly linked to the learning taking place in the classroom. This also applies to the level of challenge the homework provides, in that it needs to match the level of challenge that your students

are engaging with in the classroom.

Belonging and value

If someone had told me at the start of my teaching career that homework could help students feel a sense belonging in the classroom, and encourage them to value their learning more, I'd have looked at them dubiously. Yet this is precisely what effective homework can achieve. A student who...

- Knows when to expect homework
- Can see that their homework is designed to help them retain new knowledge
- Recognises the format and content of certain questions, having previously tackled them in class

...will feel that they can confidently contribute to lessons. Not just when answering questions, but also when thinking about and participating in the learning that's taking place. This is powerful.

Education isn't just about getting good grades and the attaining the highest marks; it's also about getting students to see the value in learning, so that they can carry robust independent study skills with them into the future.

As teachers, our duty is to think carefully about the homework we set, so that our students can develop confidence when learning about our subject, build important habits and achieve more. An important part of achieving this is to establish a strong culture of integrity and respect for learning. When both students and their guiding voices

“MISS, WHY DO WE GET HOMEWORK...?”

With sufficient thought put into it, homework can provide...

- ▶ Teachers with invaluable data about their students, study habits and levels of focus
- ▶ Students with opportunities to solidify and add to their foundational knowledge across multiple subjects
- ▶ A way for students to build their confidence, practise their ability to focus, and develop reliable study habits and motivational techniques that will serve them well into adulthood
- ▶ Schools with a positive culture of self-managed learning and improvement

at home are able to recognise the value of independent study, homework can become one of the most important drivers of student motivation.

To that end, one of the simplest things that any teacher can do is to value and talk about homework they assign with the same level of passion as they would with respect to their classroom teaching. Because the two are inherently connected.



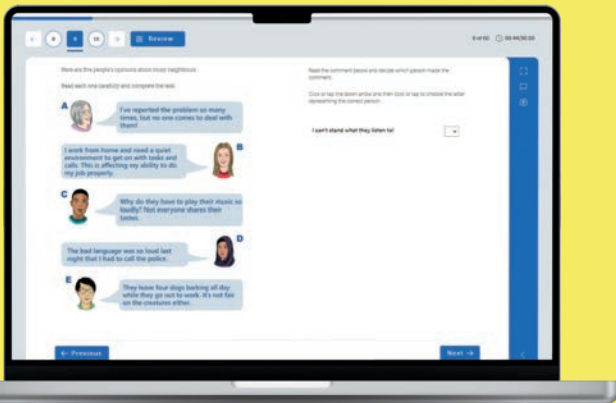
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jovita M. Castelino is a teacher with a special interest in applying cognitive science principles to teaching to maximise student learning; her book, *The Homework Conundrum*, is available now (£16.99, Routledge)



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If we want to know why attitudes towards mental health seem to be regressing, we could start by looking at how vital support services have been denuded of resources, and how the complexity of mental health conditions have been deliberately downplayed

Natasha Devon

Most of my week is spent visiting schools and colleges, delivering workshops and conducting research on mental health. On Saturdays, however, I host a show on LBC, one of the UK's most popular speech radio stations.

Every show, without fail, at least one caller drops a truth bomb so profound, I carry it with me during the week ahead. One such moment recently occurred when we were responding to the findings of MIND's latest Attitudes to Mental Illness survey (see tiny.cc/ts141-ND1). The survey revealed – tragically, yet unsurprisingly – that stigma, mental health related-knowledge and intended behaviour towards people with mental health problems have regressed to 2009 levels.

Divide and conquer

I have my own theory as to why this has happened. During the previous Conservative administration, high profile politicians, as well as much of the Tory-supporting media, had been heavily implying (if not overtly stating) that mental health awareness had 'gone too far'. There appeared to be concerted efforts at linking mental ill health to unemployment, and widely repeated suggestions that most people unable to work were opting for a certain 'lifestyle' choice.

In a classic 'divide and conquer' move, the implied messages conveyed by all this activity were '*It's really easy to get a mental health or neurodivergence diagnosis*' (it isn't), '*Sickness payments from the welfare state are incredibly generous*' (they aren't), and '*People not working are getting something that you, the incredibly hard-working taxpayer, should feel resentful about*' (you shouldn't).

I also believe that the rise in mental health stigma may have something to do with the enduring lack of specificity most of us deploy when discussing

mental health issues. I frequently hear teachers tell me, '*[This pupil] says they have exam stress, but it's normal to be stressed about exams! They just have to deal with it!*'

The first part of that statement is obviously true. The second requires further analysis. 'Exam stress' isn't a diagnosable mental illness comparable to clinical depression or an anxiety disorder – but that's not to say that it doesn't merit the offer of some additional support.

'Overly dramatic'

As with 'physical health', the term 'mental health' covers an enormous number of conditions. There are the mental health equivalents of sustaining a bruise or catching a cold – and then there are the equivalents of breaking a leg, or being diagnosed with cancer. Each will require very different responses. Also similar to physical health symptoms is the way in which mental health issues can worsen over time if left unattended.

A mental health issue like exam stress might require the psychological equivalent of a plaster and some antiseptic cream, but that doesn't

render it completely unimportant. Our classifications shouldn't be restricted to just '*Things that we refer to clinical services*' and '*Things we can afford to simply ignore*'.

My caller, however, had a different take. "*We went through those years of people being quite empathetic,*" she said, "*but I see society as the equivalent of that friend who creates a fake state of it being okay to talk about how you feel, but once you have, says you're being 'overly dramatic'*"

I asked if one could paraphrase what she was saying in the following way: *The next logical step, after awareness-raising, is for us to change how we do things, and whilst most people are prepared to be sympathetic, very few will inconvenience themselves in reality.* She agreed.

A lack of tools

This is, of course, quite a negative take on how individual human beings behave. Many of us want to be helpful, but are hampered by a lack of suitable tools. School staff will often require support from community services, in order to have a sufficiently comprehensive mental health support system in place for pupils.

Yet the fact remains that CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) are incredibly stretched. Educational psychologists were all but dispensed with entirely under austerity measures imposed after 2010, as were other important resources that previously enabled schools to holistically support their young people.

Recognising how little practical help we might be able to provide or facilitate can lead us to become (understandably) overwhelmed. But shutting down the conversation in response to that overwhelm won't make the problem disappear. In fact, as MIND's survey shows, it only makes it worse.



Natasha Devon is a writer, broadcaster and campaigner on issues relating to education and mental health; to find out more, visit natashadevон.com or follow @NatashaDevon

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THE TS GUIDE TO... CPD

At best, CPD can be an empowering tool that makes you a more accomplished educator; at worst, it can be a time-sapping chore. So how can teachers and leaders ensure it's more the former, and less the latter?

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CPD exists to improve skills and provide better outcomes - but as Sally Newton explains, the path from 'helpful training' to 'improved practice' isn't always a smooth one...



IN FIGURES: HOW DO TEACHERS FEEL ABOUT THE CPD THEY CURRENTLY RECEIVE?

73%

of surveyed classroom teachers had participated in at least one online course or seminar within the previous 12 months

40%

of teachers felt the last INSET day they attended to have been 'somewhat' or 'very' useful

4%

of teachers believe that behaviour management training will improve their expertise

Source: 'The Current State of Professional Development for Teachers' report published by Teacher Tapp in January 2024 (see tinyurl.com/ts141-C1)

3 TEACHWIRE
ARTICLES
FROM THE
ARCHIVES

DITCH DULL CPD

Jim Funnell makes the case for why the traditional 'stand and deliver' style of professional development is now past its sell-by date

bit.ly/141special1

WHERE ARE THE SPECIFICS?

General purpose CPD is all well and good - but don't neglect the training your staff need to become subject experts, advises Daniel Harvey

bit.ly/141special2

TAKE THE LEAD

Leading CPD in your school is a great way to demonstrate leadership, develop your vision and gain experience of staff management, says Paul K. Ainsworth

bit.ly/141special3

STARTING STRONG

Craig Lomas and **Professor Geoff Baker** share their thoughts on what it takes to survive and thrive as an ECT

For those who are motivated, teaching can offer an incredible career that's rewarding, varied and energising. Yet retention continues to be a significant issue, with many leaving the profession disillusioned and disenfranchised from their own development.

This is particularly the case for early career teachers (ECTs). Professional development can be a critical factor in keeping colleagues in the profession, but also a daunting task that has the capacity to overwhelm. Knowing what to prioritise can be challenging.

Here, we're going to offer some advice for ECTs on how to thrive in the early years of your teaching career, and build solid foundations for continued development long into the future.

Meet and greet

Our first piece of advice is to see as many people as you can. Whatever your route into teaching, training often involves observations of teachers in and out of your subject specialism. This will usually be your first opportunity to see teaching and learning in action, and form ideas about the type of teacher you wish to become.

However, once you've qualified and commenced a full teaching timetable, it's common for these lesson observation opportunities to reduce significantly. In fact, it's conceivable that many ECTs will rarely leave their

own classrooms – yet the benefits of getting out to see others teach are considerable. These include, but aren't limited to:

- **Reassurance** – Observing others can provide you with peace of mind that the issues you might be facing are common, and that even more experienced teachers need to navigate similar challenges
- **Targeted professional development** – When struggling with a specific issue, it's good to observe colleagues who are strong in that area. If you're

“Teaching is a demanding profession – and can be all-consuming, if you're not careful”

unsure who to observe, seek advice from a mentor or line manager who can guide you. Observing with a specific development focus in mind can provide practical strategies for you to trial in your own classroom.

- **Idea generation** – It's easy to become comfortable in your own routines as a teacher; observing others can provide that spark or moment of inspiration for you to advance your teaching, ensuring that student engagement doesn't dwindle.

Observing colleagues in any area of the school, regardless of discipline or age taught, can be beneficial. Take time afterwards to reflect on what you've observed and how it might change your teaching.

Check the evidence

Our second piece of advice would be to ground your pedagogy in research. As an ECT, it's likely that you'll have been exposed to anecdotal tales of great teaching by others considerably more experienced than yourself. Whilst there can be some contextual value in this

information, a research-informed approach is a more rigorous approach to developing pedagogy.

ECTs will often begin their careers in teaching with a good foundation of theory, but soon become disconnected from academic research once they've qualified. Online media can provide an effective way of re-engaging with this evidence base, through listening to podcasts, using platforms like Google Scholar and utilising AI to locate and summarise literature.

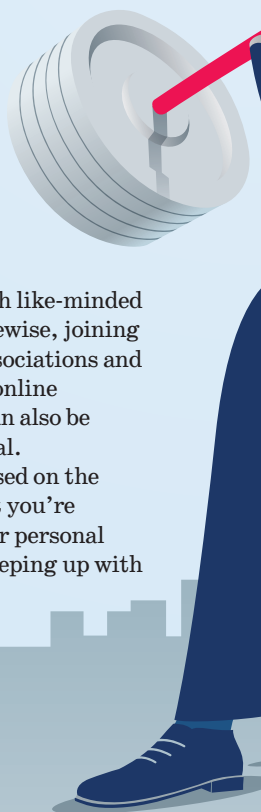
Staying connected to research will, firstly, reduce

the challenges of re-engaging and ensure that you make informed decisions regarding your pedagogical approaches. Likewise, when you have a specific concern with your practice, or would like to develop a particular area, utilising an Action Research approach – whereby you implement evidence-based strategies, evaluate their success, review and then redevelop – can help you maintain a strategic focus.

Strong subject knowledge developed throughout one's career is a fundamental building block of effective teaching. Teaching is a profession that's constantly evolving; having a strong knowledge base to draw from will enable you to avoid misconceptions and answer questions that fall outside of the planned curriculum.

Attending subject-specific courses and conferences is a great way of developing your subject knowledge, and can facilitate networking with like-minded colleagues. Likewise, joining professional associations and engaging with online communities can also be hugely beneficial.

Staying focused on the content of what you're teaching in your personal reading, and keeping up with contemporary



news regarding the topics you're engaging with, will help ensure that your disciplinary knowledge remains up to date, and that you retain your passion for the content you're teaching.

Cast your net wide

Building professional networks both within and beyond your setting is another important facet of thriving as an ECT. Surrounding yourself with supportive and positive colleagues can be beneficial in both a professional and personal sense, and significantly contribute to your success as a teacher.

Colleagues are a valuable source of information and advice, and are naturally essential for any collaborative approaches to work. Developing these kinds of professional working relationships

early on will provide you with a support network that can generate positivity across the profession at large, and help to reduce any sense of isolation you may be feeling. Every teacher has bad days. Having colleagues you can turn to for moral support and advice when you're struggling can be key to staying in teaching for the long-term.

There is, however, a caveat here. Positive networks can be hugely empowering, but do be mindful how insidious toxic relationships can be. Should you ever find yourself in a group whose members are all jaded with respect to the profession and see everything through a lens of negativity, it may be worth challenging them, or else moving on to a different group altogether.

Invest in your wellbeing

Finally, the most potentially important piece of advice we'd offer is to develop your own 'reset button'.

Teaching is a demanding profession, and can

be all-consuming if you're not careful. Investing in yourself professionally *is* important – but so too is investing in your wellbeing. Setting clear boundaries between work and personal time is a routine that we'd recommend you establish as soon as possible.

A teacher's workload is never-ending. And yes, while you do need to ensure deadlines are being met, it's just as vital that you feel capable of flicking the 'off' switch, without feeling guilty.

The ability to practice self care is an important element of your overall wellbeing. You'll be more effective in the classroom if you ensure that you look after yourself, both physically and mentally.

Maintaining regular exercise, a healthy diet and ensuring you get sufficient sleep each night are all important for ensuring your students get the best of you in the classroom. It's also crucial to actively seek out support and advice whenever you might need it.

Through those strong professional relationships you've already established, you'll have a support network that's ready and willing to help. One certainty in teaching is that things *will*

go wrong from time to time – so when they do, talk things through and come up with new approaches and solutions. You can then embark on the next day knowing that this is normal, and that each day can be an opportunity for you to refine your practice and grow professionally.

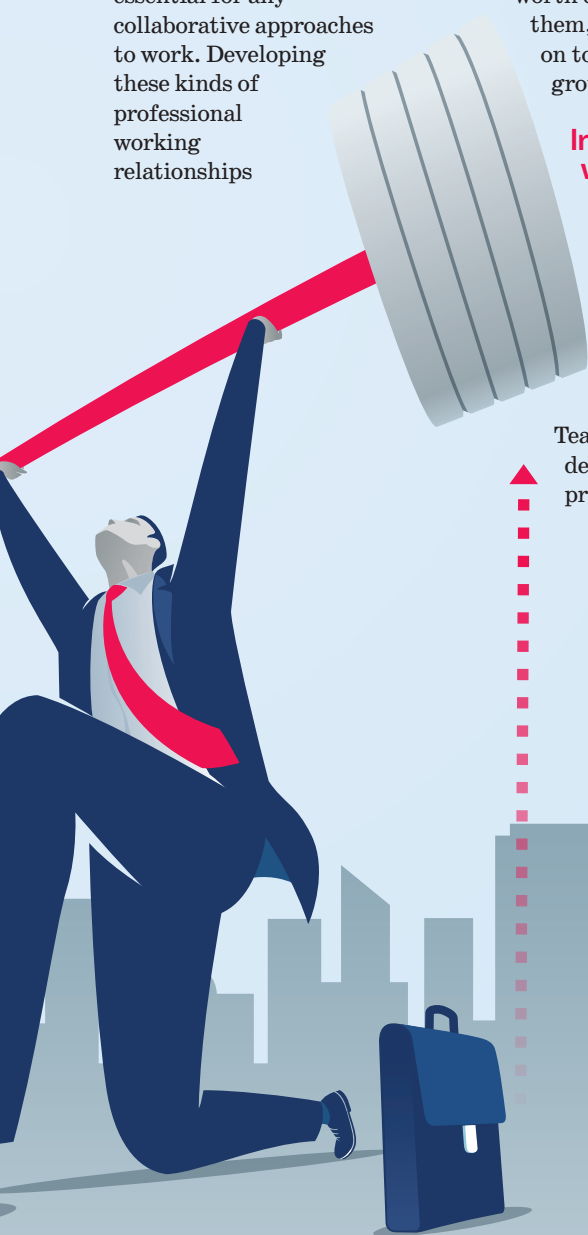
Thriving in the early years of your teaching career requires willing and balance. Through sharing good practice, grounding your pedagogy in research, prioritising subject knowledge development, building positive relationships and creating a reset button for your wellbeing, you can create the foundations for a successful teaching career.

Teaching is a journey that requires continuous growth. There will be challenges along the way, but embracing and learning from them – whilst not forgetting to also celebrate the successes – will lead to a career where you're not just surviving, but thriving.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Geoff Baker is a Professor of Education and Craig Lomas a Senior Lecturer in Education, both at the University of Bolton, and both former senior secondary school leaders



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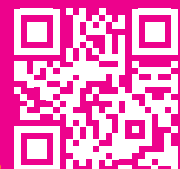
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How to make a leader

Rob Crowther contemplates the professional development, self-reflection and practical steps needed to advance from the classroom into SLT

My original reason for seeking out a leadership role was that I could do more for the kids at our school than I was already. I believed I could achieve better outcomes by providing learning and teaching environments that genuinely supported them, their teachers and the community – and that’s remained the case ever since.

For me, everything always comes back to that one kid who’s sat on their chair in front of you. Every decision you make as an educator will have an effect on that child – from how you work with your faculty, to your interactions with parents and the wider school community. It all impacts upon them, to one extent or another.

The infallibility fallacy

Earlier in my career, while working at a school in Jakarta, Indonesia, we had a principal who was incredibly humble, had an easy ability to laugh at himself and never took himself too seriously. If he ever got something wrong, he’d be quick to acknowledge it.

I’d already worked in a number of leadership roles by that point, but this turned out to be a huge

point of learning for me – because up to then, I’d always felt that you needed to be virtually infallible when holding leadership role.

What I learned then, and have taken with me ever since, is that the more you show you’re *not* infallible, the stronger your relationships with people will be. You can remain open to new ways of thinking, sometimes not be in possession of all the answers, and be liable to occasionally get things wrong.

Navigating the storm

I don’t use Twitter/X all that regularly now, but at one time I used it quite frequently, and came to see it as a kind of ‘bitesize’ form of personal development. I’d often print out advice I’d seen via Twitter on my wall, one of which remains there to this day – a note that says, ‘*Bring students into your calm – don’t let don’t let them bring you into their storm.*’

I’ve since shared that with our faculty and parents, and

it’s gone on to become something of a mantra for the school: *Remain calm, find a way through the storm, give the storm time to blow out, and then take it forward.*

Ongoing professional development remains hugely important for me. A large part of my professional development this past year has involved making connections at various conferences and events, but I’m also finding now that newer, less traditional and more targeted professional development opportunities – ones which enable you to rapidly put things into practice – are becoming extremely valuable.

Vision and values

To those interested in making the move into leadership themselves, I’d advise firstly seeking out good development opportunities,

learning from others and finding good mentors. My philosophy has always been that when somebody asks me to do something – ‘*Can you just do this?*’ – I’ll generally answer ‘yes’, and then figure out the details afterwards, learning what’s required in the process. Act on every available opportunity to assume more responsibility and to lead.

Also, involve yourself in any opportunities to take students on trips, as it’s incredibly important that you get to know them. The extent to which you can connect with students will always come through very clearly when assuming new roles, be it at your current school or any others. Because we’re ultimately in the business of *educating young people* – and you need to know who they are.

Be curious and be resilient. Get to know who *you* are as an individual, and finally, try to align your goals, vision and values with those schools you actively want to for work for.

When applying for job roles, I won’t cast a wide net. Instead, I’ll identify those schools I believe are aligned with my vision and values, and the rules to which I subscribe. I’ve stayed at ACS Cobham since 2016 because I’m closely aligned with the school’s vision and the values we have – and because it’s a place where I’d want my own children to be educated.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Rob Crowther is Head of School at ACS Cobham

WHEN CPD goes wrong

CPD exists to improve skills and provide better outcomes – but as **Sally Newton** explains, the path from ‘helpful training’ to ‘improved practice’ isn’t always a smooth one...

We’ve all had that sinking feeling, after a full day’s teaching, when we suddenly remember that there’s a whole staff CPD session we need to attend. And that’s before we can even *begin* to grapple with the resources we need to print for tomorrow, the phone calls home we need to make, the lessons we need to plan for later in the week, that pile of marking that needs doing by Friday...

We’ve also likely experienced the cognitive overload of two full days of INSET each September, where we’ll sit in a freshly painted school hall or theatre as 247 PowerPoint slides flow before us and we start to fidget in our uncomfortable seating – not unlike our disengaged Y9s during an hour-long assembly...

