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‘CARE TO COMMENT?’

A head's guide to handling the media

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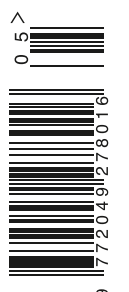
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FROM THE EDITOR

“Welcome...



Readers will notice a few more ‘*At the time of writing*’s and ‘*As we go to press*’ mentions than usual this issue. We’re finishing work on it two weeks out from the date of the 2024 General Election, and from this vantage point – short of some extraordinary developments between now and polling day – there will be a Labour administration in power by the time our next issue is out.

Given the prevailing media narrative surrounding the election campaign – the Tories are doomed, Starmer’s Labour will inevitably secure a Parliamentary majority, the only question being by how much – there’s been lots of talk concerning the Conservatives’ record these past 14 years. What’s curious, however, is that outside of the specialist education press, their genuinely impactful and far-reaching education reforms are barely getting any airtime.

The subsequent disruptions of Brexit and the infamous 2022 ‘mini-budget’ will naturally loom larger in the minds of the general public, of course. It might also have something to do with the fact that the reforms in question happened very early on, under Michael Gove’s 2010-2014 tenure as Education Secretary under the Conservative/Lib Dem coalition government. As the *eight* individuals appointed to that Ministerial role over the following decade would attest, his legacy cast a long shadow.

The hyper-acceleration of the academies programme. The rollout of the free schools programme. A dramatic overhaul of the National Curriculum. A largely successful re-pivoting of schools’ academic priorities in favour of knowledge-based learning. The EBacc. Progress 8 and Attainment 8. The changes to GCSE assessments may have come into effect after Gove was moved on, but the groundwork was laid under his watch. It really was one heck of a run.

With the news that Gove will not be standing for re-election as an MP, some might be tempted to see this year as a decisive break with those Govian orthodoxies that have done so much to shape the profession for so long. But I wouldn’t bank on it.

Bridget Phillipson may well have some grand plans in mind, but I’d venture that both she and the profession at large would rather attend to the pressing issues of teacher recruitment, pupil absence, SEND resourcing and schools funding first, rather than spend Labour’s putative first term upending everything all over again. It seems unlikely, but maybe the *real* Govian legacy could be a dawning realisation that enabling the myriad complexities of a country’s education system to be so subject to the whims, ambitions and preconceived notions of a single individual and their inner circle of advisors maybe isn’t the best idea...

Enjoy the issue,

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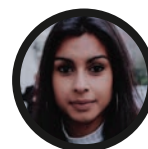
On board this issue:



Rebecca Leek is a school leadership consultant



David Voisin is a head of MFL



Meera Chudasama is an English, media and film studies teacher



Ian Mitchell is a teacher of English and psychology



Nikki Cunningham-Smith is an assistant headteacher



Peter Hughes is CEO of the Mossbourne Federation trust

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School of thought

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Amid the commentary surrounding the 2024 General Election, education is considered by many as a comparative bright spot of the Conservatives' 14 years in office – but do such claims actually stack up...?

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As online platforms and mobile devices rewire our reading and writing habits, we may need to rethink our ideas around what modern 'literacy' even means, suggests David Voisin

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The bulging in tray awaiting the next Education Secretary; why the benefits of an organised classroom can't be overstated – and the geopolitical stories we can learn from watching the Olympics...

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SECONDARY

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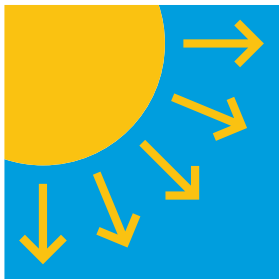
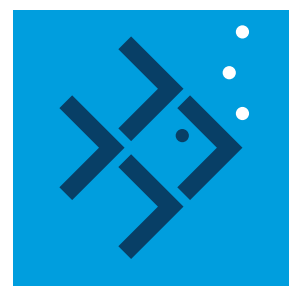
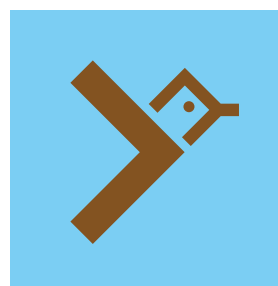
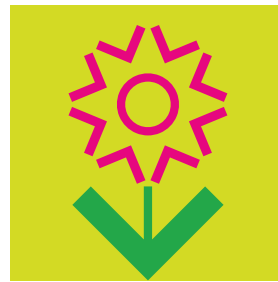
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Published by: Artichoke Media, Suites 2 & 4, Global House, Global Park, Eastgates, CO1 2TJ

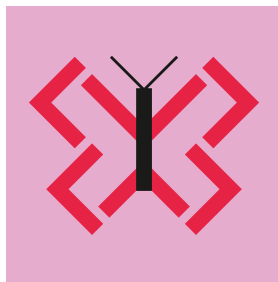
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The newsletter

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

The UNINFORMED teacher's guide to...

BAND4BAND

It's got a curt duration of 2 minutes and 20 seconds, is credited to British rapper Central Cee (pictured) featuring American rapper Lil Baby, contains lyrics that will be largely indecipherable to anyone over the age of 22 and you'll probably hear it blaring out of at least one smartphone wielded by a surly teenager before the summer's out.

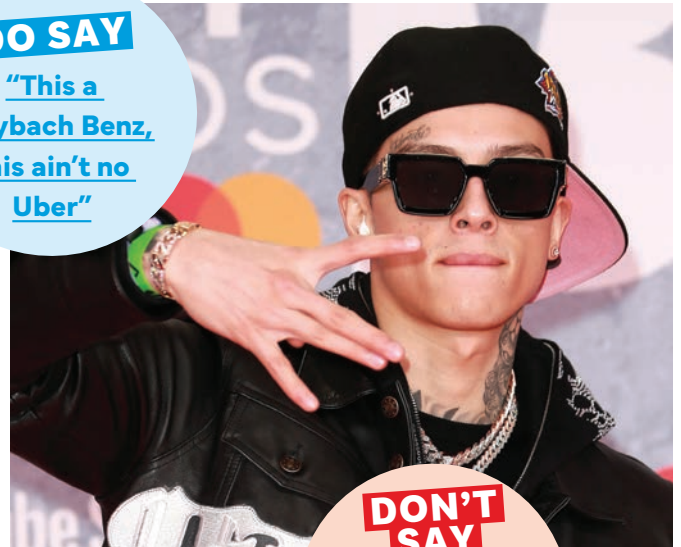
It might not have crossed your own cultural radar, but know this – the track 'Band4Band' is popular. How popular? 110,327,357 streams on Spotify since its release on May 23rd 2024 popular. The video – replete with those classic aspirational hip-hop visual signifiers of private jets, luxury sports cars and expensive jewellery – has racked up 42,822,432 YouTube views within the same timeframe, and you can expect both numbers to climb significantly higher by autumn.

So...what does it sound like? Well, it features a sinister, three-note ascending synth string motif atop a UK drill beat, above which two gents proceed to tell us how stupendously rich they both are. As the punchy chorus puts it, 'We can go band for band' / 'F--- that, we can go M for M'. For anyone not conversant in 'young', that roughly translates as 'We can compare our denominations of currency in the thousands' / 'Tush and fie, I say we compare our respective levels of stratospheric wealth in the MILLIONS.'



DO SAY

"This a Maybach Benz, this ain't no Uber"



DON'T SAY

"But luckily the seats go back"

BEAT THE BUDGET



by The Bell Foundation

Who is it for?

KS1-4 teachers, EAL co-ordinators and TAs

What's on offer?

A 92-page PDF containing teaching ideas and suggestions for school staff working with EAL learners, for use in conjunction with The Bell Foundation's EAL Assessment Framework.



How might teachers use the resources?

The document contains a series of adaptable teaching ideas and examples, as well as details of recommended approaches and strategies for EAL learners and suggestions for how classrooms can be organised to become more inclusive.

Where is it available?

bell-foundation.org.uk/resources

What are we talking about?

Strategies and Guidance to Support EAL Learners in Intervention Groups, produced

WHAT THEY SAID

"My education reforms were designed to build a country where everyone – no matter their background – can become the authors of their own life stories. For me, that is what being in Parliament and being in government is all about."

Michael Gove, in a letter announcing his decision to not seek re-election as an MP

Think of a number...