A crucial factor

The importance of CPD for teachers isn’t lost on the profession’s senior leaders, nor officials at the DfE. As research by John Hattie has previously shown, the classroom teacher is the single most important factor in determining pupil outcomes (see tiny.cc/ts141-cpd1). In their book, *The Teacher Gap*, Rebecca Allen and Sam Sims further observe that, “*Moving a child from an average teacher to a top teacher’s class means they will learn in six months what would otherwise have taken twelve.*”

This would seem to indicate that CPD is extremely important for ensuring that novice teachers can flourish and become expert educators, and that the already capable can further hone their craft. And yet, there’s also evidence to suggest that only 1% of training is actually effective in improving classroom practice (Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education, 2011).

“CPD shouldn’t be seen in isolation, as a sequence of ‘one and done’ training sessions”

It’s entirely possible for CPD to go awry in both relevance and delivery – so what can school leaders do to ensure any CPD they roll out to staff is, in fact, valuable to them and appropriately implemented?

Here, I’m going to outline a number of key reasons as to why seemingly good ideas shared during CPD sessions aren’t successfully transferred into practice. The first being...

Time restraints and stress

There are only so many hours in the day. All too often, my previous experiences of CPD have involved a ‘one off’, hour-long training session, immediately followed by staff either hurrying home at the end of the day, or returning to their packed

to-do lists – and in both cases, never looking at any of the content from the session ever again.

Adopting a different theme for successive one-hour CPD sessions taking place throughout the year might seem like a good way of presenting staff with a variety and range of training knowledge – but in practice, it can be

one key theme is explored across a number of facilitator-led sessions. Between those sessions, staff will also be given opportunities and space to fully embed elements from the training they’ve received

into their own practice.

CPD shouldn't be seen in isolation, as a sequence of 'one and done' training sessions that all staff are required to attend before moving on. By its very nature, CPD is *continued* and *ongoing*, and could therefore entail not just facilitator-led sessions, but also observations of expert practitioners, co-planning opportunities with colleagues within and beyond department areas and meetings with line managers.

There may be scope for coaches or mentors to discuss colleagues' progress in relation to specific individual or whole

school CPD targets, or for junior staff to shadow more experienced colleagues to see their expertise in action, and hopefully identify their own next steps for improvement.

The 'know it / do it' gap

Closely linked to issues of time restraint and stress is the 'know it / do it' gap. We might *know* that implementing a 'thinking hard' element within each lesson we teach is a good idea; we may agree with the training we've undertaken, but that doesn't necessarily mean we'll return to our classroom and suddenly upend all of our resources and materials overnight. We

might *know* that something is an excellent idea, but not really know *how* to employ it within our own practice.

Some of the most effective CPD sessions I've attended would give attendees a 'takeaways' pack of resources that we could quickly and easily adapt for use in our own lessons. That's why, when I now deliver my own CPD sessions to colleagues, I'll usually share what I call 'Examples of Excellence' – exemplar materials and shared format documents that teachers can readily adapt for their own lessons and learners.

One instance of this that comes to mind was a guided reading document I saw being shared by a history trainee. Questions were carefully constructed around each paragraph, so that key information was easy for pupils to identify and extraneous cognitive load was reduced. This document went on to be widely shared with other trainees across a variety of departments, with the format retained, but the content changed to suit different subjects and the reading content required for each lesson.

The Goldilocks effect

Getting CPD 'just right' for everyone in the room is often challenging for school leaders when faced with a staff body who might range from a Year 1 ECT to someone who's been teaching for over 20 years. Capturing the interest of that keen and eager ECT – who'll be desperate to absorb all the training and apply everything – while retaining the attention of that old hand who's heard it all before (and may view 'adaptive teaching' as little more than a rebranded 'differentiation') is a daunting task, *but it can be done*.

Before introducing any new whole school initiatives,

undertake a staff survey in order to gauge the differing levels of confidence and need with respect to specific training. Getting that buy-in is everything – if teachers feel that they're involved in the decision-making process, it can greatly increase their general levels of engagement.

School leaders can also offer expert teachers the chance to involve themselves in the delivery of CPD, rather than have them passively sit through more of the 'same old, same old'.

Why not offer staff some degree of choice as to what CPD they wish to undertake? The options available can still relate to the same thread – such as '*Increasing students' ability to think hard*' – but there could be different sessions or activities to attend, thus ensuring everyone gets to access opportunities that will offer *them meaningful and lasting* development.

A growing number of school leaders are now undertaking the overhauled National Professional Qualifications in a range of areas, including 'Leading Teaching' and 'Leading Teacher Development'. This, combined with the continuing drive for research-informed practice, has resulted in the barriers to effective CPD being widely discussed, and attempts at overcoming them. For me, ensuring that staff are involved in CPD decision-making processes, and can take ownership of the opportunities available and how to embed them within their practice, is the most crucial element for success.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

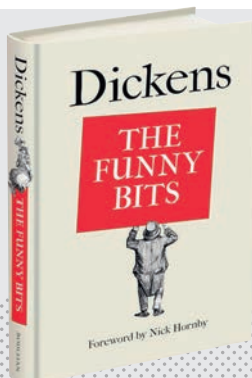
Sally Newton is secondary partnership manager at the Tommy Flowers SCITT provider of primary and secondary PGCE and apprenticeship courses





Off the Shelves

Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore



Dickens: The Funny Bits (Cruickshank (Ed.) and Nick Hornby (Foreword), Bodleian, £16.99)

As most people will know, a great many of Dickens' imaginative characters have entered the popular imagination – from Oliver Twist, to Mr Micawber and, of course, Scrooge. But how many have read the original works from whence those characters came? This book provides a potentially helpful way in. In line with the English Programme of Study's requirement that students be encouraged to choose and read books independently for challenge, interest and enjoyment, this compendium pulls together some of Dickens' more humorous passages, in a way that may well compel students to seek out the original works. If nothing else, these extracts are still worth reading in their own right, as some remain consistently funny, even well over a century after they were written.

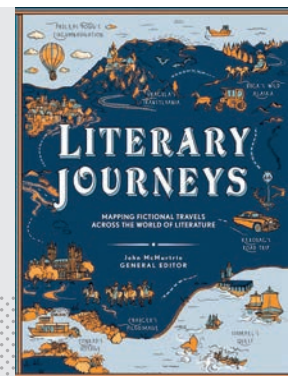
Reviewed by Terry Freedman
(see bit.ly/Eclecticism for more details)



Hitler's People - The Faces of the Third Reich (Richard J. Evans, Allen Lane, £35)

Nearly a hundred years after the rise of Nazism, people still are asking that key question – how could such apparently ordinary, and sometimes even highly cultured people commit such terrible crimes? Evans draws on previous studies into Nazism's origins and subsequent growth, while pulling in additional material and insights that have come to light since, to produce a highly readable, extremely detailed and well-organised set of character studies that can be examined in any order. Said studies pertain to Hitler himself, his paladins, Nazism's enforcers and its instruments, with Evans appearing to argue that even the most sophisticated people can become monsters if influenced by malign attitudes, in an era when acting upon those attitudes is actively encouraged. That said, he also notes how many of those involved were additionally motivated by personal ambition and greed, as well as blind adherence to a fanatic.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman



Literary Journeys: Mapping Fictional Travels across the World of Literature (John McMurtrie (Ed), Princeton, £25)

Over the course of 75 separate essays, this sumptuous book serves as a beautifully illustrated guide to the worlds and social backgrounds presented by a wide variety of books. Divided into several sections – 'Quests and explorations', 'The age of travel', 'Postmodern movements' and 'Contemporary crossings' – the featured works span 725 BCE to the present day. Each essay presents an overview of the book in question, with biographical details concerning the author. Each entry is only a few pages long, sometimes with accompanying illustrations, but they still succeed as being good introductions to some seminal texts, and stimulating springboards for classroom discussion. Given the wealth of knowledge it contains, the book represents great value for money, and fully deserves a place on every English department's bookshelves.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman

ON THE RADAR

Social Media and Youth Mental Health (Vicki Harrison, Anne Collier, Steven Adelsheim (Eds.), £46)

Ever since the social media revolution of the mid 2000s, questions and concerns have consistently been raised over the effects Facebook, Snapchat and latterly Instagram and TikTok have had on the behavioural development of children and teens. Neatly coinciding with the growing visibility of parental campaigning groups, such as the Smartphone Free Childhood Movement, *Social Media and Youth Mental Health* pulls together contributions from 41 scholars across 14 chapter-length articles, on topics ranging from 'Dignity, Diversity, and the Challenges of Bullying and Hateful Speech' to 'Gaming, Identity Construction, and Social Connection'.

As the editors note in their introduction, the social media space is relentlessly fast-moving, but given the task they and their contributing authors have set themselves – to rigorously interrogate the society-wide youth mental health impacts of social media through a public health lens – their observations and findings are unlikely to date quickly.

An ambitious academic survey like this is arguably long overdue, though perhaps its most notable portion is the foregrounding of young people's perspectives on social media use, in a chapter titled 'Youth Agency, Rights, and the Promise of a Well-Designed Digital World'. Amid a series of quotes from international teens, describing what they variously enjoy about, expect and endure from social media platforms, one soundbite from a 14-year-old Indonesian female particularly stands out: "As technology grows, we can easily access information. But it's hard to know whether the information is valid or not."



Meet the author

DR RICHARD BUSTIN



What made you want to extol the virtues of subject-based secondary education in the form of a book?

I'm a geography teacher, and have always felt I've had to fight my case for having geography on the school curriculum. Often, however, particularly at KS3, geography gets lumped in with history and RE to form 'humanities', meaning students can go from Y7 all the way to Y9 having never actually been taught geography by a geographer.

The book came out of my own doctoral research into why geography is an important curriculum subject. I put that question to teachers at another school, and received some lovely responses – but then received a different set of responses from a second, and then a third school.

I found that disconnect really interesting, and saw it repeated across other subjects – subject specialists, teaching the same subject in different schools, each placing a slightly different emphasis on what they thought their subject was actually doing educationally, which prompted me to read up on the area.

How do you react when you're asked by students in geography lessons, 'Why do we need to learn this?'

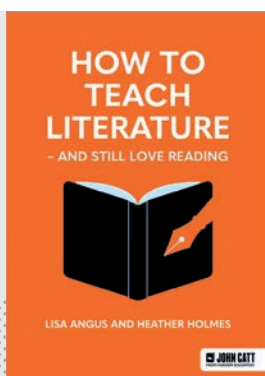
If a teacher ever responds to that question with 'because it's on the exam', that's not good enough. I once spoke to a trainee teacher, who was teaching a lesson on migration, and when I asked why, that's how they answered. I wanted them to refer to the news stories about boats arriving on UK shores, how it's a global live issue, and pushed them on it. But in the end, they just looked at me and said 'Because they must know the difference between assessment objective 1 and assessment objective 2! They'd been conditioned to think that the output of everything we do is geared towards exams, but it's not. The output is something far more fundamental, which is empowering students with subject knowledge, whatever that subject might be.'

What needs to happen to change that mindset and help teachers reconnect with the fundamentals of their subject?

Doing that is quite difficult within the current climate, where schools are judged according to students' success in their exams. One thing teachers can do, however, is really think about what it is their subject offers young people that no other subject can.

Can you articulate it succinctly? Get to the nub of what it's really about, and ensure that every lesson you teach contains something of the heart of your subject within it.

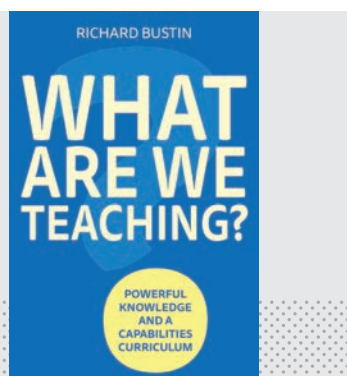
Dr Richard Bustin is a geography teacher and department lead at Lancing College, where he is responsible for staff development and teacher training



How to Teach Literature – and Still Love Reading (Heather Holmes and Lisa Angus, John Catt, £16)

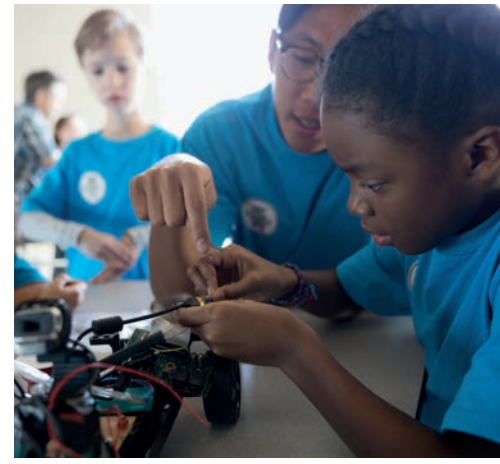
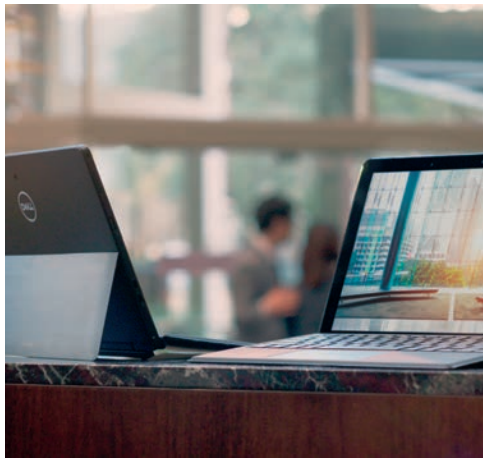
The relatively slim nature of this volume – 129 pages, plus bibliography – belies how much knowledge and guidance its authors have managed to pack within it. Evidently the work of expert literature specialists and examiners, each chapter outlines numerous strategies for in-class work and assessing students' understanding. While undoubtedly a useful book for new English teachers to read and keep around for reference, it also contains some insights that even seasoned old hands will likely find valuable. Having stressed the importance of going through texts thoroughly before introducing them to students, the authors proceed to guide readers through the minefields of teaching drama, poetry and Shakespeare, while sharing plenty of suggestions for reading material that classes will find engaging. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman



What Are We Teaching? (Richard Bustin, Crown House Publishing, £16.99)

In recent years, teachers have been encouraged to perceive what they do through a traditional/progressive dichotomy – one that Bustin is determined to upend. His starting point in *What Are We Teaching?* is that the subject-based curriculum much admired by 'trads' is worth preserving, but can too easily end up with teachers operating within their own separate silos and inhibit the kind of interdisciplinary exploration that 'progs' will tell you benefits students and teachers alike. Instead, Bustin calls for greater recognition of how knowledge is constructed differently across various subjects – vividly illustrated by a section in which teachers are challenged to explain why their subject is important. From there, he makes a compelling case for viewing teaching through the frame of *capabilities* – exploring what young people are doing with the knowledge they have learnt, rather than obsessing over GCSE results alone.



ASK THE EXPERT

“Empowering schools with advanced technology solutions”

Intel’s Matt Hains explains how AI-powered PCs can transform teaching, learning, and school management.

How can upgrading PC hardware improve school performance?

Faster PCs with AI capabilities, like Dell’s Latitude 5000 range featuring Intel Core Ultra processors, make a real difference in schools. These systems speed up applications, cut down on admin tasks, and allow teachers to spend more quality time with students. An organisation we worked with recently equipped its developers with Dell Latitude laptops powered by our AI processors, reducing cloud costs and boosting their productivity by 50%. For schools, this means smoother learning, less frustration, and better efficiency.

What should schools consider when choosing new devices?

When choosing new devices for your school, it’s best to think of the bigger picture. AI-powered devices with Neural Processing Units (NPUs) are great for delivering the speed, security, and adaptability that today’s schools need. These devices handle heavy multitasking, from digital lesson planning to real-time data processing, making it easy to personalise learning. Plus, they’re low-maintenance, saving valuable IT time. Choosing Intel-powered devices means schools are investing in future-proof tech that’s ready to meet students’ evolving needs and teachers’ daily demands.

What are common technology challenges schools face, and how can Intel help?

Many schools deal with outdated, slow tech and growing security risks, but Dell’s Intel powered AI PCs with NPUs and open AI solutions, like oneAPI, tackle these challenges head-on. Faster processing eliminates lags, and advanced security protects against cyber threats in real time. Intel works with more than 100 software vendors to build AI experiences out of the box, leveraging AI PCs. With oneAPI, schools avoid being locked into proprietary systems, meaning more scalability and cost-efficiency, while optimising AI workloads across devices. It’s all about smarter tools that make teaching and learning seamless and efficient.



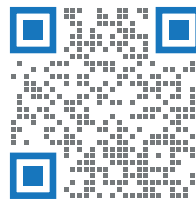
EXPERT PROFILE

NAME:
Matt Hains

JOB TITLE:
Client Workspace Specialist

AREA OF EXPERTISE:
Education-focused workspace solutions

BEST PART OF MY JOB:
Helping schools make the most of the latest technology for a better educational experience



What role does technology play in improving school operations?

Tech is now essential for efficient school management. Intel-powered devices, with their AI capabilities, streamline everyday tasks, like automating admin work and enhancing classroom collaboration. Teachers gain time to focus on students, while school leaders have data insights at their fingertips, making decision-making faster and more strategic. Dell is able to consult and advise your school on areas where improvements can be made, as well as what tech would be the most suitable for your needs. When tech integrates smoothly into school routines, everyone benefits, and the focus stays where it should be: on delivering a quality educational experience.

How can AI-driven PCs support personalised learning for students?

AI PCs with NPUs open up amazing possibilities for personalised learning. With adaptive tech, teachers can create tailored lessons that suit different students’ needs, adjusting in real time to help each learner excel. These devices can support applications that adjust to each student’s pace, making learning more engaging and accessible. For teachers, it means smarter tools to monitor progress and ensure no student is left behind – all while saving precious prep time.

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MEET US AT BETT 2025

Join Matt Hains and the Intel team at the Dell stand in Hall 17 at Stand ND10 to find out firsthand how Intel’s solutions can empower schools with high-performance, secure, and reliable devices tailored to the unique needs of educational institutions.

EVENT DETAILS

What is Bett?

Bett is the largest edtech exhibition in the world, taking place each year in different locations across the globe, including the UK, Brasil and Asia. From global tech companies, to renowned education brands and fledgling startups, you can find solutions for all education settings, challenges and budgets.

Where is Bett UK?

ExCeL London, Royal Victoria Dock

When is Bett?

22nd - 24th January 2025

How do I register?

Head over to uk.bettshow.com/visit and select your ticket



INNOVATE AND COLLABORATE

We get a sneak peek at what's in store for the 40th anniversary of the world's biggest edtech show

Bett UK is back. Celebrating 40 years of edtech excellence, Bett 2025 is set to unite 30,000+ educators, policymakers and edtech enthusiasts from 129+ countries. This is your chance to explore the latest trends in education, access hundreds of hours of free CPD and build connections with the global education community, all under one roof.

Join us as we innovate, collaborate and drive better education, globally. Tickets for all three days are absolutely free for educators, and include wonderful highlights such as...

The legendary Stephen Fry

Renowned for his wit, wisdom and incredible insights, Stephen Fry is an English actor, screenwriter, author, playwright, journalist, poet, comedian, television presenter, film director and all-round national treasure.

With a career spanning more than four decades, the star of *Blackadder*, *A Bit of Fry & Laurie*, *QI* and *The Hobbit* – to name but a few – has inspired millions through storytelling that

bridges the worlds of technology, literature and learning. Find him discussing the human approach to AI with Anne-Marie Imafidon in the Bett Arena at 9:30am on 22nd January.

Bett Arena tackles AI

Hosted by the dynamic Laura McNerney, this year's Arena will feature AI trailblazers Dan Fitzpatrick, The AI Educator, and Rose Luckin, professor emeritus at UCL and founder of Educate Ventures, who will explore how AI is reshaping education (hear more from Rose on p39). Adding creativity to the mix, poets Michael Rosen and Christian Foley will take to the stage for an inspiring and unique session. Plus, hear the powerful story of Nicolas Hamilton, as he shares his journey and incredible achievements in professional racing and inclusion.

Go big or go home

At Bett UK 2025, we're championing the next generation of tech-savvy



thinkers and innovators.

Bett's Big Assembly, in partnership with Tech She Can, invites learners to explore gaming tech and career opportunities alongside inspiring educators. The Design4SDGs Challenge and Kids Judge Bett event let pupils to share their ideas and recognise standout tech products, while the Esports Tournaments will be showcasing school teams' skills in *Rocket League* matches.

Register your interest now at uk.bettshow.com and follow us on social media (@bett_show) to make sure you don't miss a thing!

EXPLORE ESPORTS

With Bett once again shining a spotlight on Esports, James Marriott tells us about the discussion panel he'll be participating in, and the Esports journey he and his students have embarked on at Wilmington Academy in Dartford, Kent...

The 'Esports, security and student safety' panel (22nd Jan, 11.35am-12pm, Esports @ Bett) is about safeguarding, how we can develop a safe and secure Esports environment within schools, colleges and universities, and how we've done that at Wilmington Academy.

Until around five years ago, I didn't know anything about Esports. I knew online competitive gaming existed, but never realised just how many people were regularly playing. I teach e-safety as part of the KS3/4 computing curriculum, so I know about online safeguarding and the issues surrounding online grooming and chat messaging inside games. As I tell our pupils, anyone can make an account and pretend to be someone else online.

I'll be explaining at the session how we developed a safe and secure environment for our Esports pupils, in which they can effectively communicate with each other and really flourish in what's a safe environment for them.

From the outset, there were hurdles we had to overcome. Discord is an essential online chat tool, and a primary method by which the British Esports body communicates information, but it had been previously flagged by staff for



being potentially harmful. That's fair and right, but it was going to be our chief means of keeping our Esports pupils together and communicating openly with each other. To put that in place I needed to liaise with the school's DSL, and explain to the governors and SLT members why it was such an important tool for the Esports community.

I also had to 'sell' what Esports was, and its benefits – why it wouldn't just be about 'playing games', but an important way for pupils who would never be chosen for the school's sports teams to experience competitive match fixtures, and the pride that comes from being part of a team themselves.

James Marriott is director ICT and Esports at Wilmington Academy



CELEBRATING 40 YEARS

As Bett heads into its fifth decade, we look at some of the highlights of the world's biggest edtech show...

Table talks

Learn from other educators and grow your personal learning network. Bringing together individuals from schools, universities and governments based on chosen topics of interest, TableTalks is the opportunity of the year to connect and collaborate with your peers.

Connect @ Bett

Transforming the way that our community connects and collaborates, you'll meet new people, discover new organisations and forge meaningful connections that result in positive changes for you, your organisation and your learners.

Tech User Labs

Learn directly from world-leading experts, with specialised tutorials and working groups designed to help you get the most out of your tech. Tech User Labs is an unrivalled opportunity not to be missed!

CPD-accredited content

Planning your CPD credits for 2025? Tick it off your list early when you register for Bett UK 2025 with our free CPD-accredited programme, hosting over 100+ hours of quality, CPD-accredited content for you to choose from. With six stages, 300+ speakers and thrilling keynotes from some of the biggest names in education, there's no CPD opportunity quite like it. The best part? All our content is free for educators.

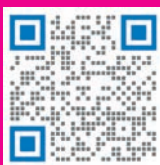
Find out more about the Bett UK 2025 agenda at uk.bettshow.com

teach SECONDARY RECOMMENDS

EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

Explore the future of learning with Dell Technologies at Bett 2025, where cutting-edge technology meets educational innovation (stands **ND10** and **NJ80**). Visitors will have opportunities to get hands-on with the latest laptops, monitors, and devices – each rigorously tested to meet the demands of modern classrooms.

You'll also find an Esports Showdown, alongside Expert Insights from Dell and Intel specialists regarding AI, Windows 11, cybersecurity and more.



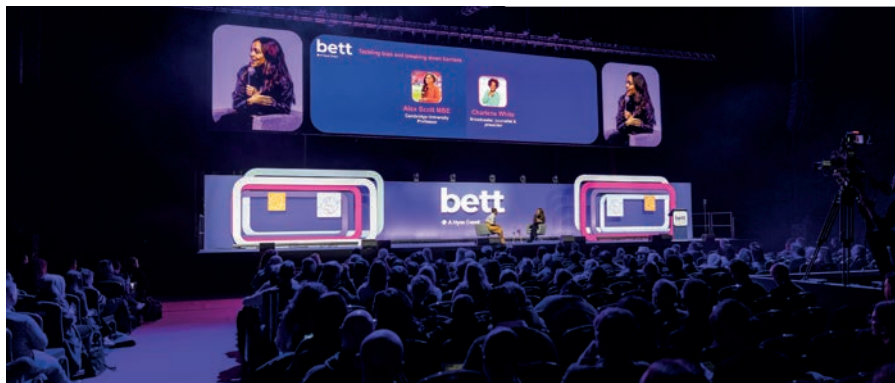
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UNPARALLELED REPRESENTATION

NAHT represents over 50,000 serving school leaders in early years, primary, secondary and special schools, making us the largest trade union exclusively for school leaders in the UK. NAHT is democratically run and supports its members through offering unparalleled protection and representation, using our voice at the highest levels of government to influence policy for the benefit of leaders and learners everywhere.



Alongside our members, we work to create a better education system for both educationalists and students alike. Find us at Bett 2025 on stand **SS50**; for more information, visit naht.org.uk



MEET THE SPEAKER

“Learning isn’t effortless”



Name:
Rose Luckin

Role:
UCL professor and founder of Educate Ventures (educateventures.com)

Sessions:

- ‘AI-powered pedagogical transformation: Visions of the 2040 classroom’
22nd Jan, 2:15-2:45pm, The Arena
- ‘AI: Learn fast, act more slowly’
23rd Jan, 9:30-10:15am, The Arena
- ‘AI, data and employability’
23rd Jan, 3:55-4.25pm, Ahead Auditorium

What will classrooms look like in 2040?

It’s hard to predict, but we’re seeing lots of enthusiasm across the English education system around AI. Obviously, not from everybody – there are still a lot of people not engaging with it, understandably, because they’ve got too many things on their plates. But there is engagement.

However, for many educators, the key is having a basic understanding of how AI works and its implications, because it’s incredibly difficult to leverage it – both for pupils and for themselves, if they don’t have that skillset.

So CPD is the cornerstone of this development?

A lot of what will happen in the classrooms of the future depends on how people react to the technology. We know AI will be a factor, there’s no stopping that, so it’s essential for people working in education to have a say in, and knowledge of how this technology is going to be used.

How far should educators be engaging with the ethical side of AI?

We need to help students learn how to use the technologies appropriately. There’s a lot of emphasis on ‘academic misconduct’ – students using it for cheating and that kind of thing – but we have to help them see *why* that’s not a good thing to do.

We should show them how to use the tools effectively, in ways that will actually help them far more than by cheating, but educators must be empowered in order to do that with their students. Otherwise, we risk getting caught up in where to assign blame – ‘Oh, they just want to cheat’ (which I don’t believe is the case).

With some consumer AI tools, however, we’re being told they’re going to make our lives ‘effortless’. As an educator, that’s not a message I’m comfortable with, because learning isn’t effortless. And that’s a really important argument for why educators need to be part of the conversation, because we don’t want lots of technologies appearing on the market that are all about persuading learners that they don’t need to work hard any more.

What role does Big Tech have in all this?

Unfortunately, due to the nature of our society, there’s already a huge advantage gap between what independent and state schools are reaping from these new technologies. There’s so much that AI can do, but it will take significant investment for schools without big budgets. Big Tech can help with that – they will gain an awful lot from selling their products in the education sector, so they could help us with some of our key challenges, such as the SEND crisis. Our system is under incredible strain, and they could step up to assist.

Rose Luckin is professor emeritus at UCL, and founder/CEO of Educate Ventures Research Limited – see educateventures.com for more details

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ONLINE EXPERTISE

BBC Bitesize offers curriculum-linked self-study and home learning for secondary students. For 11- to 14-year-olds, there are interactive activities and award-winning games that support homework and revision. Our revision resources for 14- to 16-year-olds include quickfire quizzes, exam-style questions, videos and podcasts.

There’s also careers advice, study support and help for students on how to spot fake news via BBC Bitesize’s ‘Other Side of the Story’ section.

BBC Teach is meanwhile home to a range of teacher-facing content, including short, curriculum-linked videos that bring the best BBC content into your classroom, educational campaigns and assembly plans – including one marking the 80th anniversary of Holocaust Memorial Day. Find us on stand SS71.

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FINALIST

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MEET THE SPEAKER

“I’ve seen schools bombarded with calls from parents”

Name:
Kelly Hannaghan

Role:
Mental health and wellbeing consultant and director of Mind Work Matters (mindworkmatters.com)

Session:

‘Out of the shadows: Conquering the hidden challenge of Emotionally Based School Avoidance’
23rd Jan, 11:15-11:45am, Teaching & Learning area

What can you tell us about the session you’ll be presenting?

I’ll be discussing emotionally-based school avoidance (EBSA), though it can also be referred to as ‘school refusal’. It’s a condition whereby a child or young person has severe difficulty attending school due to emotional distress. Unlike truancy – which tends to involve deliberate absenteeism with or without parent/carer knowledge – EBSA typically occurs with the knowledge of caregivers, and is rooted in underlying emotional and psychological challenges. Right now, we’re seeing a huge rise of EBSA right across the education sector.

EBSA is often seen as a post-COVID phenomenon – had you observed the condition before then?

I’ve been closely observing EBSA for many years, both prior to and post-pandemic. The increase in EBSA-related issues is, I think, down to the fact that there’s greater awareness around what the condition is. Another term previously used was ‘anxiety-based school avoidance’, but we know now that it doesn’t just stem from anxiety, but can be due to multifaceted reasons.

Many of those factors were, however, exacerbated by COVID-19 – which, combined with greater awareness and understanding around EBSA, is why it’s now being recognised much more widely across the education sector. We also know that year on year, we’re seeing increased mental health challenges. Currently, around one in five children and young people are likely to have a probable mental health condition.

Shifting parental attitudes during the

pandemic, and changes in how people see the value of education are also contributing towards EBSA. When all that is combined with socioeconomic pressures and reduced trust in the availability of education support, it makes families more reluctant to prioritise school attendance.

In what ways are schools successfully tackling the challenges presented by EBSA?

Many schools are using psychologically informed approaches to look for signs of distress, listen to those students and families affected and then provide links to appropriate resources.

Early identification and communication is key. When I’m working with schools, be it through consultancy or training, the most positive case studies are those where schools are working very closely with parents and caregivers to identify warning signs of EBSA early on.

Even before getting to that stage, though, effective preventative measures would include EBSA awareness training for staff, workshops for parents and increased understanding of how to manage stress and anxiety effectively among students. The schools faring best in EBSA strategies are the ones developing those strong links with families and their local communities.

What should schools be doing in response to those wider shifts in parental attitudes towards school education?

Working alongside the NAHT, I’ve seen schools being bombarded with calls from parents who are aggressive or somehow dissatisfied with their school’s offer, and real struggles around gaining parental buy-in. What we must remember is that parents are often the product of their own environment.

In my opinion, parental capacities have changed. In the work I’m doing, I’m seeing the growth of a more ‘submissive’ style of parenting, because parents are so worried about their children experiencing mental health difficulties that



they’re slipping into a style of parenting that sets fewer boundaries.

And yet, we know that boundaries keep young people safe. When we’re working with parents and carers, I’ll always keep in mind the fact that they’ll have had their own personal experiences of school. If those experiences were negative, then they may not see the value of education as easily.

To what extent are the EBSA rates we’re now seeing a ‘new normal’?

We should always hold on to the hope that EBSA rates will eventually decrease. That’s still the ultimate goal, but we must be mindful of how the education landscape is always changing.

I myself wonder what the future of education is going to look like with further integration of AI, and whether we’re going to be moving more towards a permanent hybrid form of education for young people in the long term. I think many of the young people I work with would feel more comfortable with that approach, especially those affected by anxiety.

I would, however, caveat that by pointing out how the thing we really need more of is human connection, because connecting with other people is what increases our dopamine levels. We all need to recognise that EBSA is very much on the rise, and likely here to stay – but also that it’s vital to get in early, and do that preventative work. And that starts with building up the knowledge and confidence of our educators.



Visit Dell Technologies at Bett 2025

Discover how Dell Technologies is shaping the future of learning.

Here's what Dell is bringing you at Bett 2025

Bett is the world's largest EdTech event, drawing over 30,000 educators and innovators for three days of cutting-edge technology, networking, and discovery. Stop by the Dell stand for a hands-on look at how our products are transforming education. Here's what you'll find.



Hands-on demos and immersive experiences

Dive into our interactive demos to see how Dell's latest technologies powered by Intel can elevate the classroom. From durable "kid-tough" devices to advanced educational software, experience the tools that make learning accessible and dynamic.

The Alienware technology explorer bus

For the first time in the UK, the Alienware Technology Explorer Bus arrives at Bett! Don't miss this immersive experience, where you can game on 5 Alienware gaming stations complete with high-performance accessories, take a fun, futuristic selfie at the AI Photo Booth, win Alienware gear, and check out the latest Alienware accessories.



Talk to the experts

At the Insight Hub you can hear directly from the minds behind Dells' innovative solutions. We'll have live session starting every 30 minutes from 10:30am where you can speak with experts, explore new developments and get your questions answered. Each session will last 15 minutes so come along to hear from Google, Intel, Microsoft and more.



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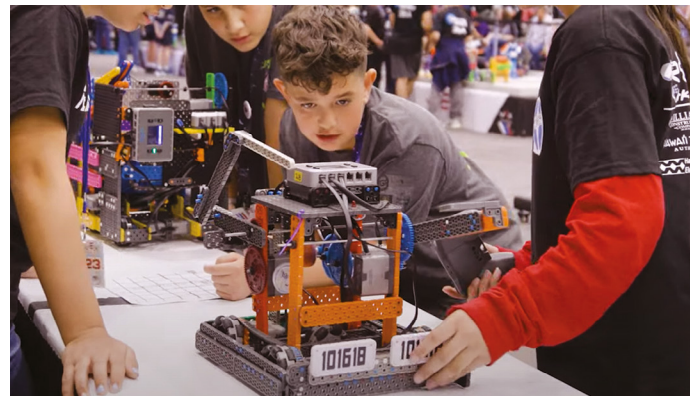


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“

Do you know WHAT I MEAN?

Encouraging teachers to use clear, unambiguous language at all times can give a significant boost to your whole school inclusion efforts, observes Rebecca Leek...

Schools are full of talk – instructions, explanations, anecdotes, requests, questions, answers and everything in between. Apparently, the average human speaks around 16,000 words every day. Multiply that by the students in your school, not to mention the adults, and that's a lot of words!

Words used precisely are what teaching is all about. At very least, clear communication is an essential part of our toolkit as teachers, as well as a powerful means of keeping students going about their school day safely, calmly and – hopefully – cheerfully.

At the same time, however, the spoken language we employ can also create problems if it's too ambiguous or overcomplicated.

Blind panic

I've previously witnessed the blind panic of a young man, not long arrived in this country from South America, being shouted at by his head of year after having taken the wrong route out of the hall after assembly. He was not only unaware of the rules surrounding the door system, but couldn't understand the reprimand he was receiving for the very thing he'd misunderstood.

I'd been teaching the student English for a couple of weeks at that point, and

knew he was only just mastering some basic vocabulary. There was no way he could have understood, 'What do you think Miss felt when you thought you could just go across the front?' That's a complicated sentence to even read, let alone understand when spoken out loud.

Every school leader, teacher, governor, student and family wants their school to be harmonious and ordered. In terms of behaviour and discipline, we're less dichotomous than some people on social media would have us believe. We want smooth days, with minimal confrontation and more time for all the lovely stuff – the explaining, listening, learning and creating.

One of the best ways to establish this kind of well-ordered, low stress environment is for adults to pay greater attention to how they talk. For the aforementioned student, English was an additional language. He was already working hard, aged 15, to access a pretty indecipherable education system.

Verbal discipline

Be aware that others in your school community will be similarly having to put in additional effort, all of the time, to process what's being said to them. They might be on the SEND register as having a 'communication and interaction' difference. They may have an autism diagnosis and find language sticky, the multifarious meanings of words and phrases potentially clagging up their thinking. If a teacher says, 'We're in the hall today,' it can prompt

intensive speculation: 'Does that mean we're in the hall now? Because we're in the classroom... Are we going to be in the hall? Should I go there now...?'

Regardless of EAL status or the categories in your SEND register, verbal discipline within a school helps everyone, and is really good for embedding workplace etiquette.

Here, then, are five ways of tidying up the oral language quagmire for the benefit of all, and some advice on how to embed this approach at your school.

5 steps to clarity

1. Name first

We all know this is better, but do we actually do it? 'Can you help me hand out the books please, Jordan?'

If Jordan wasn't listening at the start of the instruction (maybe because he was getting on with his work), he'll have missed the message. He's now looking at you, perplexed. Having already had a bad morning, you sigh again. That negativity might be just enough of a nudge to send Jordan's day on a downward spiral. So, *name first*.

2. Thornless sentences

The Waldo is a type of blackberry cultivated to have no barbs. Similarly, we can smooth out our sentences so that they're less 'thorny'. By removing unnecessary verbiage from your speech, your students will stand a better chance of understanding precisely what it is you need them to do.

Instead of, 'If you pop it over there, then we'll be all set to do the next thing,' go with 'Put your book there.' Rather than, 'Take care on the stairs, because they're slippery and we don't want any accidents, so can we make sure we walk on the left?' opt for, 'Walk on the left.'

3. Dual coding and body language

Dual coding is the act of combining something verbal with something visual, which can do much help with understanding. If you say, 'Put your book there', make that instruction clearer still through your use of body language. Point to the place you mean – it's a gesture that will reinforce your verbal instruction, and vice versa.

4. Pronouns and prepositions

Be very aware of these two word types and how you deploy them. If, for example, you say, 'Put it there,' how sure are you that the students know what 'it' is, and what you mean by 'there'? Use nouns, not pronouns, and be as precise as possible when specifying

time and space.

In place of, 'We'll take it and lay it on top,' we can instead say, 'Take the ruler. Lay it horizontally along the x axis on the graph.'

5. Direct versus questions

I'm not sure that overburdening children with questions and choices is particularly helpful – at least, not all the time. I'm all for agency, but don't

use questions when they're not needed. Not least because the syntax of how questions are formulated in English can often be tricky.

Instead of, 'Would you like to get the netballs out?' say, 'Jordan, get the netballs out.' Don't say, 'Right then – if we're all ready, shall we take ourselves over there?' Remove the question: 'We're going over there now.'

Less 'doing to' and more 'doing with'

Effective communication within school settings builds good rapport and positive relationships between pupils and staff, and is particularly important for pupils with SEND. Use of appropriate language and verbal strategies will help to build the foundations for staff understanding pupils with SEND both holistically, and as individuals – their strengths, differences and support needs.

The pupil at the centre of the Assess / Plan / Do review process is the cornerstone of the SEND Code of Practice. When co-designing plans of support, effective communication is essential for ensuring that these are suitably personalised, whilst also enabling self-advocacy.

Learning is also made more effective when meaning is co-constructed; when the teacher communicates in a way the pupil understands, and the pupil can reliably provide feedback on what they have or haven't understood. Effective communication can facilitate that vital shift from 'doing to' to 'doing with'.

Inclusive principles

The term 'Pupils with SEND' can encompass a wide range of needs, including pupils diagnosed with autism, ADHD, speech and language difficulties or physical disabilities, as well as pupils not yet diagnosed.

Consequently, there may be a number of barriers to effective communication that might benefit from the application of inclusive principles, such as those that we would advocate at the Autism Education Trust:



Focus on the Individual

- Understand, respect and use the pupil's preferred methods of communication – whether they be verbal, visual or involving the use of augmented alternative communication devices
- Be mindful of a pupil's information processing, social communication and sensory differences, particularly in terms of volume and preferences around personal space

Develop positive relationships

Ensure that all staff...

- Listen to, respect and value what pupils tell them
- Are open, honest and genuine in their interactions with pupils, since trust is vital for keeping channels of communication open with SEND pupils, who may already feel disengaged or disillusioned
- Use inclusive language
- Encourage Peer Support and develop inclusive group activities to support social communication
- Support group work and/or offer alternative methods of communication for those students who may find working in a group challenging, or even impossible
- Seek support from external professionals, such as speech and language therapists or sensory advisory teams

Create enabling environments

- Develop a culture where pupil voice is valued and pupils are able to contribute equally
- Keep all verbal communication easy to understand, while avoiding idioms, abstract phrases and sarcasm
- Allow for extra processing time, and avoid cold calling where this is likely to cause pupils distress or anxiety
- Use gestures, facial expressions and visual cues, though be aware that some pupils – such as those who are autistic – may not interpret these easily
- Upskill staff on use of assistive technologies, such as speech generation devices

Learning and development

- Ensure staff receive up-to-date training on how to facilitate effective communication with all pupils, including those with SEND



Julie Gibson is Head of Content and Product Development at the Autism Education Trust; for more information, visit autismeducationtrust.org.uk



“Verbal discipline within a school helps everyone”

Embedding this approach

Stage 1: Hearts and Minds

You need your staff to believe you, as many will have never previously struggled with language. There will be some who need to make an empathetic leap to recognise that the language they use can make life hard for certain people – students and staff alike. They must then agree that working on it will improve the workings of the school.