49.7%

of children with SEND are currently waiting 20 weeks or more to receive Education, Health and Care Plans to which they're entitled

Source: SEN2 data collection performed by the UK government

6%

The decline in average teacher pay across the UK (in real terms) compared to 2010
Source: The Institute for Fiscal Studies

6,500

The number of new teachers the Labour Party has pledged to hire if (at time of writing) elected to office
Source: Labour Party manifesto

ONE FOR THE WALL

"A lot of clever people have got everything except judgement"

Clement Attlee



Mixed fortunes

With the 2024 general election campaign still in full swing at the time of writing, we don't yet know how different the DfE's priorities are going to be after July 4th. Either way, the incoming administration will be inheriting a DfE with a distinctly mixed record, if a new report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies is anything to go by.

According to the authors of 'The state of education: what awaits the next government?', standards of literacy and numeracy among England's 15-year-olds showing a marked improvement over the past 10 years, relative to other OECD nations. As things stand, academic performance in England sits above the G7 average.

Things are distinctly less rosy when it comes to education inequality, however. Around half of those pupils eligible for Free School Meals show good levels of development, compared to 72% of their peers. 16-year-olds in the Free School Meals group are also 29 percentage points less likely to earn good GCSEs, compared to their less disadvantaged peers, highlighting the extent to which the GCSE attainment gap between the two groups has barely shifted over the last couple of decades.

Other issues set to loom large on the new government's to-do list are the 60% rise in pupils on EHCPs since 2016 and a dramatic rise in absenteeism, with pupils on average missing 14 school days per year, climbing to 21 days for disadvantaged students.

The full report can be downloaded via bit.ly/ts135-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 Education World Forum 2024



WHO? Gillian Keegan, Secretary of State for Education (at time of going to press)

WHERE? London

WHEN? 20th May 2024

"In the last few years, we've talked a lot about the pandemic. We've now moved beyond the COVID crisis, and our immediate response, but there are still challenges that remain – including children's mental health and school attendance.

These are joined by the other great issues of our age: introducing children to technology safely, whilst not allowing it to damage or dominate their lives, and accelerating climate action and awareness to preserve their future world.

How do we limit the impact of the challenges mentioned above? Sharing what is known to work can overcome stubborn problems and spread success. Real change is hard. But someone showing you a proven way forward, guided by good evidence, can make it easier.

We have worked together successfully in the past. This is how we must tackle the current and upcoming education challenges of this century. As Malala Yousafzai has said, "*There are many problems, but I think there is a solution to all these problems. It's just one, and it's education.*"

As we gather together to discuss education solutions this week, remember to share what you've seen work in your country. Children's futures rely on all of our solutions."

THE RESPONSE:

Teacher pay uncertainty



FROM? Pepe Di'lasio, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said:

REGARDING? Lack of clarity from government on 2024/25 teacher pay award

WHEN? 24th May 2024

"The Department for Education has not been able to give us any steer on the fate of the teacher pay award – and we fear no decision will now be made until after the General Election. [This] means that teachers and leaders have no clarity about what they will be paid when they come back after the summer break, and schools are unable to plan their budgets for next year with any confidence.

This is particularly problematic in the context of school budgets being under massive pressure with many schools planning deficit budgets while they consider further cuts."

4-5 JULY 2024 The 14th Festival of Education | 5 JULY 2024 nasen LIVE 2024: Inclusive Practice in Action |
5 JULY 2024 Reckoning with Race: Anti-racism in Schools Conference

4-5 JULY 2024

The 14th Festival of Education
Wellington College, Crowthorne
educationfest.co.uk

If you like the idea of getting some valuable CPD within the bucolic surroundings of Wellington College, put a date in the diary for this year's Festival of Education in July. Expect a packed programme with over 300 noted speakers, a host of engaging sessions, stimulating talks and passionate debates wherever you look, and all manner of networking opportunities.

5 JULY 2024

nasen LIVE 2024: Inclusive Practice in Action
Vox Conference Centre, Birmingham
nasen.org.uk/nasen-live-2024

So popular is the SEND education charity's annual conference that tickets for this year's event are actually sold out, with access only available via a waitlist. Those managing to make it along will find leading speakers and panels aplenty, numerous opportunities for in-person advice and CPD sessions, and a sizeable exhibition area populated by a wide range of service and product providers.

5 JULY 2024

Reckoning with Race: Anti-racism in Schools Conference
St Claudine's Catholic School for Girls, London
bit.ly/ts135-NE1

A national conference aimed at bringing together education leaders engaged in anti-racism efforts at their schools. On the agenda will be expert advice and practical suggestions on how schools committed to racial justice and anti-racism can put those values into action, via workable and sustainable policies and practices.

2024/25

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Get Into Film

MANDELA: THE LONG WALK TO FREEDOM (2013, 147 MINUTES, 12)



CURRICULUM LINKS:

History, politics, citizenship

Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1990 was celebrated around the world, as South Africa finally ended its brutal system of apartheid, which had denied Black citizens the most basic civil rights. By the time of his death (one month before this film's London premiere), Nelson Mandela was universally adored and respected, and stood as an icon for peace.

Starring British actor Idris Elba, the film opens on the period when Mandela was labelled a dangerous terrorist and jailed for sabotage, before telling the incredible and inspirational story of his subsequent incarceration and eventual triumphant release.

Discussion questions:

- Before the film – what words do you associate with the name 'Nelson Mandela'?
- Did anything surprise you about the way that this film portrayed Nelson Mandela's life?
- Were there any sections of the film that you think worked better than others, or that you found especially powerful?

Head online to intofilm.org to stream this film for free and download the film guide containing Teacher's Notes; look out also for our resources page to mark Nelson Mandela Day, which takes place on Thursday 18th July 2024 - see bit.ly/ts135-NL2 for more details

X Retweets
Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?

Chris Curtis @Xris32

Today is the last day of secondary school for my daughters. Why is it people expect you to be sad? I walked away from a hospital with them both hooked up to life support, thinking they wouldn't last a night, when first born. For that fact alone, I can only feel joy.

James Eldon @EldonPrincipal

In the park, celebrating with Y11 after physics exam. Lots of tears and love. A group of last year's Y11 walk by and join in. Then some students from two years ago walk by and tell us about finishing college and their ambitions. Our amazing Y11 team then basking in love. Magic.

Follow us via [@teachsecondary](https://twitter.com/teachsecondary) - and let us know what you're thinking

TEACHER TALES

True stories from the education chalkface

'Three chairs'

During an Ofsted inspection at a highly exclusive independent girls' school, the three inspectors decided to attend morning assembly.

After introducing the inspectors to the assembled girls, the head suddenly realised there were no available chairs among the seated members of staff for the inspectors to sit on. Briskly, the head clapped her hands and, with some urgency, requested 'Three chairs!' for the inspectors...

...whereupon a significant number of the girls in the hall loudly responded with "Hip, hip - HOORAY..."

From the mouths of babes

I can still recall the time when I once had to take a 12-year-old prop forward to A&E, after he'd shed blood on behalf of his rugby teammates during a hard-fought match.

Upon arrival, we checked in at reception. When asked if he'd been to the hospital before, he replied that he had. After some minutes of checking, and having failed to find any records, the receptionist asked if he was sure. The boy was adamant that he had, some two weeks ago.

After yet more checking and running queries by colleagues, the receptionist apologised for not being able to locate his missing details and asked what he had previously been admitted for.

"I came in to see my granddad," replied the boy.

Just another day's work at a busy hospital reception, I suppose...

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

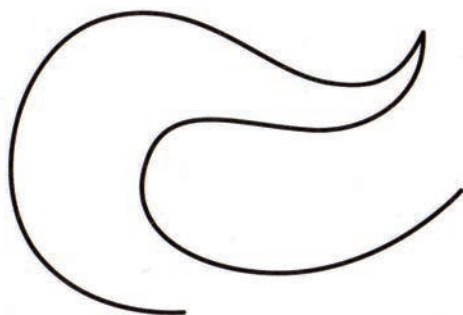
Redraw or trace the shape below.

The shape is unfinished.

Finish it in a logical and pleasing way so that the outline is continuous.

#31 FINISHING WELL

A Few Minutes of Design FINISHING WELL



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CANON FODDER

We might want young people to ‘appreciate’ literature, reasons **Ian Mitchell** – but how can we do that without common agreement on what good literature actually looks like?