Ask someone whose first language isn't English to describe what it was like when they first arrived in this country. With colleagues, watch a film wherein autistic people describe what it's like to grapple with the complexities of language. Ambitious About Autism has some excellent films like this on its YouTube page.

Stage 2: Psychological safety

Enjoy talking as a staff about how we can all get it wrong sometimes. If you're a leader, model humility and share how you're aware that you need to work on something, particularly yourself. If you can establish a culture whereby people are happy to help each other and call each other out (respectfully), then you will have a self-moderating and self-improving system.

Stage 3: One step at a time

Small, incremental changes embedded properly, so that they become habit, is an especially effective way of embedding new practice. Choose one improvement – like the ‘name first’ approach – and work on this first. Adopt it as your focus for a number of weeks, until everyone can report that it's happening habitually. Once you hear names appearing in instructions first – everywhere, throughout every corridor and classroom – it'll then be time to add in the next step.

This is pretty much how the intervention approach of precision teaching works. Children will only add in new spellings once they've fully mastered previous ones.

So when it comes to the language you and your staff use, be sure to always *keep things precise* – both in how you use your existing language, and when layering in new strategies. And take things one step at a time.



Rebecca Leek has been a primary and secondary teacher, SENCo, headteacher and MAT CEO; she is currently the Executive Director of the Suffolk Primary Headteacher's Association



The law firm Browne Jacobson recently conducted a survey among school leaders and found that 65% of respondents were either ‘dissatisfied’ or ‘highly dissatisfied’ with existing government guidance on how they should support pupils with SEND. Current levels of SEND funding, and government policy on SEND more generally, came in for particular criticism, with 90% and 82% of respondents respectively being ‘very dissatisfied’ or ‘dissatisfied’ with these.

In terms of what they felt the government's policy priorities ought to be, 68% considered the creation of a national set of SEND standards to be the most important. 66% felt that funding for 33 new special schools (as announced by the previous government) was what they chiefly wanted to see, while 48% believed that priority should be given to standardising education, health and care plans.

The survey was conducted in October 2024, and took in the views of over 200 leaders – among them, CEOs, executive headteachers, trustees and governors.

According to Laura Thompson, a senior associate at Browne Jacobson specialising in SEND matters, “While insufficient SEND funding continues to be a major cause of frustration for school leaders – despite the extra £1bn pledged in the Autumn Budget – the wide range of issues captured by our School Leaders Survey is another sign, if one was needed, that the SEND system requires a significant overhaul.

“One assistant headteacher at a trust covering five different local authority areas told us they have to deal with five different processes and five different EHCP templates. Since the publication of the SEND code of practice in 2014, there have been questions around when – or if – a standardised template will be prepared for EHCPs but there is still no sign. For something that would, in the grand scheme of things, be a relatively straightforward change to make, it could make a significant difference to schools, local authorities and parents.”

The full ‘School Leaders Survey SEND findings’ report can be downloaded via tinyurl.com/ts141-SC1

It's not just here

England isn't alone in struggling to recruit teachers, observes **Jennifer Hampton** – other countries are too, so is there anything we can learn from how they've responded?

This summer, an old friend visiting from the US – possibly in an attempt to lure me across the pond – brought up the teacher shortages they were seeing in that country.

At first, I was shocked, since I'd assumed it was only here in England where this crisis existed. As a teacher of English from Belfast, I really enjoy our increasingly international staffroom and had, naively, assumed that there was still an abundance of teachers in other parts of the world. It turns out I was wrong.

Beyond the UK

It is, in fact, an international situation, and one that's growing. Some would argue that it's even dangerous.

The countries most affected include Australia, Canada, Ireland, the USA and Japan, but shortages have also been observed in numerous other high income European countries, such as Italy, France and The Netherlands. Indeed, the European Commission's 2023 Education and Training Monitor report (see tiny.cc/ts141-TR1) highlighted teacher shortages in nearly every EU country.

An article published by the Irish broadcaster RTÉ in September 2023 asked, 'Where have all the teachers gone?' (see tiny.cc/ts141-TR2). In late 2022, Australian education ministers made the decision to launch a National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, specifically to address the country's education workforce shortages.

Beyond higher income countries

Yet this is an issue that extends far beyond the borders of those high-income countries. A 2012 UN conference held in Rio de Janeiro established a series of universal goals intended to help meet global

Inevitably, our students' learning is impacted, given teachers' fundamental role in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding.

In lower income countries – where qualified teacher-to-pupil ratios already vary dramatically – shortages can

far-right politicians and leaders have become a regular feature of mainstream media. The climate crisis is exerting tangible effects on our lives, with above average temperatures and increasingly frequent episodes of severe flooding. And those are just *some* of the troubling headlines.

We're still picking up the pieces following the COVID 19 school closures. The pandemic visibly taught us just how much our students need their schools and teachers. Given our shifting geopolitical landscape, surely it's of fundamental importance that children and young people throughout the world get to secure access to high quality teachers and schools?

What we don't yet know is who'll be picking up the pieces when, or even if the international teacher recruitment and retention crisis ever gets resolved.

Raising the prestige

In June 2023, the United Nations Secretary General established a High Level Panel on The Teaching Profession to address the

“The conversations we're having in our staffrooms, classrooms and school offices aren't just echoed across the country, but throughout the wider world”

challenges, and thus were the UN's Sustainable Development Goals born (see sdgs.un.org/goals).

Sustainable Development Goal 4, 'Quality Education,' has as one of its target outcomes, 'Universal, free primary and secondary education by 2030'. According to UNESCO's 2024 Global Report on Teachers (tiny.cc/ts141-TR4), 44 million additional primary and secondary teachers are needed to fulfil this basic right to education. However, many countries, burdened as they are by international debt, are simply unable to invest in public services like education.

We know what impact teacher shortages can have. Unqualified teachers; bigger class sizes; increased workloads; reduced subject offers.

mean no learning at all. In displacement contexts, like refugee camps, ratios can exceed one teacher to 70 students.

Picking up the pieces

Last year we experienced a summer that saw racist rioting take place across Britain. I write these words soon after the re-election of Donald Trump as US president. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is ongoing. There are no signs of any meaningful de-escalation of events in the Middle East.

At the same time, stories charting the rise of

issue. In a culture where criticism of teachers has become normalised, it's hard not to feel uplifted by seeing how the panel's recommendations include 'Enabling transformation' and 'elevating the status and dignity' of the profession.

The aforementioned Global Report on Teachers meanwhile talks about establishing a 'New social contract' that 'raises the prestige of the profession'. The report goes on to explore how a shift towards de-professionalising the education workforce has taken place, accompanied by a growing pervasiveness of monitoring and prescribed practice.

Also addressed are issues that include salaries, working conditions, the effectiveness of school leadership and the support offered to ECTs, who continue to account for a substantial proportion of the profession's leavers. The

report is able to speak to a multidimensional, global issue for an international audience, because it's a crisis underpinned by widespread tendencies towards underfunding of the kind with which we are so very familiar here in the UK.

Refreshingly, however, including teachers in policymaking lies at the heart of the approach recommended by the report – and it's an idea that may be starting to see some traction.

The NEU is currently calling on the UK government to develop a global teacher strategy and establish an independent commission to investigate how unions and government can work together on addressing the teacher shortage crisis. They're also demanding that recruitment strategies adopted in the UK don't exacerbate teacher shortages elsewhere.

A disempowered profession

I personally have no plans to move to the US to teach, but teacher migration is another complex strand of this global issue – and one I suspect we'll be hearing a lot more about in the coming months and years.

Nor does the complexity end there. Pupil to teacher ratios; what constitutes a 'qualified' teacher; how we compare across expectations between different education systems across multiple continents – all these are

amongst the challenges as well. And that's not even taking into account how conflicts are impacting upon children, young people and teachers in the war-torn countries we regularly hear about in the news.

Last autumn, teachers received a 5.5% pay award in their pockets. At the time of writing, the government's wide-ranging Curriculum and Assessment Review is ongoing, with its findings due for release some time in 2025.

Becky Francis, the review's leader, has used words like 'disempowered' and 'de-professionalised' when publicly discussing the review's emerging themes thus far. It may be that the review's conclusions end up chiming with the elevation of the profession urged by the Global Teacher Report.

Since that conversation with my friend last summer, I've been able to place my frustrations about what's happened to my pay, and my perceptions of a profession I care deeply about, into an international context. The conversations we're having in our staffrooms, classrooms and school offices aren't just echoed across the country, but throughout the wider world. And it's really important that we know that.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Hampton (@brightonteacher) is an English teacher, literacy lead and former SLE (literacy)

SO WHAT ARE OTHER COUNTRIES DOING?

Singapore, South Korea and Finland are among the countries most commonly cited as **not** experiencing significant teacher shortages. Among those that are, here are some of the steps they're taking to address their recruitment difficulties:

- ▶ Scholarships and bursaries for teacher training courses
- ▶ Reductions in teaching and contact time
- ▶ Significant teacher salary increases so that they're comparable, or higher than equivalent professions
- ▶ Adjusting salaries upwards in urban areas with more expensive housing
- ▶ National campaigns aimed at highlighting and celebrating the work of teachers
- ▶ Creating mechanisms that enable teachers to have a voice in policy and planning
- ▶ Developing new career pathways and making improvements to those already in place
- ▶ Creating leadership cultures based on distributed decision-making and collaboration
- ▶ Increasing funding, entitlements and time for professional development, in terms of both pedagogy and subject knowledge
- ▶ Shifting towards placing more focus on pedagogy
- ▶ Offering opportunities for teachers to drive their own development – including learning techniques utilised in other countries
- ▶ Significant reductions in the use of standardised examinations



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+ Its three parallel forms are ideal for tracking progress after periods of intervention

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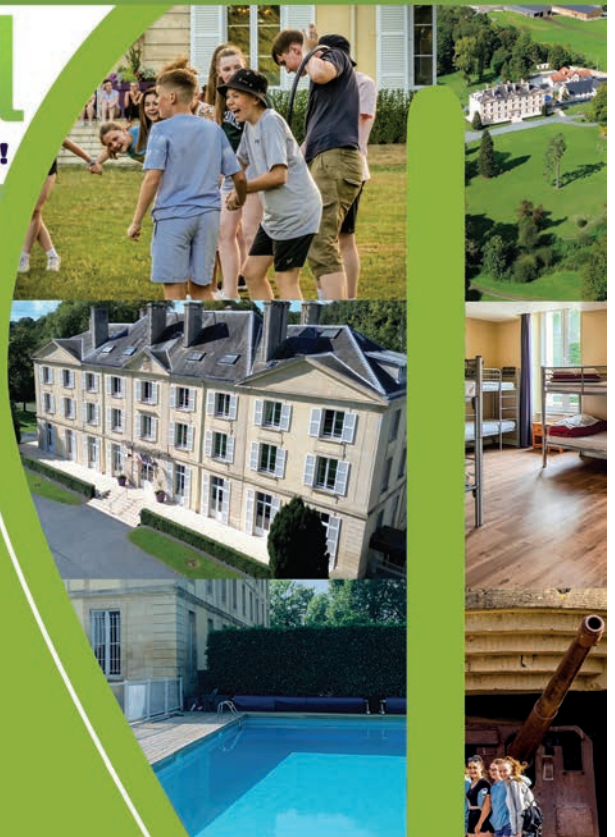
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Can we fix it?

If the teacher feedback from several recent listening exercises is any indication, there's a growing desire for Ofsted to change in some fairly fundamental ways, observes **Adrian Lyons**...



In March 2024, Ofsted embarked on an ambitious listening exercise named 'The Big Listen', aimed at engaging educators, school leaders and stakeholders across England. While the consultation was positioned as a bold initiative, many questioned whether it was structured to sidestep deeper, more fundamental questions.

Alongside the publication of Ofsted's response the following September, an independent response emerged, aptly titled the 'Alternative Big Listen' (ABL), conducted by two former senior HMIs (Frank Norris and Professor Colin Richards), with the support of other former HMIs – including me – and educational experts (see thealternativebiglisten.co.uk).

The ABL surveyed over 1,300 individuals in the education sector, and has provided compelling insights that call for urgent, systemic change in Ofsted's approach to inspection. Some of its findings were stark – such as the 91% of respondents who felt that Ofsted was 'not fit for purpose,' and the significant 90% who perceived inconsistencies in inspections across different regions.

As those overseeing the ABL noted when unveiling their final report, "*Ofsted has lost very significant levels of trust and confidence.*" The survey further highlighted how 85% of participants disagreed with the notion that the proportion of schools graded

Good or Outstanding accurately reflects the quality of the system as a whole. Additionally, 83% of respondents supported a moratorium on routine inspections, emphasising instead the need for a comprehensive review before continuing with the current inspection model.

These statistics reflect a shared concern – is Ofsted measuring the right metrics, and is it doing so fairly and effectively?

Greater sensitivity

Alongside the release of its Big Listen report, Ofsted also published a review by former Chief Inspector Dame Christine Gilbert, which examined Ofsted's response to the tragic circumstances surrounding the inspection of Cavendish Primary School. The inquest into the incident highlighted concerns around the conduct of that inspection, which was found to have contributed to the distress and subsequent death of the school's headteacher, Ruth Perry.

The review detailed how Ofsted's current leaders responded by attempting to instil a culture of greater sensitivity, in which all inspectors were required to regularly check in on the wellbeing of headteachers – a practice that effective inspectors were routinely performing already.

Dame Christine's report did, however, raise broader concerns surrounding Ofsted's governance – particularly the limited role of its non-executive board in critical decision-making. She noted that HMCI is not fully

accountable to the board, and that the board lacks control over Ofsted's budget. This financial constraint has driven a high-volume 'dominant inspection' approach, which has in turn led to rapid staff turnover and a lack of experience among inspectors. It surely can't be right that Ofsted's governance is less robust than the expectations placed upon the schools it inspects?

Score cards

These reports were all published in early September 2024, and were thus to some extent overshadowed by the government's announcement that 'Overall effectiveness' grades for state schools would no longer form part of Ofsted's inspections, with immediate effect.

From September 2025, Ofsted reports will have evolved into 'score cards' – something that seems to have been generally received as a positive move. It may well be, though I do worry that we may end up with something akin to inspection reports as they existed around 2010, whereby many worthwhile judgements were required around the 'Every Child Matters' agenda.

As schools were being judged on the ECM agenda, they had an accountability incentive – which was great. Sadly, however, inspections lacked the resources to make

anything like the 31 judgements required for a secondary school with a sixth form. Consequently, many of the sub-judgements lost any meaning.

As a specialist HMI at the time, my own analysis showed that unless the inspection was led by a member of the economics, business and enterprise team, the judgement on '*The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic wellbeing*' would invariably be identical to the judgement for '*Pupils' achievement*'.

Unless something more fundamental changes at Ofsted, score cards may not be the panacea that many seem to be hoping for. I know that when in opposition, the Labour Party had been thinking about them; I just hope that Bridget Phillipson comes up with something more original than simply letting Ofsted tinker with its existing framework once again.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adrian Lyons was one of His Majesty's Inspectors between 2005 and 2021 and now works with MATs, teacher training providers and LAs to support education; find out more at adrianlyonsconsulting.com

WORDS OF *encouragement*

Meera Chudasama sets out a series of engaging classroom activities designed to both celebrate reading, and harness the enthusiasms of those for whom the printed word can present a struggle...

Are you struggling to get your students stuck into a book? Do they love storytelling and audiobooks, yet struggle with comprehending a text?

If so, there are a range of ways in which you can get them intrigued and hooked on the written word by harnessing their appreciation of stories. Here, I've set out some strategies for helping students develop their comprehension skills more fully, and in time, discover an enjoyment for reading.

10 minutes of reading

First off, we can use blending strategies, whereby audiobooks and other media are combined with the written word, and consider using a broader selection of written forms of reading in our teaching practice. Students can sometimes find comfort in listening to audiobooks, so try showing them how there's space for both verbal and written storytelling.

Some of you may already be embedding 10 minutes of independent or class reading at the start of your lessons. One way of making this exercise more effective is to immediately follow the reading time itself with some short questions posed to the class – for example...

- Who has read a good introduction to a character?
- Can someone read a favourite part of their book out loud? Tell us why

this is your favourite part.

- Has anyone noticed a plot twist, flashback or flash-forward?

Asking specific questions like this, which help to embed knowledge of language and structural features, will soon get students embedding that same language within their thinking.

It should also enable students to start recognising certain literary techniques,

and those that they're reading in the classroom.

Follow the steps below and use the accompanying download (see 'Free Resources' panel) to organise this game as a starter activity or plenary – it can always be tweaked, amended or even developed further to suit the needs of your class.

Step 1: Create (or download) a worksheet with the prompt 'Name 3...' and give each

so dedicate one tutor session per week to reading a short story to the group purely for the purposes of pleasure, and *not* for analysis.

Read the story aloud to model good reading, being careful to check your intonation and understanding of the punctuation ahead of time.

Two good stories to use for this are 'Lamb to the Slaughter' by Roald Dahl and 'The Red Room' by H.G. Wells. Pause at key moments of the story to ask students questions, such as:

“Design quick activities that task students with considering different aspects of a story they've read”

and transfer that skill back into the work you set them in class.

You can start to establish links between your own class reader to any books the students might be choosing to read themselves. If you're studying foreshadowing, for example, ask students, 'Have you used foreshadowing in your own story? What impact does it have?'

The '5 Seconds' game

Then there's the '5 Seconds' game – one you might be familiar with from playing with family and friends.

Suitable for pairs or groups, it's easily adapted to fit the English classroom, a great tool for retrieval practice and can support students in connecting ideas between stories they're listening to in their own time

pair/group a pile of 'Name 3...' cards.

Step 2: One member of the group picks a card and proceeds to 'name 3...' varieties of whatever the card specifies within 5 seconds. If they run out of time, their partner or another member of the group has a go.

Step 3: Instruct the students to keep a running tally of points, with one point earned per correct suggestion as prompted by the card. You could introduce an additional incentive by drawing up a class leaderboard.

Tutor reading challenge

This works best with larger groups or as a class activity. The aim of reading during tutor time is to ultimately increase the enjoyment students get from reading –



- What happened here?
- What has happened to [X character]?
- What do you think will happen next?
- How could this happen?
- Why could this happen?

Rather than encouraging analysis, though, what we want to do here is encourage students' interest in the story first and foremost, while developing their understanding of the story's characters and events.

If time allows, why not add some drama? Once the story's been read through, have students assume the roles of the story's characters and continue the narrative orally.

Reading logbooks

With the aid of just a standard exercise book, we can get students to better organise their thoughts with regards to one or more texts that they're reading.

Design quick activities that task students with considering different aspects of a story they've already read. Each entry can work as a separate homework assignment, encouraging students to participate in a range of reading-related tasks, such as:

- Drawing a map or view of a particular location featured in the story
- A short transcription of what a text message exchange between two of the story's main characters might look like
- Imagining the social media profile of one of the story's characters and how their posts would read

30-Day reading challenge

You can devise a 30-day challenge for your students, or support them in creating one of their own.

A 30-day reading challenge should give students 30 small reading tasks to complete over the course of 30 days. Ensuring that these tasks are kept short and easy to manage will give students the confidence to develop their reading skills. There's a link to an example in the 'Free resources' panel opposite.

You could tweak the example provided and use alternative online links to embed audiobooks you feel might be more suitable for your class. The 30-day reading challenge is a great way of helping students to develop greater breadth and depth in their regular reading habits.

What's more, you could embed half-termly or termly challenges focused on different genres or specific authors. However you go about using it, this kind of reading challenge can be effective at targeting the needs of individual students.

Text storyboards

This activity can work in many different ways. For students who love listening to audiobooks, or can often be found gripped by a graphic novel, supporting their comprehension of text with visuals can be a good way of blending reading strategies.

You can trial this technique by using a short story and following the 3-step 'read, pause, draw' strategy outlined below:

- **Read** a part of the story
- **Pause** at a point you feel gives students enough stimulus to draw from
- **Draw** a frame or picture that encapsulates what they have just read

Here, students are utilising their summary skills via



tw teachwire FREE RESOURCES

21 'Name 3...' prompts for the '5 Seconds' game
bit.ly/ts141-SR1

Full 30-day reading challenge task list, presented as a student handout
bit.ly/ts141-SR2

visual means. They can support their drawings by writing their own written summaries immediately beneath, or by directly quoting from the text. Whichever one they opt for, you'll be able to keep track of how well they're comprehending the text.

For added challenge, make this a timed activity, or direct students' attention to an area of particular focus – such as the conventions of Gothic horror, for example.

Of these strategies, my own personal favourites are the 5-second game and the 30-day reading challenge – both of which aim to bring students together in a shared passion for reading, while giving those who typically struggle with reading to try their hand at smaller, more manageable tasks. Give them a go, and start thinking about how you can support all readers in further developing their comprehension skills outside the classroom.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meera Chudasama is an English, media and film studies teacher with a passion for design and research, and has developed course content for the Chartered College of Teaching



The (*Incomplete*) Lit in Colour Play List 2024

Plays written by writers of colour for
11-18 year-olds to study and perform



Can you recommend a further 60 plays by writers of colour that my students can explore in the classroom? *Yes, we can*

This question posed to us by a secondary school teacher remains at the heart of all we do in the Lit in Colour campaign.

This second (*Incomplete*) Play List is filled with more powerful stories, fascinating characters and varieties of lived experiences so students can discover the creativity, rewards and relevance they offer.

The Play List recommends plays for Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 with every play exploring a range of themes and concerns, all of which are representative of topics and issues that affect students today. With content warnings, themes and signposts to additional teaching resources, this List helps teachers to introduce any of these plays into secondary school classrooms.



FOCUS ON: THE ARTS

Whether helping students develop their design and illustration skills, or breaking down those participation barriers in drama lessons, we look at how arts teachers can encourage their classes to experiment and engage with powerful forms of creativity

How can teachers cultivate the skills needed to appreciate and embrace different artforms?

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APPLY YOURSELF

Hannah Day explains why applied art and design warrants a place within a curriculum more typically concerned with matters of painting, sculpture and the like...

Our art department recently needed to find some temporary cover. Fine art teachers were lining up to help us out. Photography tutors were thinner on the ground. The pool of graphic communication specialists proved to be a desert, with no one able or willing to be found, anywhere.

Given the increasingly applied nature of the subject, why the lack of available tutors?

Limited by resources

While the specialisms available for both the GCSE and GCE pathways remain the same, it's fair to say that many schools – limited by resources and student numbers – only offer traditional, fine art-focused courses. Related subjects such as textiles, graphics and 3D design are often further rooted in technology – could that also be part of the reason?

Still contending with our temporary cover needs, I cast my mind back to some of the art teachers I'd got to know throughout my career. While I'm lucky enough to share our graphics course with an experienced illustrator, most art teachers I know are painters who mix their own practice with teaching. It logically follows that if your work is fine art, then that's where your teaching will be more focused too.

If my recent experiences are in line with the national picture, we should reconsider applied art's place in our teaching – and how we can ensure teachers and students get to develop confidence in this important area.

Applied art has a place

It may be that your applied art provision is already extensive. Conversely, you may have barely thought about it at all – or if you have, perhaps even dismissed it as a 'lesser' form of creativity. Wherever you fall on the spectrum, we need all art teachers to value applied approaches to creativity, so that they can craft well-considered projects for their students.

Graphics is a very popular course at my college for several reasons – the chief one being that students can see how it clearly leads into

“Could your students photograph the rehearsals for the school's next big theatre production and design the program?”

various careers. They also respond well to being tasked with meeting clear briefs that have listed outcomes, and can bring their own interests to bear on their studies by linking projects to the graphics outcomes required within various fields.

For many, the more typically conceptual and personal nature of fine art projects holds little appeal, but they still want to be creative. These pathways offer them just that.

Start simple

The vast majority of our students don't possess any Photoshop experience when they join us, which is why we'll start with a simple project that teaches them all the basics, before leading to their first graphic outcome.

Inspired by the Bauhaus school, our students will learn how Photoshop can be used to move, rotate, resize and duplicate objects. Simple text is then added, and finally their designs will be applied to a set of four postage stamps.

This process teaches them about various design parameters, including dimensions, considerations around displaying the price and King's head, and the need for a collection of different designs to convey a degree of unity. With the added contextual element, we'll spend around 12 hours

on this project, but the process can be streamlined. This being their first project at college, we'll ensure there's scope for students to work at a steady, unpressured pace.

Whenever we've come to plan for the year ahead, this project has always held firm – because introducing the foundational elements of graphics is a neat and rewarding project for our students to take part in.

Resource reuse

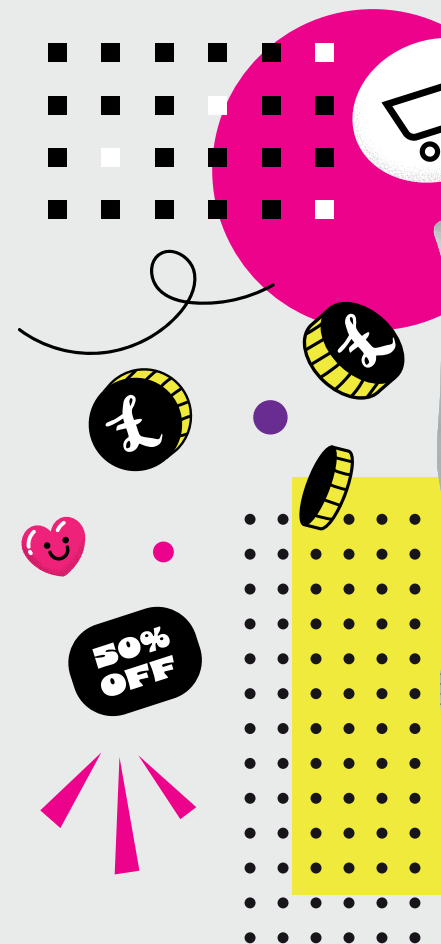
If you're relatively new to all this, don't be put off by the potentially time-consuming nature of resource preparation. There are a great many free resources out there, so use those instead.

Among my favourites are the videos found on the 'Mr

E's Art Club' YouTube channel (see youtube.com/@nickengland151). Each video spotlights an individual graphic or photographic artist, and then shows you how to recreate their work digitally, step by step. Since each tutorial has a related artist, there's an easy contextual link to ensure assessment objectives are being met.

What's more, those steps are demonstrated using Photopea (photopea.com) – an image editing application clearly modelled on Photoshop, but free to use and a great alternative if your school lacks an Adobe licence. It's browser-based, meaning students can access it outside of school, thus opening up your homework possibilities.

Alternatively, decide what



you want to teach and find a video to match. When teaching technical elements, I'll ensure that I have related videos for many of the lessons coming up, as backups for absent students and those keen to recap certain topics and processes.

Link to what students love

It seems that nearly everything we encounter and interact with nowadays includes some form of branding, visual identity or graphic design. Let students decide what the focus of their projects should be, and then use this as a base to which you can link the teaching.

Our course covers logo and typography design, websites and packaging – all of which can be applied to any number of sectors. Take an album, for example – there will be a logo indicating the record label, website and social media details for the musicians, the dimensions of surrounding packaging itself, the CD cover and the typography

used across it all. I ask students to pick any brand – a product, place, film, album, book or campaign they're interested in. The only area we steer clear of is game design, since games already have such a clear visual element.

This is, of course, covered across the duration of a 2-year A Level course, and you don't have to do it all. You could tackle just one area. Decide if logos play to your strengths, or if typography is what excites you. That way, your students can gain insights into applied art while still leaving time for those fine art activities.

Consider other pathways

I've focused so far on graphics, as that's what I teach, but 'applied' can refer to any outcome that has a commercial end product.

Could your students photograph the rehearsals for the school's next big theatre production and design the program? Could



tw teachwire FREE RESOURCES

A 'Bauhaus' graphics project containing class/homework activities, visual displays and evaluation questions
bit.ly/ts141-AA1

they design sculptures for a shared space within the school grounds and create a maquette as their outcome?

Could they redesign the art block with architectural drawings, or design the bedroom of their dreams, complete with mood boards, fabric samples and their own self-designed lamp?

One of our ex-students, who now works as an architect, visits us from time to time and sits in on lessons. After recounting a potted history of his journey from this very college to his current career, he sets the students a design brief hinging on a specific problem at a certain location, and provides them with a map of the surrounding land and existing building(s).

Most recently, this activity concerned a football club that needed to rebuild its changing facilities. The brief presented a mix of limits and possibilities and challenged students to find a balance between the two. For that lesson, the students were able to experience the type of work undertaken by practising architects and consider it as a possible career route. Indeed, several students stayed after the session to grill him, keen as they were to find out more.

So whatever you do, don't overlook this varied and exciting aspect of art education. It's where many of our students will likely end up, should they choose to enter the world of creative work – so let's show them how to get started.

ONLINE INSPIRATIONS

If you're unsure where to start with teaching applied art, see if the following suggestions can get those creative juices flowing...

PHOTOGRAPHY

You can find plenty of visually inspiring feeds on Instagram – one I particularly love is @things_i_see_when_its_quiet. Get students to record their visual style – maybe it's muted colours, geometric shapes, industrial locations – then respond to their work, presenting it in the same grid format.

TEXTILE DESIGN

Instagram user @imakestagram is full of crazy tutorials. Her original clothing garments are somewhat resource-heavy, but her accessories are made with everyday items and easy for students to recreate themselves. Link to millenary, footwear or costume design to widen the contextual base.

ARCHITECTURE

Tiny Houses (see their Facebook page at facebook.com/itinyhouses) serves up numerous examples of compact living. Use these as inspiration to get students designing their own living space with a series of limits. This links well to environmental, housing supply and cost concerns.

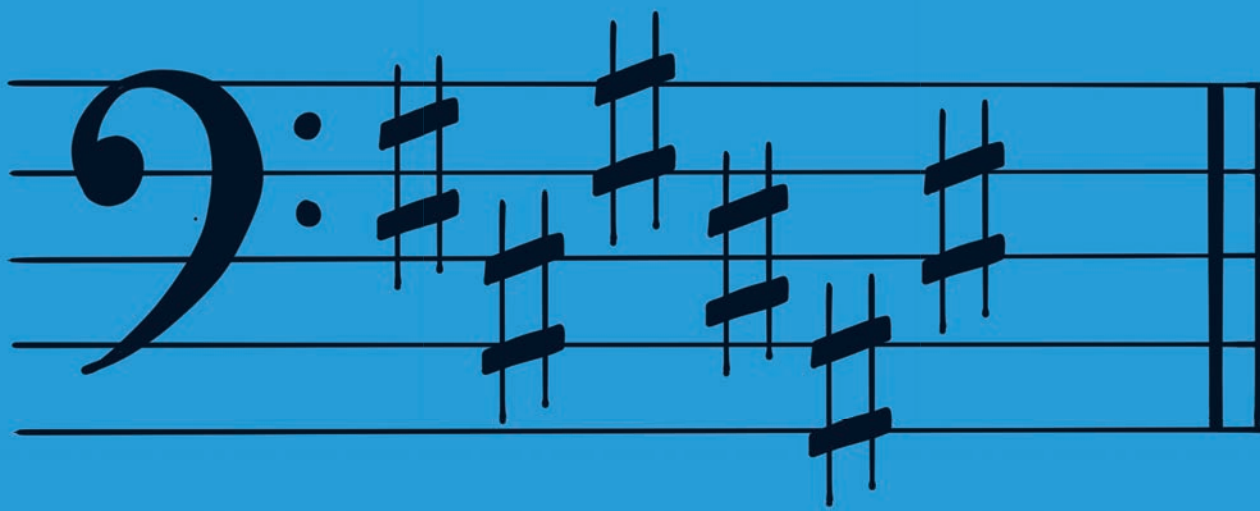


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hannah Day is head of art, media and film at Ludlow College

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Stage FRIGHT

All KS3 drama teachers will have encountered students reluctant to engage with the subject's practical demands – here's how to reach them, writes **Martin Matthews**

Some students thrive in practical lessons. Others will shy away, while a few will refuse to get involved in any way at all.

Reaching students who don't want to engage isn't easy for a drama teacher – nor indeed for any teacher asking students to partake in practical lessons that may require moving out of comfort zones.

In drama, the open space can be daunting for some. As teachers leading these spaces, it's our responsibility to make them less intimidating and ensure

they're welcoming places for all students, regardless of ability.

Common reactions

A refusal to engage in practical work can emerge from feelings of anxiety, but also from a lack of interest in, or understanding of the subject – “*What's the point of drama, Sir?*”

It can be frustrating for a teacher if students don't want to engage, but then consider the reactions of teachers during INSET days when asked to undertake group work. The responses aren't always positive. My point is that as teachers, we sometimes know how the children in our classes feel.

We may have even been there ourselves, when asked to do something we don't feel comfortable with.

Reaching students that don't wish to engage with lessons is difficult, and there's no 'one size fits all' approach when supporting these students. There are, though, some key points we could consider.

Safe spaces

Drama spaces, like any classroom, should be safe spaces. Leading by example is crucial, and setting a positive tone in the classroom really matters. It's important to outline clear guidelines for the teaching space, in which all people should

be included in a collaborative environment. Some teachers opt for classes setting rules together; others will have simple supportive procedures that encourage collaboration and mutual respect. Drama should be a place of continuing growth for everyone, irrespective of background.

For students who feel anxious, they need to know that their teacher is someone they can speak to. Letting your classes know you're available to discuss issues can really help. Listening to concerns and then acting on them to break down barriers is key.

For some students, setting simple goals can make a big difference. Some years ago, there was a student on my register who was never in my classroom. Taking the time to visit the inclusion room where she went for drama lessons, introducing myself, listening to her concerns about drama and setting manageable goals helped get her into the classroom, start taking part and ultimately enjoy the lessons.

Not all students will get that far, but for some, setting foot in the classroom and seeing that it's a space they can at least be in is huge. Celebrate those little achievements, and where possible, involve parents and colleagues in the process.

Sense of purpose

The late paediatrician and psychoanalyst, Donald Winnicott, once noted that, “*It is creative apperception that makes life worth living*”. Young people finding joy in play or drama can be important for them. Sometimes it's essential to just let drama be for drama's

sake, and have it be an escape, a place for imagination to grow or, dare I say it, *fun*.

Spaces like this can bring about personal growth and development in immeasurable ways. That said, given the ongoing push for lessons to be linked with careers, young people can also be encouraged to engage by highlighting to them the skills they're developing in practical drama lessons, and how they might apply them elsewhere:

- Team work/group work, through both listening and discussion
- Presentation and communication skills
- Critical thinking
- Leadership
- Time management and working to deadlines

Pushing these skills, while linking them to the rest of the curriculum, students' future jobs and adult lives, can engage young people and lend their learning greater relevance or purpose.

All teachers face the conundrum of how to reach certain students. There are no simple answers, no single approaches that will engage those who, for whatever reason, simply don't want to engage. Though making your classroom into a space for all students, in which they feel welcome, is certainly a good starting point.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Martin Matthews teaches in a secondary school in the North West of England

Get on their WAVELENGTH

Listening is that crucial component of KS3/4 music lessons that can often seem hardest to get right, observes **Helen Tierney** – so how can we help students become more attentive listeners?

Research projects have long concluded that it's adolescents and young adults who are most engaged with the act of listening to music. A USA-based study conducted in early 2024 found that teenagers, on average, spend 2.5 hours daily listening to music.

It would appear that the tracks of our teenage years don't pale into insignificance as we develop more sophisticated tastes. Instead, the music we listen to in our bedrooms at 15 will likely still thrill and energise us some 50 years on – more potently, it seems, than music from any other periods of our lives.

The students in our secondary music classrooms are therefore surely ripe for the enriching, informative and life-sustaining experiences in listening that we music teachers are ready to give them – so why does delivering this prove to be so challenging? Do set-works help, or ultimately hinder them from developing the deep listening experiences we know they're capable of? And more to the point – how can we even begin to compete with those all-important and ever-expanding playlists our teens spend so much time listening to?

Listening barriers

Roberto Iannandrea is the Director of Music at St George's International School in Rome, and readily concedes that the use of set-works can be problematic.

"I started teaching when the listening exam was based on unfamiliar piece," he recalls. "I remember that the teaching community was ecstatic when the set-works were introduced, because it gave teachers much more focus, and above all, resources – but set-works can be too prescriptive, and favour more 'Western Classical'-trained students, while creating frustration in those students who are more

"Students not having a secure vocabulary to really explain or critique what they are hearing is definite barrier"

pop-, rock- or jazz-oriented."

Roberto also thinks that the extensive subject vocabulary needed for KS3/4 listening is an obstacle. So too does Emily Crowhurst, Director of the School 21 performing arts school in Stratford, which won the 'Outstanding School Music Department' category in this year's Music & Drama Education Awards.

"In KS3, students not having a secure language base/vocabulary to really explain or critique what they are hearing is a definite barrier," says Emily, "and can be at KS4, if students aren't provided with the right tools to articulate what they are hearing, or given specific things to listen for.

At School 21, we explicitly share vocabulary that's linked to what we want students to listen for, to

provide direction – either on the board, or via our core language booklets."

Emily further shares Roberto's concerns around set-works limiting, rather than expanding in-depth listening skills: *"The danger is that very specific content about those works are learnt, without students gaining a fuller understanding of the music's place in a wider cross-section of a particular genre or composer."*

Are you experienced?

The variety of musical experiences (or lack thereof) that students have when they arrive in Y7 similarly concerns Chris Drake – Director of Music at the Winston Churchill School in Woking, and recipient of Classic FM's Secondary School-Age Teacher of the Year Award.

"At the beginning of KS3, the biggest challenge to class listening are the wide experiences that students have had in primary school," he observes. "These can range from students almost never having listened to music in either a school setting (KS1 and KS2) or had experience of live music, through to students who regularly listened to and analysed music (at a basic level), or were taken to concerts or shows from a

young age.

"This means things like instrument recognition, being able to feel a pulse and work out a tempo, etc. varies hugely. In addition, it means that some students haven't been exposed to a range of styles, and this can result in them being unwilling to engage with music they wouldn't normally listen to.

"I think it's important to establish listening as something that happens regularly, and an expectation in music lessons. I also think it's important that students understand that they won't 'like' every piece of music (and that there isn't an expectation for them to do so), but that they have to learn to appreciate the skill it takes to compose a piece, and find the important features that make up the music."

Chris also points out how important the visual aspect can be for many students: *"We always try and find engaging examples – often using videos to show the musicians playing, rather than just listening to a track.*

Our Y9 students really enjoy, and come up with insightful responses to a listening exercise based on a reggae remix of [The Weeknd track] 'Blinding Lights'."

A rich soundworld

Kerry Andrew has a unique perspective, positioned as she is alongside Beethoven and Bob Marley as one of the featured composers in the BBC's acclaimed 'Ten Pieces' listening project (see tiny.cc/ts141-ML1). Their commissioned piece, 'NO PLACE LIKE' has been performed and listened to by thousands of young people.

Kerry's own listening experience was traditional, very much tied to notes on the page, but their own music is anything but – blending genres and various

sounds heard all around us into a vivacious, yet accessible style. What was it like to be asked to write a piece for this long-established and highly regarded resource bank?

"This was such an amazing commission and project to be part of," Kerry says. "I wanted to create a piece that drew on students' experience of sounds in their home towns and actual homes, and sent out questionnaires all around the country. I got this fantastic range of responses back – a rich soundworld including bagpipes, football songs, mobile phones, traffic, ice cream vans, sea shanties, a cancer machine... it was this portrait of the UK through children's ears.

"I made a huge poem from their answers, and then honed it down to a more general set of lyrics that celebrated the idea of different, yet connected communities and home."

Freedom and creativity

The freedom and creativity of the kind of listening Kerry encourages in their work can only be envied by those facing the demands of preparing students for the KS4 and 5 listening papers

– but can we perhaps take something from this?

"I do wonder if a teacher can be a bit more inventive with the listening requirements, Can listening be a part of all activities, not a separate thing?" Kerry suggests. *"Can your students write reviews of each other's performances? Can you look at the way a classical composer like Mozart is used in lots of different contexts? Is it possible to encourage students to bring in music they like that works in similar ways to something they're studying? Can there be listening parties?"*

"I think it's important to really celebrate music as a whole world that includes all genres and activities, and for none to seem any less worthy than any other."

Not every listening lesson will necessarily be a party, but it's maybe worth thinking about how you can free things up when planning – especially when we consider the long-term potential impact of the music we put before our students.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Helen Tierney has run music departments in comprehensive schools for over 25 years, was an advanced skills teacher for secondary music in Barnet and now works freelance in music teaching, examining and dementia work.

Find out more about Kerry Andrew's music on scores.kerryandrew.com; their recent novel, *WE ARE TOGETHER BECAUSE*, is available now (£9.99, Atlantic Fiction)



A WORD IN YOUR EAR

Classic FM's Secondary School-Age Teacher of the Year, Chris Drake, presents his top tips when it comes to developing students' abilities to listen to music closely and attentively...