There’s a good chance that by the time you read this, the people of Britain will have seen the outcome of the general election. If the polls at the time of writing are to be believed, we will witness the formation of a new Labour government – though of course, the polls have been wrong before.

Whether a new government takes charge of the education system or not, teachers can certainly expect some form of political intervention to continue. After all, we’ve repeatedly seen successive governments seek to change – some might prefer ‘meddle with’ – the practices and values of Britain’s schools going back decades.

Within the span of just 15 years, for example, the UK government has devised an educational strategy for preventing terrorism, found time to dramatically redesign GCSE and A level courses and relaunched a PSHE programmed in which teachers, amongst other things, are expected to define for their students the nature of healthy sexual relationships.

A redefined literary canon

Yet whenever policymakers talk about education, reading barely seems to warrant a mention. We do have the English National Curriculum, of course, which determines that children at KS4 should be taught ‘an appreciation and love of reading’.

I would argue, however, that while the English

National Curriculum does successfully encourage the teaching of a detailed A to Z glossary of language terms that teachers should be teaching (from ‘Active Voices’ down to ‘Word Families’), what it *doesn’t* include is a prescribed list of books across the Key Stages for children’s private reading.

The acquisition of competence in reading and writing is something that schools rightly prioritise for their students, but I propose that we do something more specific – introduce a

“Inexplicably, the English National Curriculum presently fails to explicitly name those works that children should experience”

redefined literary canon that all students are encouraged to read, with an emphasis placed on the appreciation of whole narratives, both fictional and non-fictional.

There is presently no prescribed national reading list for children – at least, not one which includes named texts that all children should read before they complete formal schooling, irrespective of any exam specification.

Inexplicably, the English National Curriculum presently fails to explicitly name those works that children should experience. Perhaps it’s therefore time to

introduce a British Reading Programme – a definitive list of the most prized and valued national works of literature.

Trending downward

According to the National Literacy Trust, just 43% of 8- to 18-year-olds enjoy reading in their own time, with only 3 out of 10 of this group saying they read daily. One can reasonably assume the reasons or excuses given for this. Young people are anxious; they’re too busy studying; the existence of social media; a simple lack of hours in the day.

It’s worth paying attention to a separate YouGov poll conducted in 2020, which found that just 7% of 18- to 24-year-olds reported reading daily, compared to 34% of over 55s. Whatever the reasons for this dramatic decline in reading for the sake of reading, it’s a trend that we’re unlikely to see reversed through organic means alone.

Of course, identifying an

agreed reading list is far easier said than done (though arguably no more difficult than defining what a ‘healthy sexual relationship’ looks like). I’ve personally sat in on many unproductive English department meetings over the last 25 years, attempting to decide what a school reading list ought to look like.

Someone can always be relied upon to storm out of those meetings if Joyce’s *Ulysses* doesn’t make the final draft. It does seem as though Joyce’s most impenetrable work attracts the more volatile English teachers.

To complicate matters further, amid the so-called ongoing ‘culture wars’, the existing literary canon has been accused of being ‘too white’ or ‘too male’. What’s surprising about this is that heated culture war debates haven’t led to a resurgence in reading, since by effectively censoring literature, certain critics are surely drawing attention to the importance



and value of reading.

Who knows, perhaps we've finally stumbled upon a useful purpose for the culture wars – to provide the tonic needed to make reading both cool and radical again. After all, how can anyone decide which texts are, or aren't appropriate without first actually reading them? If that's the case, then it could be argued that there's never been a better time to 're-load' the canon.

Works worth reading

Without a widely recognised and agreed upon list of great, valued works, what's ultimately the point in undergraduates taking all those English literature university courses? Having

spent so long educating so many in arts-based courses, Britain appears to have entered something of a reading recess, with English teachers cruelly robbed of their most obvious function to society.

Meanwhile, with numbers of English literature undergraduates dwindling, one assumes that possibly-soon-to-be-redundant English faculty members would presumably jump at the chance to produce and promote a defined reading list. Doing so might even elevate the value of English literature once more, since undermining the canon by constantly questioning its relevance appears to have

done little for the general integrity of reading thus far.

A British Reading List could still be contemporary and remain subject to modification (within reason). It doesn't even *have* to contain the names of Chaucer, Dickens or Joyce. It just needs to be legitimised by a series of chosen works which, by common agreement, are considered *worth reading*.

Any tiresome discussions over which writers should or shouldn't be included will soon become insignificant, once a generation of people who have engaged with some of the finest works literature has to offer finally come of age. Because they will *appreciate* literature.

They will also be better communicators, more fluent readers, and be better able to understand and digest ideas with confidence. They will feel like they have a culture, and they will effectively own their culture. Above all, they will be able to *think*.

Inflection point

There are elephants in the room, however – those being the adults. They need to be reading these great works too, because how else will children be able to discuss what they are reading?

Teachers, especially, need to be reading more themselves. That might mean spending a little less time scouring exam specifications and more time on reading good books – but that's a problem when it's still commonly understood that a 'good teacher' is someone whose students consistently achieve the highest grades.

The ongoing obsession with exam grades is fast reaching an inflection point. Placing too much focus on point scores, to exclusion of virtually everything else, only serves to underscore how exams are a crude, if necessary measure of a person's worth.

Reading, on the other

IN BRIEF

What's the issue?

The National Curriculum currently lacks a prescribed list of literary works that all students (and their teachers) should, or at least try to read

What's being said?

The question of which books 'should' be read in school is one that's often argued over, while the legitimacy of the literary canon itself has come under fire for reasons related to race, class and identity

What's really happening?

Attacking the notion of a literary canon has done little to prevent a steady decline in reading for enjoyment among children and adults alike – perhaps in part because, without an easily accessible signpost to what great literature is, fewer people will experience the richness of such works first-hand

The takeaway

The process of drawing up a widely accepted list of great literary works – contemporary or otherwise – may not be straightforward, but doing so will be vital if we want younger generations to preserve and further build upon literary traditions in the years to come

hand, is something you can happily do until the day you pass away or suffer dementia. Reading cannot undermine itself – and the sooner we get back to it, the better.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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



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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

Culture is a fantastic vector of language and vice versa, with sport and art providing great opportunities for encountering words of foreign origin. The artform of ballet, for instance – itself a word of French origin – has brought with it some interesting terminologies. One is the postural '*plié*' which literally means 'folded'. Immediately, the semantic and morphological connections to the Tier 2 word '*pliable*' (meaning 'foldable') are evident. Another past participle, this time from the discipline of fencing, is the word '*touché*' – a term that means 'touched', and which is shouted by fencing referees when a duellist has been hit.



LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

It's often said that '*English is the hardest language to learn*' – but is there any veracity to that claim?

All languages are, in their own way, highly complex entities. To compare linguistic complexity across languages, however, nuance and context are essential. It's certainly true that the 44 phonemes of the English language can lead to more orthographic idiosyncrasies compared to the simpler spellings of other tongues such as Spanish, but this is often exaggerated. Only a quarter of English words are spelt irregularly, with the most important being used so frequently that they're typically learnt by rote.

Nor does English's huge vocabulary mean that the average Anglophone 'knows more words' than speakers of less lexically-endowed languages. Grammatical complexity is comparatively easy in English, with regular verbs having only four forms (e.g. 'play' / 'plays' / 'played' / 'playing'). In French or English, there can be considerably more. One thing we can say, though, is that the complexity of other languages depends on how they relate to yours. The more languages you learn, the better you understand your own.

TEACHING TIP: EXPLORING SPACE

All teachers would agree that time is one of the most problematic hurdles in education – but what about space? Can we, as educators, exploit it fully to our advantage?

Every teacher will be familiar with the saying 'walls must teach', but this goes against the competing claim that overloaded displays can generate a form of cognitive 'clogging'. I would contend that a judicious use of space, combined with a good sense of timing, can be of considerable help when it comes to vocabulary instruction, and would suggest trying the following two strategies:

Strategy 1

When reading in class, you don't want to interrupt the flow. For this, a set of specially designed bookmarks can be a useful tool. Ensure that one side is erasable by applying white vinyl to its surface. Readers can now quickly jot down any words they don't know, along with the relevant page number, so that they can run said words by their teacher later. On the reverse side, interesting Tier 2 words selected by the teacher can be permanently written on a series of lines, alongside their definitions.

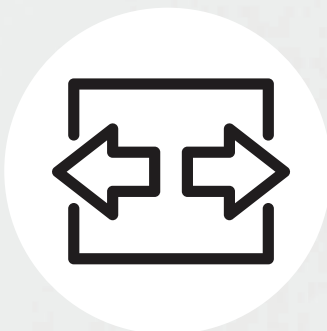
Strategy 2

In exercise books, the margins will often be left neglected. Whenever we encounter any interesting vocabulary, I'll make a 'big V' hand signal to my pupils. Immediately, they'll write a capital 'V' in their margins, and we'll collectively adduce a definition of the new word. This can also help evidence that vocabulary instruction is a regular occurrence within your lessons.

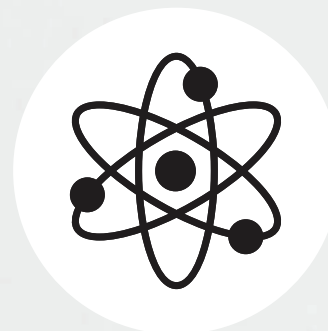
SAME ROOT, DIFFERENT WORDS



A **Tracheotomy** is an incision in the windpipe



A **dichotomy** is a separation or split into two mutually exclusive or contradictory entities



Before elementary particles were discovered, the word **atom** literally meant 'which can't be split'



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Even allowing for the crudely simple messaging of election campaigns, the claims that have been made of the Conservatives' achievements in education since 2010 seem far less robust than they might appear...

Melissa Benn



By now, *Teach Secondary* readers may be heartily sick of the arguments congealed into easy soundbites that are being endlessly trotted out in television studios and newspaper articles as we edge ever closer to July 4th.

Take the Conservatives' position on their own education reforms over the last 15 years. According to a DfE-produced document published in late 2023, proposing the introduction of a new Advanced British Standard qualification for 16- 19-year-olds, "*We have made sure that the education system is fairly funded and teachers' work rewarded.*" (see bit.ly/ts135-MB1)

That's some claim – and one possibly contradicted by those currently battling with funding shortfalls, collapsing roofs and/or assorted crises in SEND provision.

Triumphant assertions

And yet, it's this argument that's been put forward at every opportunity by Conservative ministers, MPs and their supporters. It's a claim that tends to hinge on two key metrics – the first relating to some improvements in England's results in the 2022 PISA league tables.

This saw children in England aged 9 and 10 place 4th for reading in PISA's global rankings. The achievements of England's 15-year-olds in reading, maths and science also appeared to be significantly higher than the OECD average.

Unsurprisingly, these results led to a crop of approving pieces in the serious media. *The Economist* was last year moved to laud Tories' education record in an article titled '*The strange success of the Tories' schools policy*' (see econ.st/3LtQzXk). Elsewhere, *Times* columnist Ian Martin declared, "*We're good at reform – look at England's schools.*" (see bit.ly/ts135-MB2).

Of course, the bigger question is whether league tables or percentages are

necessarily always the best way of judging the quality of work being done in our schools. But for now, let's stick with those figures – how robust are these triumphant assertions?

Notable omissions

The full 2022 PISA results showed that while England's maths, reading and science scores had declined significantly since the pandemic, England had remained significantly above average in performance – but there are some important caveats.

Firstly, a third of schools and a quarter of pupils overall refused to take part in the study, meaning England's response rate fell below PISA's sample standards. According to one subsequent investigation, this suggests that "*Higher performing pupils may be overrepresented,*" and some results "*may therefore be somewhat higher than they might otherwise be.*"

PISA itself estimates that England's maths and reading scores may have been as much as 7 or 8 points higher than they ought to have been, and that if this over-representation were taken into account, England would have actually placed much lower (see bit.ly/ts135-MB3).

It's also worth noting that England's ranking is lower in all cases than it was

in 2018, being similar to results in 2006 and 2015. Moreover, one hears scarcely any peep from Whitehall officials or the Conservatives regarding the 2022 PISA rankings on *overall life satisfaction*, where English pupils were placed at a shocking second from bottom of the table.

Factually correct, hiding a lot

There are similar questions to be asked about the government's second key claim – that since 2010, the number of Good and Outstanding schools in England has risen from 68% to 88% Sounds good, right?

Well, when the the Education Policy Institute examined the statistics in detail, it concluded that while "*The DfE's headline is factually correct, it hides a lot if we want to understand whether this means school standards have improved.*" (see bit.ly/ts135-MB4).

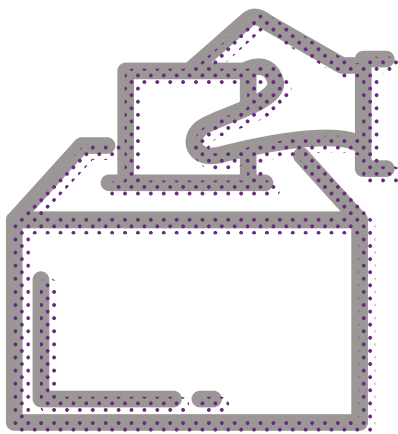
In short, the EPI found that the *actual proportion* of Outstanding schools appears to be falling, and is in fact lower than in 2010; that only 83% (not 88%) of secondary schools are Good or Outstanding.

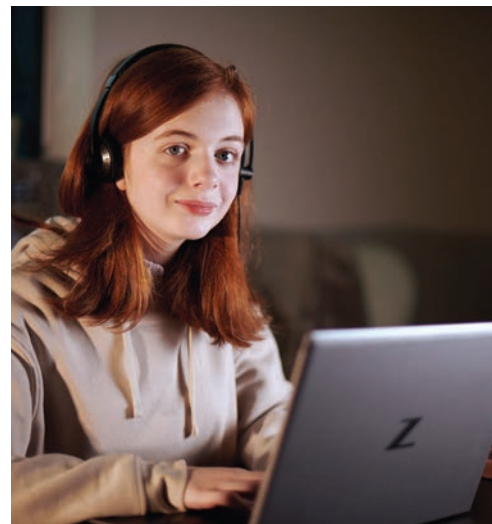
It further found that current Ofsted grades may not even be a good reflection of current performance, given that the average Outstanding school hasn't been inspected for over seven years, and the average Good school for six.

Finally, the EPI noted that 15% of currently Good or Outstanding schools are operating under different governance arrangements to when they were last inspected – again, casting doubt on the findings of quality.

Incumbent governments are bound to be scrutinised in a way that oppositions rarely are. They *are* the ones who have been in charge, after all – but will most voters grasp the many dimensions at play when told repeatedly that education has been a standout success of this Conservative administration?

I fear not...





ASK THE EXPERT

Transforming online learning

Jenny Webster, Deputy Head of English at Academy21, explains how online education can use innovative approaches to improve student engagement

How can we foster active student engagement online?

Engaging students in online learning environments requires innovative pedagogical strategies that promote active participation and interaction. Student-led discussions with gamification elements, interactive quizzes and polls are all effective ways of enhancing engagement and motivation. This way, educators can create dynamic online classrooms, in which students are actively involved in the learning process.

How does live teaching add value to the online learning experience?

Live teaching is a game changer. Live sessions offer invaluable opportunities for connection and engagement between teachers and students. They enable educators to provide immediate feedback, foster meaningful discussions and tailor instruction to individual needs. This enhances student motivation, promotes a sense of community and facilitates deeper learning experiences, nurturing both academic growth and personal development.

How can we deliver adaptive teaching online?

In online schooling, adaptive teaching is paramount for ensuring every student's success. Through embedding varied pedagogical strategies, multimedia resources and interactive activities, the needs of diverse learners can be accommodated. By analysing students' performance data and adapting content delivery accordingly, educators can provide targeted support and remediation, ultimately enhancing student learning outcomes.

What role does technology play in the online classroom?

Integrating multimedia resources, interactive simulations and educational apps will ensure that



EXPERT PROFILE

NAME:
Jenny Webster

JOB TITLE:
Deputy Head of English

AREA OF EXPERTISE:
Developing efficient readers

BEST PART OF MY JOB:
Mentoring new staff, seeing our students grow in confidence and working with my team to innovate our practice

lessons are engaging and dynamic. Virtual collaboration tools facilitate meaningful communication and teamwork, helping to create an important sense of fellowship among learners while breaking down geographical barriers with a single click. Technology can empower educators to create immersive, interactive learning environments that inspire curiosity and promote academic success in the online classroom.