- ▶ Make listening part of what students do regularly. If it becomes part of your routine, students won't think anything of it and quickly get used to participating in listening activities.
- ▶ Make it clear that students don't have to like every piece you show them, but that they must learn to appreciate the skill of the relevant composers.
- ▶ For new teachers, I'd say start by finding accessible and engaging examples. Once your students are used to listening in lessons, gradually introduce a wider variety of music.
- ▶ Show students videos to accompany the music that's playing, so they can also see the instruments being played, rather than just hearing them.
- ▶ Find examples of the music you love and share these with your students. This can be a great way of getting your students to know you better – and if you have the trust of your students, then they'll listen to anything!

What's New?

Our pick of the latest solutions and innovations for secondary education

1 Achieve your best

Do you have students in need of GCSE support? If so, there's still time to join Academy21's DfE-accredited, GCSE Rescue courses in the lead-up to exam season. These comprise a unique blend of 100% live teaching, interactive lessons, revision and skill sessions – as well as personalised support that will help your students achieve their best outcomes.

Courses are structured so that students can join at any time. Participants learn in small groups with others of similar ability, and undertake activities tailored to their needs with real-time feedback. Academy21 courses can be accessed through on-site provision, remotely or via a combination of both – whichever best fits your students' needs. Contact Academy21 today to find out more – email contact@academy21.co.uk or call **0800 208 8210**.



4

Rehearsal room to classroom

From Teacher Webinars to our Certificate in Teaching Shakespeare courses, the Royal Shakespeare Company offers a variety of transformative CPD opportunities for teachers. Join a CPD session to experience how we apply techniques directly from our rehearsal rooms and transfer them into your classroom to bring Shakespeare to life. Recent research into our work – Time to Act – demonstrated that using these techniques has a positive impact on the breadth, depth and complexity of the language used by young people. Crucially, the research also showed that when these practices were applied in the classroom, students' enjoyment of learning and confidence as learners increased. Find out more about the opportunities available at rsc.org.uk/learn

Photo by Sara Beaumont © RSC



2 Free CPR teaching tools

British Heart Foundation will be exhibiting at The Bett Show at ExCel

London 22-24 January 2025 – and we'd love to see you there! Did you know CPR is mandatory on the curriculum in the UK? Upskill your students and take the stress out of teaching CPR with Classroom RevivR – our free, interactive CPR training tool for students aged 11 – 16 years old. Register for Classroom RevivR now, and our expert team will be available to answer any questions you might have when you visit us on stand **SJ91**. For more information, scan the QR code or search for 'Classroom RevivR'.



British Heart Foundation



3 Enhance your history teaching

Join the Historical Association's 6-week Experienced Teacher Programme for subject-specific professional development tailored to Key Stages 3 to 5. Running online from February until May 2025, this evening course is designed for teachers who want to stay in the classroom while engaging with the latest thinking and debates in history education – without being talked down to as if they lack experience.

Explore cutting-edge debates, access a wide range of research and resources and collaborate with colleagues to enrich your practice. This is no one-size-fits-all course, but an invigorating dive into history's biggest questions. Visit history.org.uk/go/ETP to secure your place today!



5

The tech inspiration charity

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Tech she can

Tech She Can is the tech inspiration charity dedicated to inspiring the next generation of tech talent. We create and deliver free, engaging and inclusive resources for children, teachers, and parents, aiming to spark interest in tech careers from an early age. Our mission is simple but powerful – we want to help build a future where everyone has the opportunity to participate in developing technology. To help teachers connect children's passions with future technology, we've partnered with Infosys to create bespoke, free CPD sessions. For more details, visit infyspringboard.eu.onwingspan.com or techshecan.org



6 Play giveaway
 Teaching English and/or drama? Want to win 60 new diverse play texts for your class to explore? Then enter Bloomsbury Publishing's Lit in Colour competition!
 To celebrate the launch of its 2024 *(Incomplete) Lit in Colour Play List*, featuring 60 plays by writers of colour suitable for student study, Bloomsbury Publishing is offering one lucky person the chance to win ALL the plays in the 2024 Play List. To find out more, visit bloomsbury.com/LitinColour



9 Alpine experiences
 With over 30 years of experience, SkiBound is a trusted leader in school ski trips. Its team – from expert Account Managers, to on-site staff – ensures smooth, hassle-free travel to ski destinations across Europe and North America. Exclusive Clubhotels in the French Alps provide affordable, premium access to top resorts, with dedicated staff and in-house ski technicians ready to support groups on arrival.
 With strict health and safety standards and full accreditations from the LOtC, School Travel Forum, ABTA and ATOL, SkiBound offers reliable expertise, financial protection and personalised service, making it the UK's top choice for memorable school ski experiences. To find out more, visit skibound.co.uk

7 Engineering excellence
 Founded in 1944, Denford has manufactured the machines on which teachers inspire and students learn for eight decades. Specialising in the production of CNC (Computer Numerical Controlled) routers, lathes and milling machines, over the last 80 years we have established a reputation as a leading supplier to education, providing machines to some of the world's most renowned schools, colleges, and universities.
 In 2000, Denford founded the global education challenge, F1® in Schools – a not-for-profit organisation committed to furthering STEM learning – and we continue to be a proud sponsor and supporter of the challenge, as well as its official equipment supplier. Explore our product range at denford.co.uk



10 Reading excitement
 As a children's reading charity, BookTrust's aim is to help schools bring reading to life. That's why it developed the Bookbuzz programme, to give students aged 11 to 13 the chance to choose and keep a book they'll love from a collection of 16 titles, newly selected each year by an expert panel of school librarians, teachers and children's reading advocates.
 Priced at just £3.45 per student, Bookbuzz is a great value way of developing reading for pleasure at your school. Find out more at booktrust.org.uk/bookbuzz

access Education People

8 Put your people first
 With teacher shortages on the rise, schools are searching for solutions to help them manage their biggest asset – their people. Access Education HR and Payroll can provide a powerful solution for schools and MATs. More than just software, it offers a comprehensive suite that streamlines recruitment, promotes wellbeing initiatives and empowers staff with mobile access to vital HR information.
 This cloud-based platform can tackle complex tasks like pensions and benefits, freeing up valuable time and resources. Over 9,000 UK learning institutions trust Access Education. Invest in a platform that puts your people first. Learn more at theaccessgroup.com/education

Was that... *swearing*?

Michael Power offers some practical advice for how to manage incidents of offensive language being used beyond the classroom walls

You're walking down the bustling school corridor when you hear it – a burst of laughter, some loud chatter, and then *that* word. Or... was it? Maybe it was actually a 'ship'? Or a 'duck'? But no, no – you're pretty certain it wasn't.

If you work with secondary-aged children, then chances are you've faced this dilemma countless times – the overhearing of what sound like off-colour remarks in shared spaces like hallways, the canteen or the playground. Managing language in a structured classroom is one thing, but what about all those chaotic moments between lessons? Should we intervene every time? Or let it slide? And at what point does ignoring it become a tacit nod of approval?

'Casual' language

Students don't exist in a vacuum. They absorb language from TikTok, YouTube, their families and – let's be honest – each other. This cocktail of influences means that by the time they hit the school grounds, they'll be armed with a colourful vocabulary, much of which won't be PG-rated.

Take, for example, an exchange between two Y10 students I recently overheard on the playground. Their conversation was punctuated with slang, a few mild expletives and what I can only describe as a creative insult involving someone's favourite football team.

None of it was malicious; it was boisterous, cheeky and typical of teenage banter. But as I stood there in my

high-vis jacket, radio in hand, I wondered – *should I be stepping in?*

The answer isn't actually that straightforward. On the one hand, schools do have a duty to create a respectful environment. On the other, however, we risk playing games of linguistic whack-a-mole – jumping on every slip-up, creating a culture of hyper-surveillance in the process. Somewhere between those extremes lies the sweet spot.

Why language matters

Words have power. A well-timed '*Good morning!*' can brighten someone's day, just as a casually dropped insult can linger like a bad smell. And while not every

expletive or off-colour joke will be loaded with intent to harm, they still contribute to the culture of a school.

Unchecked language – be that swearing, casual sexism or use of derogatory terms – can normalise disrespect. A Y7 student hearing older peers pepper their conversations with slurs might think, '*Oh, that's just what we say here...*' Worse, students on the receiving end of offensive language may feel alienated, making the school feel less like a safe



space and more like a battlefield.

But here's the thing – language is also *context-dependent*. A whispered swear word during an intense playground football match isn't the same as a student loudly hurling insults at a peer. And therein lies the challenge for educators – distinguishing between when to intervene, and when to let things go.

Choose your battles

The key to managing language outside the classroom is knowing where to draw the line. A rule of

within earshot of younger year groups. While not malicious as such, it's a good moment to pull them aside and chat to them about being good role models.

When it's unclear whether a phrase was offensive or just bad slang, approach with curiosity rather than condemnation. Ask the student, "What do you mean by that?" 9 times out of 10, they'll see how their words could be misinterpreted.

A culture of respect

Managing language isn't about playing referee to

buddy system can work wonders. Think posters, assemblies, even TikToks – whatever gets the message across in their world.

4. Teach the power of words

Incorporate discussions about language into your lessons. English teachers have a golden opportunity here to explore how language has been used historically to oppress, uplift or change the world.

5. Restorative conversations

Instead of jumping straight to punishment, try restorative approaches. If a student uses offensive language, have them reflect. Who did this hurt? Why does it matter? These conversations build empathy and accountability.

The bigger picture

Managing language in shared spaces isn't just about avoiding swear words – it's about fostering a culture where students feel safe, respected and understood. Sure, you'll never eliminate every stray expletive from the corridors, but you can create an environment where students are mindful of their words and the impact they can have.

So next time you're strolling past a group of students and hear something borderline, take a deep breath. Decide whether it's a moment to teach, to intervene or to let go. Teaching respect isn't about perfection. It's about progress.

And if it *was* 'ship' after all, then you'll be off the hook...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Power is a headteacher and author of *The Head of Year's Handbook* (£18.99, Critical Publishing); for more information, visit michaelpower.org.uk

“Unchecked language – be that swearing, casual sexism or use of derogatory terms – can normalise disrespect”

thumb I live by runs as follows: is it harmful, disruptive or setting a bad example? If yes, intervene. If not, it might be a teachable moment in disguise.

Let's break this down with some examples.

- **Harmful:** a student using a racial slur or derogatory term, even if 'as a joke.' This needs to be addressed immediately, preferably with a calm, yet firm explanation of why it's unacceptable.
- **Disruptive:** a group of students shouting swear words across the playground for laughs. Here, a quiet word can remind them of the standards expected in school.
- **Bad example:** Older students casually swearing

every conversation; it's about building a culture where students understand the power of their words. And that starts long before the first f-bomb is dropped.

1. Set clear expectations

Your language rules need to amount to more than just 'no swearing.' Discuss what respectful communication looks like and why it matters. Use examples from real life to show how careless comments can hurt someone, or escalate a conflict.

2. Model the behaviour you expect

This one's tough. As adults, we can sometimes let an expletive slip, especially during a stressful day – but students will be watching. Keeping your own language in check sets the tone for what's acceptable.

3. Empower peer role models

Students listen to each other far more than they listen to us. A student-led campaign on respectful language, or a

'WHAT DID I JUST HEAR...?'



Sometimes, you'll catch the tail-end of a conversation and be unsure if what you heard was inappropriate or not. Here's what to do...

1 PAUSE

Don't react immediately. Knee-jerk responses can escalate situations unnecessarily. Take a moment to consider what you think you heard and whether it's worth addressing.

2 ASK

Approach calmly and say, "Can you repeat what you just said?" This gives the student a chance to clarify or rethink their words. For example, you hear a student mutter something as they walk past, and it sounds like a slur. Instead of accusing them outright, stop them and ask, "Sorry, could you say that again?" Sometimes, they'll repeat an innocent word, or realise their comment wasn't appropriate and adjust their tone. Either way, you've addressed the situation without overreacting.

3 DECIDE

Was it harmless or inappropriate? If harmless, let it go without making a fuss. If offensive, calmly explain why that language isn't acceptable and discuss the impact it could have on others.

By pausing, asking and then deciding, you model fairness while maintaining the school's culture of respect. Sometimes, simply showing students that you're listening is enough to make them more mindful of their words.

SAY IT AGAIN!

Repetition is a powerful explanation strategy that doesn't need to be boring, says **Colin Foster**...

Everyone knows that repetition is important for learning. Retrieval practice seems to be everywhere in schools at the moment, whether in the 'Do Now's' at the start of lessons, via regular formative assessments or built into homework activities.

Yet I rarely see repetition treated with the importance it deserves when it comes to teacher explanations. Often, it seems to be assumed that saying something once should be enough – but is it?

Speaking, not heard

Every teacher knows that they may need to repeat themselves on occasion, especially when students are distracted and not listening. This is a frustrating, but familiar reality of classroom teaching. But what about those times when the students *are* listening?

It might seem pointless to repeat yourself when the students were giving you their full attention first time round. They aren't having any difficulties hearing you, so why say the same thing to them again? Won't that just lead to boredom and cause students to switch off?

New teachers are often surprised to find that students seem not to know *the very thing that they have just been told*. What these new teachers are discovering is how they can have been *speaking* to their students, yet not have been *heard*.

We can relate this to instructions about what to do next, or to content that the teacher is presenting. The teacher does their explanation – which seems to

have gone down perfectly well – and then circulates around the room. Then they suddenly discover that the students don't seem to know the information they've been discussing immediately before. "*But...I just told you that!*" the teacher will say, in disbelief.

This kind of scenario won't be unfamiliar to the more

really take in what we're saying and properly absorb it. If an explanation is important, then once is rarely enough. I've often been surprised at how a student who seems completely confused can appear to instantly sort themselves out after having just one more chance at hearing an explanation.

“The experienced teacher knows that smiling, nodding students aren't necessarily actively listening to what they're saying”

experienced teachers among you. We'll often put it down to a lack of effort or attention on the part of our students – but I don't believe this is necessarily the case.

Once is rarely enough

The curse of knowledge means that teachers are always at risk of thinking what they're teaching is simpler than it actually is. We've explained something a hundred times, thus ensuring that it's very familiar and clear to *us*. We might even be rather pleased with our explanation, which we've carefully honed over the years, to the point where it becomes hard to see how any student could fail to grasp it.

And indeed, it may be that there's nothing wrong with our explanation at all. The issue is rather that our students may need more than one bite at the apple to

Relative importance

I've noticed how both less experienced and veteran teachers alike will often give what appear to me to be very good explanations – but that experienced teachers' explanations will include quite a bit more repetition.

One reason for this is that the experienced teacher will be more capable of distinguishing between the most important and least important parts of their explanation. A less experienced teacher will more frequently have a 'flat profile' in terms of how they signal importance. They'll

say a whole lot of things, but to the non-expert, it's perhaps somewhat unclear which they see as being most central to grasping the point. The most important ideas will be effectively buried amid the details.

The experienced teacher is more likely to say something like, *'The thing you really have to remember here is...'* or *'Listen carefully to this next bit – this is the big idea,'* or *'There's really just one main thing you have to understand about this'*. This isn't just a strategy for combating inattention – they'll still say this kind of thing even if the class are sat in silence looking directly at them and nodding.

The experienced teacher knows that smiling, nodding students aren't necessarily actively listening to what they're saying. Capable teachers will, of course, be careful not to overuse these strategies, lest they

become ineffective. But I do hear that kind of repetition a fair bit when watching experienced teachers at work.

Highlighting

In written text, we can identify important elements by using bold subheadings – like the one just above these lines – to 'highlight' the main ideas I'm talking about. But how do you do this in speech? Surely not by just speaking more loudly...?

The main equivalent of the highlighting pen when speaking aloud is, simply, *use of repetition*.

Experienced teachers can often be quite explicit about this – *"What I've just said there is really important. I'm going to say it again."*

We need to help students see the wood for the trees. If we simply say *'Everything is*

important', that's analogous to the student who indiscriminately runs their highlighter pen over every line of their revision guide. It may look pretty, but if everything stands out then nothing stands out.

Similarly, we have to be selective with what to highlight by repetition, so that we can draw students' attention to those key ideas. This requires thinking deeply about the curriculum and the content, so that we can better discern what those key ideas actually are.

Avoiding tedium

But how do we prevent our delivery from becoming merely boring, and prompting students to tune out? If they know that we're going to be saying everything twice, will they only bother listening for half the time?

I think there has to be a natural degree of unpredictability to our delivery, so that students can't predict when and what will be repeated. This means they need to stay on their toes if they're going to follow – but I also think there are other things we can do to

avoid becoming tedious.

If something is worth saying once, it's often worth saying more than once. Repetition can be extremely valuable when focused on the most important points.

Do you see what I did there, in those two preceding sentences? The second one essentially repeats the same point made in the first, but not in exactly the same words. The meaning is similar, so I've succeeded in repeating my main point – but I haven't simply reproduced the sentence by copying and pasting it.

Experienced teachers will do this often. They're extremely good at saying the same thing in two, three or even four different ways. I would surmise that teachers typically perfect this skill by having to adapt their explanations to different student groups and classes.

They can always explain the same thing again in a slightly different way, for a student who didn't follow the first time, but I'll see this skill deployed most often in classrooms when the teacher is speaking to the whole class.

The teacher will emphasise their point repeatedly, but using slightly different language each time, thus avoiding monotony while still underlining the point they want to highlight.

Careful use of repetition like this can help students grasp things more efficiently, and ultimately feel more successful.



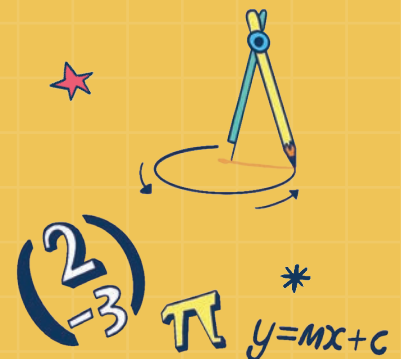
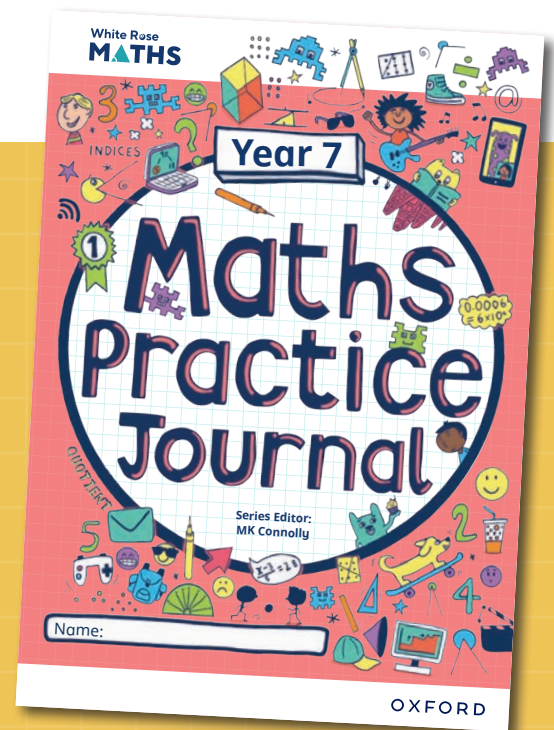
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Colin Foster (@colinfoster77) is a Reader in Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics Education at Loughborough University, and has written many books and articles for teachers; find out more at foster77.co.uk

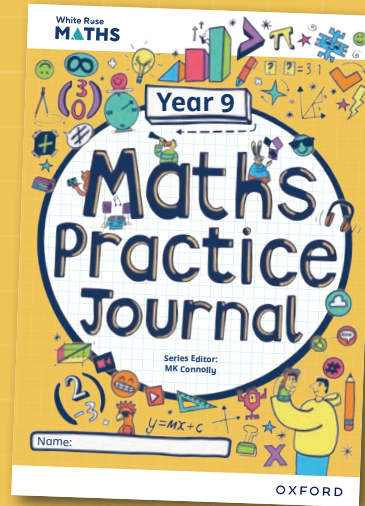
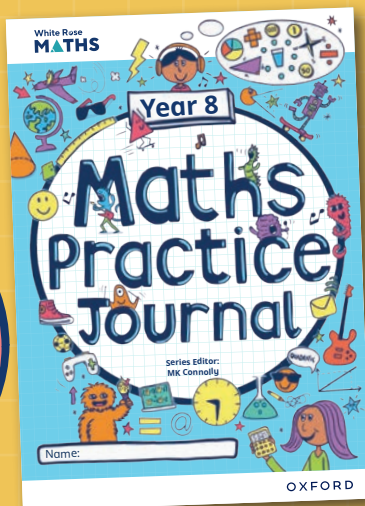
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[MATHS PROBLEM]

LOWER AND UPPER BOUNDS

Students often get confused trying to find upper and lower bounds of intervals, says **Colin Foster**

In this lesson, students learn the difference between the upper and lower bound of an interval.

THE DIFFICULTY

*I'm thinking of a number.
It rounds to 250.
What could the number be?*

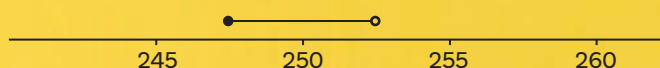
Students could respond to this question on mini-whiteboards by writing one possible number. Different students might assume that the number has been rounded to different degrees of accuracy (e.g. to the nearest 1, nearest 5, nearest 10 or nearest 50). This will lead to different answers being correct or incorrect.

THE SOLUTION

Resolve this confusion by completing this table. To start with, just complete the middle 'Lower bound' column. The lower bound is the smallest possible value that my number could be.

I get 250 when my number is rounded to...	Lower bound	Upper bound
... the nearest 1.		
... the nearest 5.		
... the nearest 10.		
... the nearest 50.		

Number lines (see top of opposite column) may help students to see that the lower bounds are 249.5, 247.5, 245 and 225. For example, to see the answer for rounding to the nearest 5, they need a number line that goes up in 5s.



What do you think the 'upper bound' means?

This is more complicated, because the upper bound **isn't** the highest possible value my number might be. There **isn't** a highest possible value that my number might be. For example, for rounding to the nearest 5, my number could be anywhere **up to** 252.5, but it can't actually **be** 252.5, because 252.5 would round **up** to 255.

It's worth spending time on this point, because if students don't get this then they will always be confused about upper bounds. They might want the upper bound to be 252.4, but that can't be right, because 252.41 is larger and would also round down to 250. So would 252.49 and 252.499, and so on. There isn't a largest number that rounds down to 250, and that's why we can't find it. The number 252.49, with the 9s running on forever, isn't the answer either, because this is actually equal to 252.5, which rounds **up** to 255.

So, we have to define the upper bound of the interval around 250 as the **smallest** number that **doesn't** round down to 250. That's why we use an open circle, rather than a coloured-in circle, when we draw the interval on a number line, because the interval goes **right up to** this number but **doesn't include it**.

The correct table looks like this:

I get 250 when my number is rounded to...	Lower bound	Upper bound
... the nearest 1.	249.5	250.5
... the nearest 5.	247.5	252.5
... the nearest 10.	245	255
... the nearest 50.	225	275

Checking for understanding

Choose 6 numbers that are all multiples of 50. For each of your numbers, make a table like the one we've used, showing the lower and upper bounds if your number was the result of rounding to the nearest 1, 5, 10 and 50.



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

WHY WAIT?

Drafting an AI policy might seem daunting - but if you put it off, it's your staff and students who will miss out, says **James Saunders**...

As the head of a secondary school responsible for both the education and the wellbeing of 800 or more children – not to mention the professional development and work-life balance of their teachers and support staff – I make it my business to keep abreast of technological developments that could help with all of those responsibilities.

And as a computer science specialist who still makes time for teaching alongside my SLT commitments, it would be strange if I weren't at least a little excited by the possibilities and opportunities that could lie ahead, thanks to the increasing availability and sophistication of AI solutions.

As a serious fan of the *Terminator* franchise,

however, I have to confess that when I'm thinking about AI, it's hard to get Skynet out of my head...

Mixed feelings

I suspect I'm not alone in this. When I speak to fellow school leaders about where we see artificial intelligence fitting into our practice and our organisations, the conversations tend to be pretty evenly balanced between enthusiasm and caution.

Despite the fact that we've all been happily making use of AI-driven technology for many years (hands up if you rely on Google Maps), there's something about explicitly

bringing it into the education sphere, in a way that goes beyond the algorithms which make Times Tables Rock Stars and other learning apps so effective, that seems genuinely, and perhaps worryingly game-changing.

It would appear that the families and communities we serve are similarly conflicted. In August 2024, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology published the results of a research project undertaken in partnership with the DfE, which looked into 'Public attitudes towards the use of AI in education' (see tiny.cc/ts141-AI1). The report makes for interesting

reading, though it was largely overlooked by the media at the time.

For me, one of the most telling findings was that, "*While awareness of AI is relatively high, understanding does not run deep.*" The parents and children participating in the research study weren't against the use of AI in schools by any means, but they did have serious concerns about the implications of introducing it irresponsibly.

However we may feel about it, though, as Gillian Keegan said back in December 2023, '*AI is here to stay.*' At Honeywood School, we know our learners are already regularly exposed to generative AI tools, and that our staff are increasingly making use of them too. Much like early adopters in

"I want our staff and learners to reap the benefits of AI as soon as possible"



other areas of the tech sphere, children and adults alike are finding their way through curiosity and experimentation.

Yet whilst those attributes are an important part of great learning, they aren't without risk – which is why I've felt the need to implement a more structured approach, through policy.

Getting in early

I can understand why some schools may be holding back on this. As soon as you put a policy in place, you are, in a way, shining a spotlight on the topic that policy covers. You're setting clear standards and expectations, against which you then can and should be held to account.

With so many unknowns surrounding the issue of AI, this may seem like an unnecessarily bold move to make right now. But the fact is, I want our staff and learners to reap the benefits of AI as soon as possible. My predecessor at Honywood took the same approach with personal computing devices;

we've been issuing iPads to all learners since 2011, and our pandemic experience was considerably eased as a result.

Ignoring, or even banning ChatGPT, otter.ai and the like doesn't fit with our capitals-based curriculum vision. Instead, I want to ensure that we have adequate systems, training and guidance in place to ensure that such tools can be used appropriately, responsibly, and above all, safely.

The first iteration of Honywood's AI policy was shared with the LGB in November 2024. I produced the original draft, thinking about what I wanted to achieve. Those goals included improving teaching and learning outcomes; ensuring

an ethical and legal use of AI; protection of privacy and data; utilisation of AI to reduce our staff's administrative and academic workload; and to remain at the forefront of education by integrating AI to enhance and supplement the school's mission to best support young people.

I didn't ask AI to write it for me, but I did employ the kind of approach that an AI might have used – looking for examples created by others, from which I could learn. Luckily, one of our governors works for a large trust and sent me her copy of theirs to look at.

I was also able to call on the expertise of another of our governors, Andy Wood, who works in the digital space,

and whose 'SMART' advice (see panel below) was invaluable.

I have no doubt that we'll need to revise and update our AI policy frequently, in response to both technological developments and our own learning – but with a clear AI policy in place, however embryonic it may be, I'm pleased to report that it feels like the spectre of Skynet is just that little bit further away...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Saunders is the headteacher at Honywood School, Coggeshall, Essex

KEEP IT S.M.A.R.T.

Andy Wood shares his advice on building a sound AI policy for schools...

► SUPPORT LEARNING GOALS

Ensure that any integration of AI tools supports and enhances the school's curriculum objectives. AI should be a supplemental resource that promotes personalised learning, fosters critical thinking and enriches the educational experience, while upholding the integrity of the teaching process. Consult subject leaders to define how AI tools can complement specific subjects and learning outcomes.

► MANAGE RISKS AND PRIVACY

Prioritise safeguarding by addressing the potential risks associated with AI, such as deepfakes, impersonation and misuse of AI tools. Policies should also ensure compliance with GDPR and all other data protection regulations, so as to protect the personal and sensitive information of learners and staff. Collaborate with your IT and safeguarding teams when evaluating and approving AI tools, and provide regular staff training on how to identify and mitigate AI-related risks.

► ACT TRANSPARENTLY

Maintain clarity about where, when and how AI tools will be used within the school, ensuring that all stakeholders, including parents and learners, are informed. Staff should take responsibility for the quality

and accuracy of any AI-generated content or feedback used in teaching or assessment. Require staff to label any AI-generated materials, and document all instances of AI usage within lesson plans and other school activities.

► RESPECT ETHICAL STANDARDS

Emphasise the importance of ethical AI use, including active avoidance of bias, respect for intellectual property and promotion of fairness and inclusivity. Establish protocols to ensure that AI tools align with these ethical principles before being adopted. Implement periodic reviews of AI tools to identify and address any potential biases or ethical concerns, while inviting feedback from learners and staff.

► TRAIN AND MONITOR

Provide staff with the necessary training and ongoing support to use AI effectively and responsibly, in a way that complements their professional expertise. Regularly monitor AI's impact on teaching, learning and administrative tasks, and adapt practices based on outcomes and feedback. Integrate AI training into personal development reviews, and plan biannual evaluations of the policy's implementation and effectiveness.

Andy Wood provides strategic leadership for one of the UK's foremost consultancy and digital service providers, and is a parent governor at Honywood School, Coggeshall, with special responsibility for ICT



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An ‘intervention’, NOT A ‘DESTINATION’

Alessandro Capozzi explains the role that online education can play in building a new model for alternative provision

In recent dialogue around alternative provision, the concept of it being ‘a bridge back’, a ‘two-way road’ or a short-term intervention has been gaining traction. Across consultations, thought leadership, policy discussions and day-to-day planning, it’s those qualities now being cited as to what effective AP looks like.

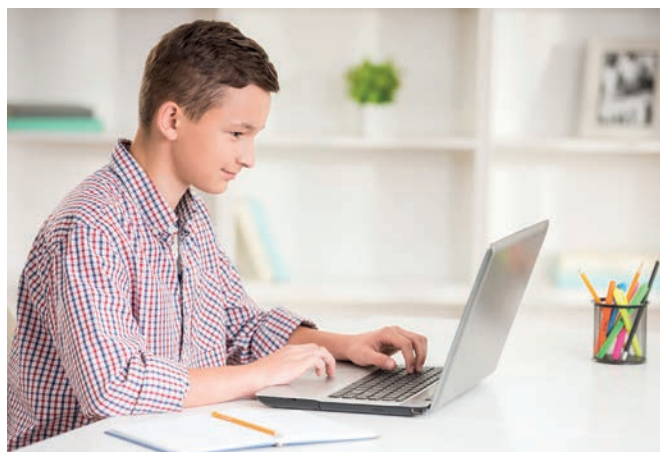
In many cases, this makes sense. We want an education system that improves outcomes for young people and creates a sense of belonging – which in part depends on providing alternatives that can be accessed by as many young people as needed, whilst ensuring they’re able to remain connected to their communities.

A system that keeps young people using those alternatives for extended periods, however, or which denies access to students with more immediate needs, has a problem.

Capacity and innovation

For some young people, it may be that a longer-term placement is what they actually need. Yet for many, the ‘It’s an intervention, not a destination’ principle is a more laudable aim, and a more reliable way of ensuring that their best interests and future aspirations are prioritised.

There’s some intriguing work being done into what a reformed AP system might involve, such as IntegratED’s Alternative Provision Quality Toolkit (see bit.ly/



ts141-AP1) and growing recognition that AP can offer some ready solutions.

If we’re to realise a new norm of inclusive, yet affordable ‘intervention’, then the system needs more innovation now – though this will be challenging to deliver without significant investment in training and capacity for schools.

Digital technologies can play a major role in delivering this capacity, making now the ideal time to consider how online learning could be integrated strategically across the wider AP system. Indeed, work on this is already underway, with scores of LAs now including online AP that meets the quality assurance of their AP frameworks and directories. The sector also now has a DfE-operated ‘Online Education Accreditation Scheme’, quality assured by Ofsted to ensure best practice and high standards in online teaching.

Plugging the gaps

The role of remote education is becoming more widely

recognised for several reasons. Chief amongst these is *quality*, in that the best providers offer live, adaptive teaching which builds relationships and ensures that students – some of whom may have been disconnected from learning – are once again engaging via inclusive online tools. Live online teaching can plug gaps quickly, with teachers able to wield an array of tools for modelling, scaffolding and assessment purposes, and give personalised, actionable feedback. The impact of this can be profound.

Another key advantage is that remote education is *flexible*, enabling it to fit around students’ existing placements or wider needs. At Academy21, we enable students to access live lessons at multiple points during the day. More importantly, this flexibility generates capacity. Our timeframes between induction and participation in live taught classes can span days, rather than weeks or months, as is so often the case with AP – something

that’s vital if early interventions are needed to address issues quickly.

Then there’s the portability. Online teaching needn’t require a dedicated location – many Academy21 students will join lessons from their ‘home school’ site, or somewhere else within their community. Whether learning at home while recovering from illness, or while regaining confidence for anxiety-related reasons, online learning can serve as a constant that provides them with a sense of stability and agency, as they choose their preferred timings and the arrangements that work best for them.

Finally, there are the added capabilities of technology-assisted school supervision. Through our remote education, we can ensure schools have all the monitoring information they need to check on their young people, complete with bespoke dashboards, lesson-by-lesson insights into every student and full access to the resources they’re using. This level of detail lets schools really understand how students are doing, adapt where needed and above all, recognise their success – all of which will form the foundations of successful reintegration.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alessandro Capozzi is Executive Headteacher at Academy21; for more information, visit academy21.co.uk



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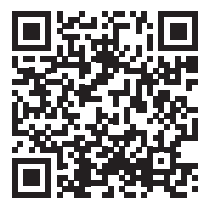
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- + How much will it cost to recruit 6,500 more teachers?
- + Why oracy and social mobility are intertwined
- + The case for teaching students about computer assembly and configuration
- + What your school can do to support Y6 to Y7 transitions
- + 5 daily classroom routines to ensure your lessons go without a hitch

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Thinking about...

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At Judgemeanow Community College, our student-led storytelling and discussion podcast, 'In the Meadows', is emblematic of how we provide our students with opportunities to use their voices.

The podcast embodies the principles of inclusion, belonging, and self-expression, equipping students with essential communication skills and an understanding of broadcast media.

Podcasts have become a transformative medium for Gen Z, with almost a third of young people aged 15-24 in the UK regularly listening to podcasts each week. Many podcasts see their highest rates of listenership amongst this age bracket, driving home the medium's appeal to a generation that's evidently eager to learn, engage with social issues and share their voices.

'In the Meadows' gives our students a unique platform for exploring the topics that matter to them most, while also showcasing voices from their local community. Previous guests have included the High Sheriff of Leicestershire and Fatimah Bobra – the first hijabi finalist in the Miss Teen GB beauty pageant.

Through discussions around Black History Month, Remembrance and faith-based celebrations, students have been able to cultivate an inclusive dialogue that celebrates diversity, while encouraging empathy and understanding.

The initiative originated as part of the school's broader commitment to fostering a positive culture, helping our students foster their own sense of empathy and respect the differences they may

have with others. The school saw the potential of podcasts to bridge communication gaps, celebrate students' interests and provide them with new learning opportunities.

'In the Meadows' quickly became a thriving space for collaboration and creativity, and the outcomes have been striking. Students have honed their active listening skills, embraced differing viewpoints and developed a deeper appreciation and respect for the stories that have shaped others' lives.

The podcast has not only given the students the chance to forge new relationships within their local community, but also helped to expand their worldview, by opening doors to careers and opportunities that may never have crossed their minds otherwise. For some, the podcast has become a springboard to new opportunities, as they learn the various skills required to record, edit and publish a high quality episode. Any given episode calls for thorough research, a solid grasp of media production and a talent for public speaking. One student has since become involved with a local radio station, so that they could further develop their passion for media and storytelling.

As podcasting continues to grow in popularity among young people, its potential to inspire and educate within schools is immense. Our podcast has helped our students articulate their identities, celebrate their communities and foster a sense of belonging. Ultimately, 'In the Meadows' has been more than just a broadcasting project; it's been a tool for empowerment.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alex Grainge is associate principal of Judgemeanow Community College



FOCUS ON... ADDITIONAL NEEDS

The number of pupils needing extra support in mainstream classrooms is growing. While this can present some fantastic opportunities for inclusion, it can also be tough.

Schools are already stretched for funding as it is, with the resulting pressures often landing squarely on teachers' shoulders. Some schools will have really got it together, and managed to set up hubs or specific classes for pupils working at lower Key Stages. Others? Not so much.

The reality is that many can find themselves attempting to juggle everything on their own, navigating mazes of inconsistent systems with minimal support. And where does that leave you? Most likely with evenings spent adapting lessons for pupils working below age-related expectations, trying to ensure they can access the curriculum while simultaneously managing the needs of 29 other students.

And that's before we even talk about the need to assess their progress, because your school's tracking systems doesn't accurately reflect the small steps forward they're actually making – but there are ways of making things easier. Here's how you can tackle some of these challenges head-on.

1 START WITH ACCURATE ASSESSMENT

First things first, find out exactly where your pupil is in their learning journey – and no, that doesn't just mean in *your* subject. Dig into their abilities in core areas like reading, writing and maths. Chat with your SENCo and colleagues to get the full picture. Once you know where they're at, you can set meaningful and realistic targets that will actually help them move forward.

2 DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL

Planning bespoke lessons can feel overwhelming, but you don't always have to create everything from scratch. There are loads of resources out there that can help you break down the curriculum into smaller, more manageable steps. This can save you

time and give you a clearer idea of what's achievable for your pupils. Use what's available and adapt it to fit your class. It's all about working smarter, not harder.

3 ADAPT YOUR LESSONS

Tailor your lessons based on what your pupils can do. If, for example, your class is learning about space, and one pupil is working at a Y4 level, ask them to draw a simple diagram or write a shorter paragraph. What's key is to keep them involved in the topic, without overwhelming them. It's all about making the work accessible, while keeping it meaningful.

4 TRACK PROGRESS PROPERLY

Here's a big question – does your school have a system that shows the genuine progress of pupils with additional needs? Many systems will simply flag that they're working at below age-related expectations, which doesn't help anyone. If you're stuck with this, speak to your SENCo about finding a better solution. The small steps some students make matter, and they deserve to be celebrated and recorded properly.

5 LEAN ON YOUR SENCO AND NETWORK

You're not in this alone. Your SENCo is there to support you, so don't be afraid to share your challenges and ideas with them. Be sure to also connect with other teachers at your school, or even in online forums. Sometimes, the best ideas can come from swapping stories with people in the same boat.

6 MOVING FORWARD

Yes, teaching pupils with additional needs is challenging, but it's also incredibly rewarding. By focusing on accurate assessments, using existing resources and finding better ways of tracking progress, you can make a real difference – not just for your pupils, but in terms of your own workload too. Every small step forward is a victory worth celebrating.

DO THIS MAINTAIN GRAVITAS

Exercise better class control with these tips from Robin Launder...

If a student starts chatting during your delivery, abruptly stop talking. Mid-sentence is powerful; mid-multisyllabic word is even more powerful. Look at the student, visibly express your surprise and then wait until you have complete compliance. Pause for a moment longer. Then begin talking to the class again.

While talking, make sure your gaze settles on that student once or twice more, to let them know that you haven't forgotten about their moment of chatting.

Be cautious about taking questions during your delivery. One question can quickly become two – and by the time you've answered that second question, you'll have lost the attention of some, or even most of the class. Besides, there's a strong likelihood that the next thing you would have said will have answered that question anyway.

If you do choose to take questions (emphasis on the 'if'), then only do so at the end. In fact, it's often better to get your students working and on task, and only then go to speak with the student who had the question. Chances are, it will have been answered by then anyway.

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

32%

of educators who have used AI report experiencing a decrease in their workload

Source: YouGov survey commissioned by Bett for its report, 'The Rise of AI in Education 2024'

How likely is it that the government will deliver on its pledge to recruit 6,500 teachers by 2027/28? The National Foundation for Educational Research has crunched the numbers and concluded that only a combination of different measures will bring that about – and that the costs involved will be considerable.

The most costly solution of all would be to boost numbers solely by upping teachers' salaries. The NFER calculates that restoring teacher pay to where it was in proportion to the wider economy circa 2010 would require pay increases of 9.55% – £2.1 billion more than the 2025//26 baseline scenario – in 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28. If enacted, though, the profession would see the addition of 6,513 teachers by 2027/28.

Other potential options include increasing bursaries – though even increasing bursaries from 2026/27 to just below the starting salary for all subjects, barring history and PE, would only result in 2,535 more secondary teachers, compared to 2024/25.

A more targeted approach to keeping ECTs in post could be to offer revised early career retention payments (ECRPs). Increasing these to £15,000 for all teachers of currently eligible subjects within their first five years would only boost teacher numbers by 2,625.

According to the NFER, meeting the 6,500 target figure would require expanding ECRP eligibility to all subjects currently eligible for bursaries, upping ECRP payments to £13,000 at schools with the highest numbers of FSM and £11,000 for the lowest, and increasing the primary bursary to £13,500 throughout 2026/27 and 2027/28.

The full NFER report, 'How to recruit 6,500 teachers?', can be downloaded via tinyurl.com/ts141-LL1

CLOSE-UP ON...