How can we ensure effective assessment online?

In online teaching, effective assessment requires a multifaceted approach. Teachers can accomplish this by leveraging technology to create various testing formats, including quizzes and interactive assignments. Learning management systems like Canvas support time-limited exams, randomised question banks and automatic grading for quick feedback. Adopting tools that monitor student understanding in real-time, such as polling and digital hand-raises, will ensure that assessments are comprehensive and conducive to learning outcomes. Facilitating discussion forums and peer reviews can additionally enrich understanding and engagement among students.

ASK ME ABOUT

- HOW WE - build positive teacher-pupil relationships in a virtual environment
- HOW WE - can utilise interactive tools and technologies to enhance student engagement in an online learning environment
- HOW WE - support personalised learning to meet the diverse learning needs of students

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Navigating the Storm

Adrian Lyons reflects on what we can expect from from Sir Martyn Oliver's Tenure as HMCI, given the events of the past few months...

On January 1st 2024, Sir Martyn Oliver assumed the role of His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) at Ofsted, marking a new chapter for the organisation responsible for inspecting and regulating services that care for children and young people.

This change of leadership came at a particularly tumultuous time, with significant challenges and a legacy of contentious issues left by his predecessor.

A troubled inheritance

Ofsted, under the leadership of the HMCI, isn't a democratic assembly of education experts, but rather a body dedicated to implementing the policies and vision of its Chief Inspector. Historically, each new HMCI has brought about a distinct shift in direction, often repudiating the policies of their predecessor.

The tenure of Sir Martyn's predecessor, Amanda Spielman, was marred by controversy – particularly around her handling of the aftermath following the tragic death of headteacher Ruth Perry. Despite the coroner's findings pointing to significant stress caused by the inspection process, Spielman had publicly commented that the case was being used to 'discredit' the regulator – a remark perceived by many as being callous.

Sir Martyn sought to signal a change in approach early on, by briefly pausing inspection activities to provide inspectors with basic mental health training. Yet this initiative, while well-intentioned, has done little to address deeper issues within Ofsted's culture and operational framework.

The elephant in the room

Sir Martyn faces two fundamental problems that contribute to the stress experienced by both inspectors and the schools they evaluate – unrealistic inspection targets, and the retention of the four overall effectiveness grades. These issues are intertwined, and have led to a crisis of confidence in the reliability of inspection outcomes.

Former HMCIs and educational experts alike have criticised the current grading system, noting that it has become easier to achieve a Good rating. Anecdotal evidence suggests that inspectors, wary of backlash and unsupported by the system, often opt to avoid the hassle of issuing lower grades.

Another of Sir Martyn's big early initiatives has been to launch the 'Big Listen' survey, in an effort to gather insights from educators – though this too has been critiqued for avoiding the elephant in the room that is the continued use of the existing overall effectiveness grades.

A shift in focus

That said, Sir Martyn has signalled a willingness to address some of the more contentious aspects of the current inspection framework. One significant change taking effect in September this year is the elimination of subject deep dives from ungraded inspections.

While welcome, if this is done in isolation then we'll be in the strange situation of having a framework built upon a model of judging the quality of education via 'subject deep dives' which most schools previously judged Good or better won't be subject to.

Another notable departure from the previous regime's approach is the disbandment of Ofsted's Curriculum Unit. Under Spielman, there had been a strong emphasis on *curriculum quality* over mere exam results – though this focus often manifested through a narrow ideological lens, sometimes alienating educators and subject specialists. The end of the Curriculum Unit thus signals a potential return to a less ideologically-driven evaluation of educational practices.

A complex legacy

Prior to 2012, Ofsted's subject reports had been based on practical, observed evidence of effective teaching practices. The Curriculum Unit was different, in that it promoted a preferred ideological approach for a comparatively limited range of subjects, based on a narrow field of ideological research.

(I have to declare an interest here, however, since my own subject area of economics and business, with its 83,993 A level entries and 127,004 GCSE entries in 2023, was among those subjects not considered worthy of the Curriculum Unit's attention).

Sir Martyn Oliver's role as HMCI is undeniably challenging. With an imminent change of government on the horizon, there's limited appetite for sweeping reforms. Yet his initial steps indicate a commitment to mitigating some of the most pressing issues within Ofsted. The task now is to balance the immediate need for practical improvements with the longer-term goal of restoring faith in the inspection system.



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



When good is better THAN PERFECT

Colin Foster explains why perfectionists can fall short when it comes to pursuing a successful and sustainable teaching career...

What kind of person becomes a teacher?

Well, it takes all sorts, and I'm not about to stereotype the entire profession. People enter teaching from all kinds of backgrounds and for all kinds of reasons – and that's a good thing.

It's a great strength for a school to have a variety of different personalities and experiences among its staff. This gives students opportunities to interact with responsible adults who represent a range of different types, with personality traits and characteristics students will sometimes identify with and sometimes not.

'Responsible adults'

But having said that, I do think that many teachers display 'perfectionist' traits. They will have worked hard at school and university, enjoy studying things, be interested in 'knowledge for the sake of knowledge' and like to get things right. They will demonstrate great attention to detail and take deadlines seriously.

It's likely that they'll also consistently pay their bills on time, respond to emails and generally try to do everything to the highest

possible standard. They aspire to be a 'responsible adult' worthy of being entrusted with other people's children.

Now, for sure, this won't describe every teacher every day – but I'd venture that this kind of personality type is somewhat overrepresented in the profession.

Positives of perfectionism

The traits described above can all be very positive, of course. Indeed, they're very likely to be part of the reason why the teachers in question have made it into the profession and since succeeded.

They were the students who planned ahead, got their essays written and submitted them in good time (and remembered to put their name at the top)! They made revision timetables that they actually followed. They've done well, and will, to some extent, attribute the career success they've had to being well organised and focused on doing things properly.

Moreover, many of these traits are ones we try to encourage in our students. We want them to be well-organised and develop good time management. We want them to think, plan ahead

and always do their best – but in doing so, could we be unintentionally fostering a 'perfectionist' attitude in them that's ultimately not in their best long-term interests?

Challenges of perfectionism

Teaching is not always a friendly vocation for the perfectionist. We all know that teaching is a highly challenging job for many reasons. Young people get only one chance at being in school, and this places a weighty responsibility on the teachers who take care of them.

Young people's lives can be complicated and distressing, and this can be emotionally draining for the teachers who support them. The sheer number of contact hours every week and the relentlessness of administrative tasks, challenging students and difficult situations means that merely surviving as a teacher may be a huge achievement.

All of this will be very difficult for someone with a perfectionist way of thinking. They don't want to just manage, muddle through and make it to the

end of Friday; they want to get everything *right*. They want to be the best version of themselves that they can be.

Before they entered teaching, they may have been used to nailing tasks and acing their own exams. They will have believed that so long as you prepare thoroughly, and master the specified content and skills, you should have nothing to worry about. Everything will go smoothly, if only you put in the effort and follow the rules.

But real life – and teaching in particular – isn't always like this. Even with the best preparation in the world, a lesson can nosedive due to factors completely outside of the teacher's (or perhaps anyone's) control. Beyond that, there will always be many other good things that could, or should be getting done than the school will ever have capacity for, or which any one teacher will be able to do. In a school environment, perfectionism therefore almost inevitably leads to stress and unhappiness.

“In a school environment, perfectionism almost inevitably leads to stress and unhappiness”



Can 'good enough' be good enough?

It's hard to change who we are. Personalities go deep. But we can be kinder to ourselves if we recognise perfectionist tendencies in our approach to our jobs.

Psychologists talk about 'maximisers' versus 'satisficers'. At one extreme,

the maximiser will agonise over a decision, considering the pros and cons of every possibility and seeking to maximise the long-term benefits. At the other extreme, the satisficer makes a much faster, more intuitive decision. They don't aim for the absolute 'best' choice; they're fine with something that's good enough.