ORACY AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

'Why are so many people talking about oracy recently?' a colleague whispers to me, during a staff training session on the topic. I chuckle, because I've noticed that following Sir Keir Starmer's emphasis on integrating oracy into the curriculum, there's been a renewed conversation around the need for explicit teaching of speaking skills.

I want to be grateful that people are finally recognising how fundamentally important this is. However, I can't help but feel irritated by the idea of politicians granting educators permission to do something we know we should be doing already.

Those of us who spend our days in classrooms are aware of our students' needs, as well as the gaps that exist between those who know how to communicate well and those who do not. We experience first-hand the stark contrast in interactions that take place in lessons, and recognise where young people fall short. We also see how those who arrive in our classrooms empowered to use their voices tend to attract their teachers' attention, both during lessons and outside them.

This is where the root of my frustration lies, since addressing oracy in schools is undeniably an act of tackling social disadvantage. It's the bridge that we build between the children who have found and use their voices to actively engage in discussion around the dinner table, and those who may not even have a dinner table, or a home life that presents such opportunities.

For many, they will have only limited opportunities for practising and improving their speaking skills. If we don't teach oracy in school, then a significant number of students will fall further behind, widening the current disadvantage gap yet further.

Research by the Education Endowment Foundation has found that oral language interventions



can have a 'Very high impact for very low cost', identifying an average of 6 months' additional progress over a year.

I'd encourage anyone who works in schools to take steps towards addressing oracy. It has always held a prominent place in my classroom, and teaching it to Y7 students (once weekly) has served as a wonderful transition into secondary school, establishing a culture of speaking confidently, listening intently and contributing enthusiastically. The success of these lessons led to the creation of my teaching pack, *Develop Brilliant Speaking*.

Oracy teaching can be incorporated consistently across the curriculum, and tackled at a whole school level by identifying key non-negotiables, communicating clearly with all stakeholders and building upon this over time, to ensure that the entire school community supports students in speaking more confidently and skilfully.

If you're a teacher, can you remember how and where you first found your voice? It probably involved plenty of encouragement, and a safe space in which to practise and make mistakes. This is where we need to start!

It's imperative to embed and incorporate opportunities to speak into KS3, so that it's not only accepted as part and parcel of participation in professional spaces, but also seen as something to enjoy; an opportunity to share thinking, express oneself and build relationships. Managing the narrative around this is as important as the delivery when teaching it.



DJAMILIA BOOTHMAN IS AN ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, TEACH FIRST TRUSTEE AND AMBASSADOR, AND AUTHOR OF THE ORACY-THEMED DEVELOP BRILLIANT SPEAKING TEACHER RESOURCE PACK FOR KS3 ENGLISH AND DRAMA (£75, COLLINS)

30%

of the youth clubs operating in London circa 2010 were closed by 2019; the young people who lost access to them were estimated to have performed 4% worse in their GCSE exams

Source: Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies

Need to know

A study by researchers at University College London has found that truancy rates rose at a faster rate in English-speaking countries in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, compared to non-English-speaking countries.

A recent working paper by the UCL researchers draws on data from the OECD's PISA programme and a series of attendance questionnaires sent to over 200 randomly selected schools in countries included within the study (England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the USA, Australia, Northern Ireland, Canada and New Zealand).

The analysis indicates that in 2022, 26% of Y11 pupils in England reported playing truant at least once within the past fortnight – up from the 18% of pupils who said the same in both 2012 and 2018.

The 2022 figures further showed that 29% of Y11 girls in England reported skipping school within the past two weeks, compared to 23% of boys. The study also notes that teenagers from lower socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to report skipping school (29%) compared to their most advantaged peers (22%).

The full study can be downloaded via tinyurl.com/ts141-LL2

WHY NOT TRY... STARTING A 'COMPUTER HARDWARE CLUB'?



The use of technology in teaching and learning can often be seen as a barrier – an added complication, with the potential for things to go wrong if you don't possess specific knowledge and skills.

And yet, technology can also be a benefit to learning for many reasons – as can understanding how it all actually *works*.

WHAT, WHERE, WHY

An ability to understand the inner workings of computers at the hardware level – essentially what goes where and why – is essential for anyone considering a career as an IT technician, network engineer or solutions architect. At the same time as learning the hardware essentials of what, where and why, however, you'll also be developing other essential skills that could be utilised across a wide range of different careers.

Understanding how a computer's hardware works in tandem with its software requires the kind of technological knowledge that's fast becoming very valuable in the modern, tech-driven workplace, and can prompt interesting observations and discussions around the vulnerabilities of the devices we all now depend on, and the pressing issues of cybercrime and data security that now regularly inform

our thinking around technology use and data protection.

Providing 'computer hardware' sessions for pupils during lunchtimes or as after-school clubs will encourage the development of practical knowledge and skills around, for example, what various computer components do, how to repair machines when they break down, and how existing computer set-ups can be configured for better performance – knowledge that can only be gained by getting truly hands-on with the technology in question.

SOLUTIONS FOR PROBLEMS

More broadly, these sessions would also help to teach practical skills related to problem-solving and critical thinking that could be hugely useful across multiple vocations and careers.

Depending on your level of IT provision, the structure of the sessions and numbers attending, the sessions could also help to develop your students' abilities at working within a team. Collaborating successfully on hardware projects will, after all, call for good interpersonal and communication skills between those taking part.

Being given opportunities to find solutions to problems – such as a computer in need

of a repair or upgrade – can boost students' confidence in their technical abilities, and helpfully illustrate what can be gained by breaking down intricate tasks into more manageable pieces, before identifying a correct solution through a process of testing.

SPARKING INTEREST

Providing access to activities that can help develop the aforementioned employment skills may well enable a wider exploration of the careers that are available, and spark students' interest in fields such as information technology, computer science and engineering, which they might not have previously considered.

I believe there's significant value to be had from teaching students how to assemble and configure computer hardware. Giving them the ability to do this at some point during the day, or at an after-school club would be a significant step towards helping them better understand and appreciate the place of technology in the modern world.

Comparisons can be further made to after-school sports clubs, in that both exist to encourage pupils into trying something new, and that both can be powerful ways of imparting essential skills and knowledge that last well into adulthood.



ROB WRAITH IS HEAD OF LEARNING TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL LEARNING AT NCG – A GROUP OF SEVEN COLLEGES ACROSS THE UK; FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [NCGRP.CO.UK](https://ncgrp.co.uk)



Checklist

Secondary transition preparations

Activities and initiatives you can run alongside your feeder schools to ensure everything goes smoothly when your new Y7s start next September...

- Create visual 'classroom notices' that can be given to Y6 pupils in June or July. They could include images of their new form room and form teacher, alongside a list of topics they can expect to be taught during the first term at their new school.
- Organise summer holiday activities or club sessions for the Y7s starting in September, so that they can familiarise themselves with your school's environment and potentially make new friends
- Host workshops in specialist teaching spaces (science labs, workshops, gyms), so that your incoming Y7s can get a sense of what their new learning environments will be like
- Have staff visit your local primaries to meet with their Y6 teachers and inclusion and pastoral leads
- Organise a summer meeting between your SENCo and local primary counterpart, and follow this up in autumn to review pupils' post-transition progress and discuss whether any support options may be needed

Clare Elson is an inclusion and safeguarding lead

TRENDING

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

EXPERIMENTAL ENGINEERING

Run by EngineeringUK, Energy Quest is a teacher-led workshop that has students utilising their problem-solving skills and science knowledge across a series of practical, hands-on experiments, while encouraging them to think like engineers.

tinyurl.com/ts141-LL5

MAKING VOICES HEARD

Coram Voice has launched its annual 'Voices' creative writing competition. Open to care-experienced children aged 4 to 25 (divided into four age categories) entries are limited to 500 words and must be themed around 'My Voice', with multiple written forms (poems, short stories, rap lyrics, newspaper articles) eligible for inclusion; the closing date is 23rd March 2025

coramvoice.org.uk/voices

CLASSROOM ROUTINES

ZEPH BENNETT HIGHLIGHTS THE DAILY PREPARATIONS AND HABITS THAT CAN GET YOUR LESSONS OFF TO A PRODUCTIVE START



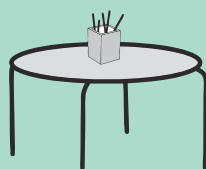
'DO NOW' TASK

Start each lesson with a retrieval or 'What do you know?' task to engage the class while you take the register



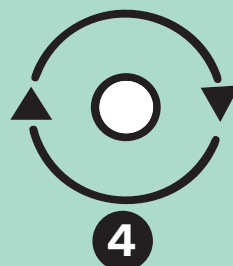
PREPARATION

Prepare your lesson resources, books and worksheets so that students can collect them upon entry into the classroom



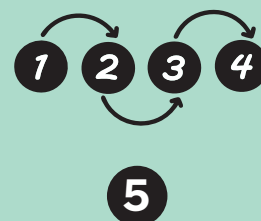
EQUIPPED

Leaving pens, pencils, gluesticks and other equipment in pots on each table can save time when students are on task



CONSISTENCY

Ensure your routines are the same for entry, 'to task' and when exiting; building that consistency will enable students to start developing good study habits



SMOOTH TRANSITIONS

Ensuring there are smooth transitions between instruction, task, check for understanding and other lesson components is essential for keeping students engaged and on task

ZEPH BENNETT IS A PE TEACHER AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT LEADER WITH 25 YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE; YOU CAN FIND MORE OF HIS EDUCATIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY FOLLOWING @ZEPHBENNETT.BSKY.SOCIAL

Got a great learning idea? Email editor@teachsecondary.com or tweet us at [@teachsecondary](https://twitter.com/teachsecondary)

ENGLISH AND DRAMA

The (*Incomplete*) Lit in Colour Play List 2024

BLOOMSBURY



If you haven't yet seen Bloomsbury's latest (*Incomplete*) Lit in Colour Play List, then your students are missing out...

AT A GLANCE

- A list of plays to help schools create more representative and inclusive drama experiences within English and Drama
- Comprises a selection of plays suitable for 11- to 18-year-olds written by authors of colour
- A readily accessible reading list by a diverse range of playwrights
- Presented with performance and staging in mind

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



The Lit in Colour campaign, founded by Penguin Books and the Runnymede Trust, aims to support schools in diversifying their teaching of English, and increasing students' access to texts by writers of colour and from minority ethnic backgrounds. And it's sorely needed, given that a staggering 90% of drama texts taught at GCSE, and 96% of those taught at A Level, are written by white playwrights.

Following on from Bloomsbury's inaugural Play List launched in 2023, this year's (*Incomplete*) Lit in Colour Play List features a further 60 age-appropriate plays by writers of colour for secondary school age students to discover, study and perform.

The plays have been curated by Bloomsbury's Lit in Colour Advisory Board and compiled in collaboration with other play publishers, and span a series of powerful stories, fascinating characters and lived experiences.

(Incidentally, the list is deliberately described as '*incomplete*' because there are so many great plays to select from, it's inevitable that any 'Play List' such as this will present only a partial picture).

The Play List is compiled according to age group, and structured around recommendations specifically tailored to KS3, KS4 and KS5. Each included play is accompanied by a concise explanation of the themes covered and content warnings where needed, alongside links to further reading around the play and its impact.

To help with planning and mapping, the plays are grouped according to themes at the end of the guide in a way that covers an impressive range of areas – including relationships, politics, activism, immigration and belonging, culture and identity, religion, class and society, and more besides.

Further teaching resources to support lesson plans based around the plays can be found on the Bloomsbury website, including video Q&As with playwrights, reading guides, blog posts and assorted articles.

Diversifying the set texts for GCSE and A Level English and Drama is valuable and important work – and I can't imagine a better resource than Lit in Colour for helping you navigate the rich variety of excellent texts that are out there and start effecting that change at your school.

The Lit in Colour campaign is already making a difference. The recent impact report from Penguin Books and Pearson shows that the overall percentage of students answering on a text by an author of colour for GCSE in England has more than doubled from 0.7% in 2019 to 1.5% in 2023. This is progress, but only the start.

Teachers can help to further spread the Lit in Colour word and ensure that their colleagues are in the know, so that more students can benefit from a curriculum that no longer neglects the lives and experiences of so many talented writers.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Presents students with a carefully chosen range of diverse, representative and inclusive writing
- ✓ Creates opportunities for exploring the plays' contributions to wider discussion and representation
- ✓ Helps to break down barriers and widen the scope of the curriculum
- ✓ Encourages teachers to more confidently discuss issues of race, ethnicity, history and diversity

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for energising plays by writers of colour that you can introduce to your secondary English and Drama students, in an effort to broaden the scope of your existing curriculum.

For more information, visit bloomsbury.com/litincolour

ENGLISH

Reading Plus

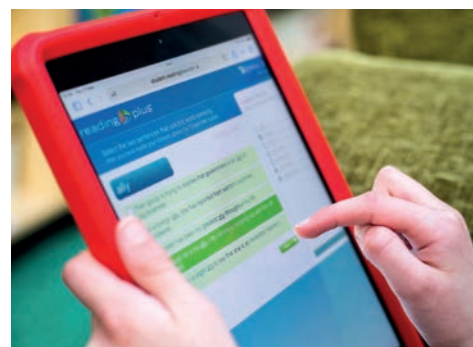
An online platform that provides valuable insights into students' reading abilities and can help them become more efficient and enthusiastic readers over time



AT A GLANCE

- A web-based reading platform
- Designed to help readers become more efficient and effective
- Adaptive intelligence matches learners to texts and continues to do so throughout
- Huge range of fiction and non-fiction texts
- Online nature makes it easily accessible for students and teachers alike

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES



Reading interventions are among the most complex activities in a secondary setting to get right. If you're in need of a programme that's proven successful at improving the reading abilities of young people, look no further than Reading Plus.

I've seen the power of Reading Plus first-hand in numerous settings, in terms of improving reading ability and more importantly, reading confidence. It remains one of the select few ways in which I've seen reading develop across a school, with almost zero cost in terms of time and workload for classroom teachers. Reading Plus gets young people reading in a way that builds self-efficacy and maturity.

The platform has a simple aim – to develop more accomplished readers. It does this by being essentially bespoke to each individual user. Upon logging in for the first time, learners undertake an initial baseline test which matches them to one of 14 levels aligned to their reading ability.

Each level has 70 to 80 fiction and non-fiction texts assigned to it. After each reading activity, the algorithm selects the most appropriate text for students to tackle next, based on live data. This makes the program hugely efficient at responding to learning needs, while requiring no input from teachers with respect to marking or assessment.

Reading Plus actually makes children read better. The platform's 'guided window' feature trains learners in how fast they

ought to read with the aid of a moving box, thus reducing both the extraneous load for readers as they encounter new pages and any temptation they might have to skip ahead. What's more, it gradually speeds up, stretching readers to increase their words per minute reading rate over time.

In this way, Reading Plus encourages the building of visual skills, getting readers to develop their reading muscles and train their eyes in moving effectively and efficiently when scanning words – a particularly helpful feature for weaker readers and EAL learners who may be used to reading from right to left.

Reading Plus is also designed to build vocabulary confidence and expose learners to a plethora of different words. To that end, its highly accessible and engaging vocabulary section boasts 2,500 words.

Automated reading programs are often criticised for their non-individualist, one-to-one humanistic input. Here, however, teachers are easily able to effectively target individual learners as they progress and intervene accordingly.

Data concerning each student's fluency, words per minute, accuracy and comprehension is readily available via a highly functional and navigable interface, thus keeping teachers informed as to precisely what each learner is struggling with in a matter of seconds, rather than through laborious marking.

teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Impressive assessment facilities to ensure reading material is pitched at appropriate levels for each learner
- ✓ A huge range of texts that ensures learners will be exposed to many different types of reading
- ✓ Online functionality and usability that's second to none
- ✓ Contains content applicable for use at KS1 through to KS4

PICK UP IF...

...you are looking for an all-inclusive reading package that enables tailored reading experiences for all learners.

For more details visit www.readingsolutionsuk.co.uk



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Lawson is a former secondary teacher, now serving as a foundation governor while running a tutoring service, and author of the book **The Successful (Less Stressful) Student** (Outskirts Press, £11.95); find out more at prep4successnow.wordpress.com or follow @johninpompano



THE LAST WORD

You are what you wear



John Lawson considers the evolving attitudes around school uniforms, and what it will take for everyone – schools, students, parents – to get on the same page...

“When you put on a uniform, there are certain inhibitions that you accept.”

– Dwight D Eisenhower.

Before entering the perennial and reliably pyrotechnic school uniform debate, one should accept that neither side has the ‘might of right’ in their corner.

We cannot definitively discern the minds of thousands of students, parents and teachers by creating policies that please or placate everybody. We can, however, make intelligent pro- or anti-uniform noises around an honest and transparent agenda.

Conversations, not confrontations

Whatever decisions schools make with respect to the uniforms worn (or not) by their students, it’s difficult to avoid polarising scenarios with winners and losers, which makes extracting the ‘knowable’ doubly important.

Traditions, preferences and opinions should always be respected and carefully considered. Many children aren’t all that vexed about the uniform issue; some will obviously dislike them, though very few will be seriously distracted or traumatised by them.

What we need are calm, decisive and inclusive conversations, rather than confrontations around where schools should set their boundaries. So let’s separate out the rhetoric from whatever facts and truths can be uncovered.

A sense of pride

First off, there’s nothing intrinsically ‘fascist’, authoritarian, or indeed sinister about schools wanting to establish dress codes, and it’s unfair to demonise any schools that insist upon students being uniformly attired.

Uniforms undoubtedly make it trickier for children to truant. Most UK schools have had school uniform policies in place for many years – how likely is it that they’ve been wrong all along? Some uniforms may well be ugly (in the eyes of some, at least), uncomfortable and/or expensive, but these are all avoidable.

We could reasonably suggest that uniforms ought to be inexpensive without looking cheap. It seems fair to assert that outfitters shouldn’t be routinely given exclusive rights to any elements of a school’s uniform, since a lack of competition will usually push up prices. We don’t, after all, approve of senior managers accepting kickbacks for exclusive and lucrative contracts.

Moreover, we can perhaps agree that dress codes serve to teach children how to look presentable.

While there’s no conclusive evidence that wearing uniforms inevitably raises performance or achievements, we can at least observe the sense of pride and identity engendered in athletes by the kit they wear when competing before the crowds, as shown by how they’ll kiss their shirts or emblems when celebrating a victory.

‘Uniform mischief’

That said, the scope for ‘uniform mischief’ is immense, and can be highly toxic. Self-styled student rebels will often challenge their school’s authority on day 1 via some form of attention-seeking uniform violation.

At some non-uniform schools in America, students will form gangs that create their own uniforms which ‘outsiders’ are forbidden from wearing, while using violence and intimidation to enforce their gang’s presence.

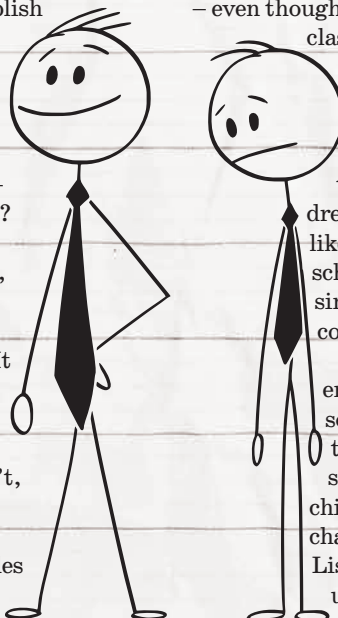
In other cases, some non-uniformed students may opt for outfits featuring countless zips and pockets that they’ll then use to conceal phones, drugs or even weapons. Others might habitually wear oversized hoodies that they refuse to peak out of during lessons. Are they in any way engaged, or even awake in there? It’s difficult to tell. Formative assessments are almost impossible without eye-to-eye contact...

Too short, too low?

Baggy clothes can meanwhile hide worrying weight fluctuations that might be noticed by teachers – and then there are matters of decorum. I remember a female colleague once being harangued by an angry mum, who had refused to accept that her daughter’s micro miniskirt was inappropriate – even though the girl would deliberately flash the boys in her class. The act of defining a ‘low-cut top’ can be similarly contentious.

Any notions of ‘too short’ or ‘too low’ long ago succumbed to subjectivism, resulting in futile discussions that are a waste everybody’s time. How practical is it to create manageable dress codes when students can wear whatever they like? Fewer secondary teachers in secondary schools even will enforce uniform codes these days, simply because of how many potentially contentious issues there now are.

Education is a journey from naivety towards enlightenment, and as with any journey, somebody needs to take charge. Teachers can be trusted to devise uniform policies that are sensitively enforced, but it’s also imperative that children and parents be given the right to politely challenge said policies or have a say in their design. Listening to families and their views is what will ultimately generate more win-win situations.



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