You might assume that the maximisers' choices would always be superior, but it isn't so straightforward. Maximisers might indeed surpass the satisficers, but still be less satisfied with the outcomes. Their high self-expectations and unwillingness to 'settle' can lead to feelings of failure when they fall short of their

unachievable goals – even if other people would be delighted with what they've achieved. Maximisers tend to be less happy and more vulnerable to depression.

When an absolutely critical decision needs to be taken, then it makes sense by all means to take the time to perform a thorough analysis. When it's worth it, going slow and carefully can pay dividends. But we can't treat every micro-decision as though it were a matter of life and death.

Very often in schools – as in life more generally – 'good enough' has to be good enough. In his book *Black Box Thinking*, Matthew Syed quotes a psychologist who states, "If I want to be a great musician, I must first play a lot of bad music."

An alien attitude

This can feel like an alien attitude to adopt when working in a school. After all, students are consistently told that they should always try their best – but is that actually realistic? Can they *always* be expected to use their neatest handwriting? What if this means that they only write half as much? Should they really always do everything to 110%?

I once knew a teacher who would always carry a fountain pen in his pocket. Everything he wrote in students' books, or anywhere at all for that matter, was written in an extremely

neat calligraphic style. People admired him for this – but was it a case of him taking pride in his work, or was he a victim of a one-size-fits-all mentality, manifesting as a failure to adapt appropriately to different situations?

It was very nice to see this fancy writing on certificates, but at other times it seemed to me to be just a waste of his time and effort. This isn't what it means to have high standards.

Scouring the internet for hours seeking that perfect online resource. Signing up for every CPD opportunity and conference you can possibly attend.

Determinedly reading every relevant edu-book that gets published (or maybe writing one?). Striving to stay on top of all of those podcasts. Completing a masters or a PhD.

The perfectionist wants to do the best for their students, but can end up sacrificing any sense of work-life balance in an endless contest to be the best they can be, while feeling constant guilt over all the things not done. In many cases, what we really need to learn is how to be comfortable doing a good enough job.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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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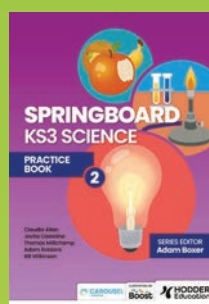
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It should go without saying, but if we want to address the harms wrought by misogyny and toxic masculinity, men and boys have to be fully involved in the conversation

Natasha Devon

For a couple of weeks this spring, social media discourse was dominated by one question – *‘If you were a lone woman or girl in a forest, would you rather encounter a man or a bear?’*

In a surprise to literally no women, six out of seven of us said ‘bear’. The rationales varied, however. For some, the bear’s behaviour would be predictable, so there would be actions they could theoretically take to avoid being attacked. If a man was intent on attacking them, nothing they could do would stop him.

Others felt the bear wouldn’t enjoy attacking them. At any rate, the bear wouldn’t pretend to befriend them first. People would also believe a woman if they said they’d been attacked by a bear. No one would have to watch the bear’s apology video afterwards, in which he claims to have turned to religion for salvation and declares that only God can judge him.

A framework for feelings

Many men saw the logic in these arguments. They understood that no one was saying they were definitely a predator. Similarly, when I visit Europe and see a negative response when people realise I’m English, I don’t instantly assume they think I voted for Brexit.

Some men, however, were outraged. How *dare* women imply they’re more dangerous than a bear? *“Misandry!”* they bellowed (even long after the rest of us had moved on to the next hot button social media trend).

The problem is, for those men who perceived these discussions as personal attacks, there are plenty of internet silos now waiting to scoop them up. Podcasts, TikTok accounts and books predominantly produced by wealthy white men claiming they’re now the most oppressed people on Earth thanks to feminism have become a multi-million-dollar industry. And alongside

the validations of hurt, their audiences will be ‘treated’ to advice on how to subjugate women and girls.

It’s little surprise that teenage boys are particularly susceptible to all this. Many of us will remember adolescence as a time when we felt we’d burst with the injustice of it all. Figures like Andrew Tate give young men a framework within which to fit these feelings.

As the women and girls who have been disrespected, harassed or assaulted by the male adherents of this movement will attest, we can’t simply assume that they’ll grow out of it. We must find a way of talking to these boys and men about women’s safety that engages them, or else lose them to the so-called manosphere – that online subculture in which boys as young as 12 are inducted and radicalised into misogynistic, homophobic and racist ideologies.

Basic decency

There are, however, some effective ways of getting young men enthusiastic about gender equality – the first of which is to ask them what they think, and then listen without contradicting them.

Often, simply asking *‘Why do you think that?’* or *‘What evidence do you see for that?’* can prompt them to arrive at a different, more productive conclusion.



We can acknowledge those people that they like and then present them with alternative role models.

If they follow misogynistic influencers, then rather than jumping to condemn, ask what it is specifically that they admire about them. Then show them examples of other prominent men online who share the same or similar qualities, but without the side order of toxic masculinity. I’ve listed a few examples below.

Above all, make them feel like part of the solution – not the problem.

The truth is that we need good men to help us fight sexism; men who will call out their mates’ ‘banter’, intervene when they see misogynistic bullying online or in real life, and who can demonstrate that it’s okay for men to talk about their feelings in a healthy way. By, well, doing just that.

Whilst I understand the arguments that men and boys shouldn’t be praised for simply showing basic decency, I would tentatively disagree. In a world where it’s so easy for them *not* to behave decently, they should be.

POSITIVE ONLINE MALE ROLE MODELS

@byalexholmes – A young therapist who focusses on how men discuss mental health

@theyoungimam – Talks to young Muslim men about the importance of respecting women (*NB – Andrew Tate claims to have converted to Islam*)

@Michaekulloapt – Male body positivity and fitness, without the toxicity

@TheOneArmedWonder – A former soldier turned disability activist and model

Natasha Devon is a writer, broadcaster and campaigner on issues relating to education and mental health; to find out more, visit natashadevon.com or follow [@_NatashaDevon](https://www.instagram.com/_NatashaDevon)

Q&A

“It can’t be left to chance”

Lizzie Catford, Director of Children’s Books at BookTrust, discusses the impact that encouraging reading for pleasure at the primary/secondary transition can have on students’ future success



30 SECOND BRIEFING

BookTrust is the UK’s largest children’s reading charity, working with millions of young people each year to get them reading. Its Bookbuzz programme helps put reading for pleasure at the heart of your school’s transition strategy.

Why should reading for pleasure be a key focus in school transition planning?

Transition into secondary school presents many challenges for students – a new environment, new peer group, new timetable and greater independence, but more responsibility too.

As they join Y7, reading for pleasure is a vital tool for easing the transition and ensuring that students don’t lose momentum. Many qualitative and quantitative research studies show the impact that reading regularly, and by choice, can have on attainment and cognitive development, as well as its effects on wellbeing and social outcomes.

How does reading for pleasure set students up for success across the curriculum?

Students who read are more likely to do better at school and make more progress across the curriculum. Reading enhances educational attainment. By feeding into their development of cognitive skills, and helping them understand forms of reasoning, complex concepts and imaginative richness, reading can support students’ problem solving skills and enhance their intellectual capacities.

How does reading for pleasure support student wellbeing?

Students who read are more likely to be happier, healthier and



experience better mental wellbeing and self-esteem.

Children aged 11-14 who read for pleasure have been shown to have healthier lifestyles. They’re less likely to try cigarettes or alcohol and eat more fruit, irrespective of their family background. They have a better foundation for healthy social-emotional development.

How does reading for pleasure promote social interaction?

Reading offers a unique tool for social interaction. A head of English at a large comprehensive school in the Midlands recently shared that she really values how BookTrust’s Bookbuzz programme – which gives students the chance to choose and keep a book they’ll love – provides great opportunities



ABOUT LIZZIE:

Lizzie Catford is an experienced publisher and reading for pleasure specialist, working on national-level behaviour change programmes to develop children’s reading habits.



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booktrust.org.uk

for getting to know her new Y7 students through low-stakes, informal book talk, in which students open up and share their points of view, likes and dislikes.

Why do schools need to embed reading for pleasure as a priority?

Put simply, it can’t be left to chance. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) released in May 2023 found that fewer students in England reported enjoying reading than in the previous study, with a quarter saying that they didn’t like reading.

With reading for pleasure in decline, taking the time to use Bookbuzz at the start of Y7 to embed positive associations with reading will pay dividends for the future. It will develop core skills by helping to scaffold choices, so that students know how to find a book that’s right for them.

Find out more about the benefits of reading and the evidence base via bit.ly/ts135-BT1
For more information on Bookbuzz visit booktrust.org.uk/bookbuzz

What’s the difference?

- + Bookbuzz provides a curated programme of books and resources to help embed a reading for pleasure culture, right from transition
- + It supports schools in scaffolding students’ choices, helping them to self-select the books they’ll read, which is proven to increase reading motivation
- + The programme spans 16 fiction and non-fiction titles, all selected by experts to ensure that there’s something for every interest and reading level

THE TS GUIDE TO... LITERACY

Has technology changed how we read? Has the evolution of our language around emotions altered how we now perceive literary characters? We take a look at how literacy is an area of teaching very much in flux...

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Gordon Cairns looks at how emotional literacy can be a powerful tool for literary analysis – particularly when wielded by learners more well-versed in it than their elders...



IN FIGURES: TO WHAT EXTENT DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE READ FOR PLEASURE?

43.4%

of 8- to 18-year-olds say they enjoy reading in their free time

28%

of the same age group say that they read during their spare time each day

52.9%

recall having been encouraged to read by their parents or carers

Source: ‘Children and young people’s reading in 2023’ survey carried out by National Literacy Trust



Reading Solutions UK is the home of DreamBox Reading Plus – the adaptive online reading programme that develops students’ fluency, vocabulary and comprehension skills.

Aimed at students in KS2-4, Reading Plus has a readability range from Y2 to GCSE and beyond. Every student has different needs, and it can be challenging to implement a reading intervention strategy that benefits the whole class.

With Reading Plus, students are placed on personalised learning paths based on their strengths and skills gaps. Students begin by completing a baseline assessment that measures their reading speed, motivation, comprehension and vocabulary levels. Based on these results, Reading Plus will then adapt its content and support to maximise every student’s progress.

See the impact on your students with a free 4-week pilot – sign up today by calling 0191 389 6078, emailing info@readingsolutionsuk.com or visiting readingsolutionsuk.co.uk



Literacy in the DIGITAL AGE

21st century technologies are reshaping how we all read and write, observes **David Voisin** – so is it time to reconsider the modern definition of ‘literacy’?

How detrimental has digital technology been to literacy?

Historically, of course, new technologies have often been blamed for corrupting and debasing language, despite not actually doing so. The Canadian intellectual, Stephen Pinker, once joked about this phenomenon, citing a humorous cartoon depicting two figures in ancient Egypt looking at engravings on a wall, while lamenting the gradual worsening of their hieroglyphic writing.

And yet, the latest set of worldwide PISA scores would seem to indicate a worrying drop in literacy rates that suspiciously coincides with the advent and subsequent growth of social media...

Exploiting the plasticity

Pinker has previously explained how reading erupted so suddenly within our social evolution that its mechanics had to be ‘bolted on’ to our existing brain circuitry. Even within the span of one individual’s lifetime, the acquisition of literacy takes place at lightning speed.

As the literacy scholar and neuroscientist Maryanne Wolf observes in her book *Proust and the Squid*, an invention that took 2,000 years to emerge has to be taught to a child over a period of 2,000 days: “*Literacy changes our brains, which changes the life trajectory of a person, which changes society, which changes our species.*”

The ways in which younger generations have adapted to the digital age have been fast too, but we’re now talking about exponential celerity. In his book *The Anxious Generation*, the American psychologist Jonathan Haidt employs the rather sombre term ‘rewiring’ in pointing out how the profusion of apps that have emerged from Silicon Valley and elsewhere exploit the plasticity of young brains, in effect permanently engraving said software into adolescents’ vulnerable minds.

This window of

The linguist George Lakoff has previously shown how language is imbued with metaphors – see how we ‘spend’ time, for example. Reading is thus time well invested, being an activity found to carry huge cognitive and social gains.

When it comes to social media, however, Jonathan Haidt talks about such activity in terms of ‘cost benefit’. The damage it does stems not just from what the product offers, but in what it takes away from other activities that could potentially do more to benefit

a child’s development.

App designers use all the tricks in the psychology toolbox to activate young people’s dopamine and get them hooked. In Maryanne Wolf’s view, “*Most of our youth and children are the recipients of multiple distractions that continuously claim their limited attention.*”

Happiness in routines

But if digital technology can create dangerous habits, then it can also help educators foster healthy routines. In his book *Atomic Habits*, writer James Clear states that we “*Raise to the level of our goals and fall to the level of our systems.*”

“Books nourish the imagination – social media force-feeds us distorted reality”

opportunity – the teenage years – is a span of time in which we, as teachers, are able to witness first-hand the tremendous damage new technologies can wreak.

Time well invested

The expression ‘reading for pleasure’ is a misleading one. We don’t *read for pleasure*, but we may well get *pleasure from reading*. People read very different things, and with very different aims – though as the psychology professor Daniel T. Willingham has pointed out, the problem isn’t that teens don’t like reading. It’s that it simply isn’t their first choice of activity.



Routines are key to success and happiness. Online homework platforms enable educators to help develop and monitor some of those routines. It's vital to inform parents how digital technology can be harnessed for learning, and how healthy ingredients such as sport, homework, social time and reading can be incorporated into children's daily habits. Indeed, it may be the only true remedy we have against the dangers of social media.

I would argue that the essence of literacy is best encapsulated in Mary Cassatt's painting 'The Reading Lesson' (see sidebar). Counter-intuitive though it may sound, at the core of reading lies a social act. Books can, and do help us socially. Rates of criminality and literacy are inversely correlated. Submerging ourselves in written fiction helps us to become more empathetic.

Jonathan Haidt has argued that the disembodied and asynchronous nature of online interactions harms a child's social development, in that emojis and 'likes' are poor

substitutes for the complexities of real emotions and genuine human rapport. Books nourish the imagination. Social media force-feeds us distorted reality.

Making us human

Nor should we overlook that other vital aspect of literacy – oracy. A significant portion of the Canon originated in oral tradition. Drama, MFL and RE present great opportunities for enhancing students' verbal abilities and developing the so-called 'soft skills' of confidence and resilience.

With platforms such as X continuing to be awash with vitriolic posts, invective and ad hominem attacks, it's never been more important to teach our students to argue in a civil manner. Besides which, in an era of AI and bots, reading serves the purpose of making us more human.

Digital technology may help us waste time, but it can also help us spend it more wisely and facilitate reading in terms of both space and time. Carrying a Kindle or iPad is considerably less cumbersome than hefting a stack of physical books. Audiobooks can seamlessly enable reading to occur in the gym or on the bus (the cognitive processes involved being the same as those relating to physical books).

Books that read YOU

At an early age, the physical aspects of literacy become important – from the symbolic act of turning pages, to

the development of fine motor skills for writing. Recent research has shown that cursive writing appears to deeply engage the brain in ways that support learning. Handwriting is an integral part of children's cognitive development, and even in later life, note-taking can be useful for helping us actively process information and synthesise our thoughts.

Where modern digital technology can really help is during that initial phase of decoding – i.e. learning to read. Studies have shown that subtitles can subliminally aid in language acquisition, especially among reluctant or weak readers. Such is the quality of subtitles now on streaming platforms such as Netflix, they can even help viewers learn foreign languages.

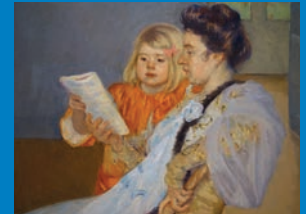
I once heard someone say that *'The internet possesses all the knowledge but none of the wisdom.'* A key danger of online information is that its algorithmically-driven distribution feeds individuals' pre-existing biases, luring them into cognitive echo-chambers. It calls to mind a chilling *pensée* by the historian, Yuval Noah Harari: *"Soon, books will read you while you are reading them."*

A formidable tool

And yet, when harnessed appropriately, the internet can be a formidable tool for learning. Audiobooks and carefully curated podcasts can bring world class intellectuals straight to your ears, whatever your class or social background. Teachers should be directing students towards such autodidactic learning opportunities.

So, does digital technology augur a dark future for literacy? Yes and no.

I believe that digital technology will exacerbate the literacy divide yet further – not because it's intrinsically bad, but



The Reading Lesson by Mary Cassatt (1901)

21ST CENTURY LITERACY ESSENTIALS

- Delay the use of keyboards for writing
- Use physical books for deep reading and ebooks for research (and notes or highlights)
- Use audiobooks, podcasts and other audio media to create more time and space for language immersion
- Foster environments and routines that reduce social media use and increase cultural capital
- Promote social and 'embodied' literacy via oracy exercises and classroom discussion
- Develop children's theory of the mind via rich reading opportunities and careful curriculum design; expose them to diverse identities and experiences, as well as different opinions
- Teach critical thinking and civil dialogue

because it has the potential to be both good *and* bad.

Perhaps in an age of ever-present, information, 'literacy' will no longer refer to knowing *how* to read, but to knowing *what* and *when* to read.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
David Voisin is a head of MFL



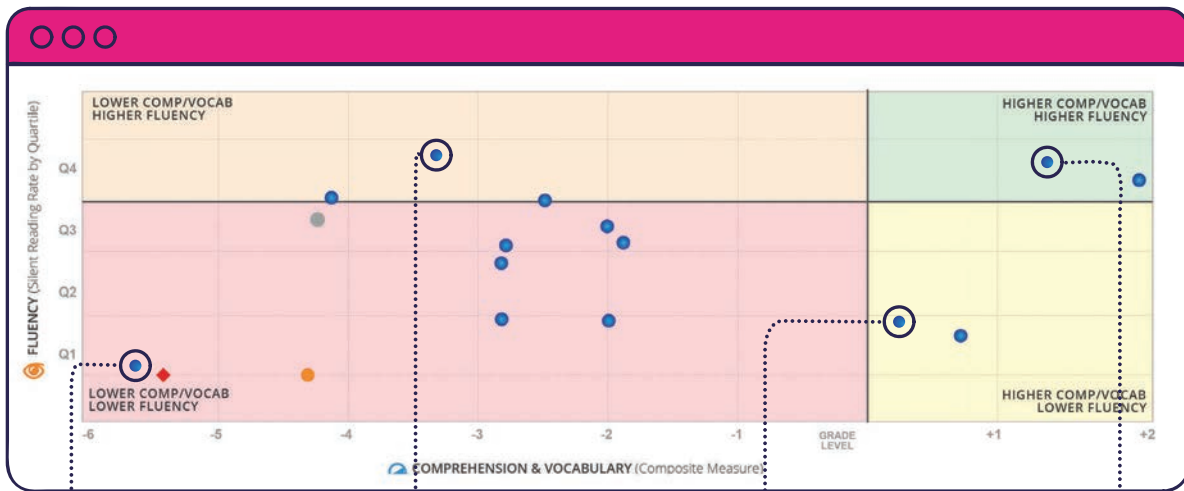
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Relearning reading

Sarah Ledger explains why engaging students in the process of ‘relearning reading’ isn’t just a wise use of time, but a moral imperative...

Why should we persist with a strategy that is plainly failing students and teachers alike? Every year, without exception, a mass cohort of learners will find themselves ploughing through past papers and hoping against hope that this time, those resit scores will go in their favour.

But what if there’s a fundamental void in their learning which has yet to be fixed?

What if – as is the case for a significant proportion of post-16 students – it’s actually a critical absence of *decoding and deciphering skills* that’s preventing them from conquering this next phase of their academic life?

We are, of course, talking about reading. Specifically, I want to highlight here the need for us to embrace the ‘re-learning of reading’, and to let go of those learned assumptions that there’s a particular age and stage at which students should have the opportunity to undertake reading as a subject matter within their school career.

A destructive cycle

With vulnerable readers, as well as those who, for whatever reason find themselves on a race to improve, there’s no single benefit to be had in tasking or testing them – not if they lack the skills required to read the words placed in front of them.

Without reading skills, learners can’t possibly hope to realise their ultimate potential. Instead, they become locked into a demoralising and destructive cycle of failure that they and their teachers have to experience time and again – but if an appropriately resourced intervention could be added to their pathway, this can be easily fixed.

Reading interventions for older learners, centred on explicit instruction, can rapidly enable students to not only read *for* knowledge, but to also *apply* knowledge.

It can gift students the perfect package of being able to recognise a word, decode it and then comprehend that word in different meanings and contexts.

Rather than feeling blinded by words and reading structures, learners can be empowered to weave together a series of word recognition skills – such as phonological awareness, decoding and sight recognition – while simultaneously developing important language comprehension skills like verbal reasoning and vocabulary structure.

Profound transformations

For schools and any other settings striving for a ‘literacy culture’ spanning multiple subject areas, this is golden. These kinds of interventions can instil in students a newfound confidence to explore word usage in any area of the curriculum.

Whether it be in science, maths, geography or indeed English literature, they’ll suddenly be able to accurately interpret

what’s being tasked of them, break down words in a way that makes sense and craft meaningful responses.

Teachers benefit from this too. The cycle of despondency that comes from putting this year’s pool of students through their resits can instead be replaced with the professional satisfaction that comes from witnessing a rapid and

effective relearning of a core skill, which in turn expands their learners’ aspirations and potential opportunities.

Given the prospect of such profound transformations, why would we *not* adopt interventions like this?

True reading comprehension

Without true reading comprehension, without the fluency and vocabulary recognition that committing to short and powerful re-learning interventions can achieve, we’ll forever be at risk of sending youngsters out into the world who may well scrape through their exams, but still find themselves perpetually limited in life by their reading skills. No-one should be resigned to such a fate.

Before our students leave our charge, we have the chance to embed reading skills which will enable them to not just flick through books of their choosing at will, but also write a CV, comprehend medical notes, be more savvy when booking holidays, submit entrepreneurial business bids and become the innovators, observers and analysts upon which our world relies.

It’s up to us to overcome our own ingrained thinking. Relearning reading can be simple to adopt, yet hugely far-reaching in its impact.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Ledger is a former head of English and deputy headteacher and now the CEO of the literacy intervention provider Lexonik; for more information, visit lexonik.co.uk or follow @LexonikST

READING

between the lines

Gordon Cairns looks at how emotional literacy can be a useful frame for literary analysis – particularly when wielded by learners more well-versed in it than their elders...

The power of great literature is its ability to maintain relevance long after the source of the author's inspiration has passed. It's what enables Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* – which portrays witchcraft-related hysteria as an allegory for the political persecution playing out in mid-20th century America – to still be read today as a primer in Emotional Literacy.

Consider the play's lead character, John Proctor. Steeped in toxic masculinity, he attempts to gaslight Abigail Williams – a younger woman he has groomed in the past. We also see him applying coercive control to his wife Elizabeth, adding salt to the rabbit stew behind her back and then complimenting her on the seasoning. All the while, he applies the power of male privilege to every female character he interacts with.

Proctor's servant, Mary Warren, meanwhile experiences a form of 'cancel culture' when she attempts to break free from a core group of girls accusing the villagers of witchcraft.

Native speakers

Previous GCSE cohorts may have been comfortable using critical terminology to describe Miller's use of foreshadowing, but they could often struggle with employing the vocabulary of emotions to describe Proctor's behaviour.

This wasn't limited *The Crucible*. An essay skilfully

analysing Philip Larkin's use of enjambement in 'Afternoons' would be similarly less assured when trying to describe the disillusionment felt by the young mothers in the play park. This wasn't because English students of the past couldn't recognise a range of behaviours and emotions, but more because many simply didn't have the language needed to accurately pin down those behaviours and emotions beyond the broad strokes of 'depressed', 'angry' or 'jealous.'

Luckily for English teachers working today, however, we're blessed with classes of late Generation Z-ers who are native speakers in the new lexicon of

the clock.

It's far easier, for instance, for a student examining Iago's actions in *Othello* to describe him as 'gaslighting Othello' when he ambiguously exclaims: 'Ha! I like not that', rather than laboriously explain how Iago is manipulating his general using psychological tools that prompt him into questioning his own powers of reasoning.

Encounters with ghosting

A key benefit for teachers is that they barely need to teach this new language; they just need to provide the materials, and then let their classes deploy their own vocabulary and go to work.

Google one or more core Emotional Literacy terms.

Indeed, it was a student who first alerted me to the possibility of deploying the language and thought processes of Emotional Literacy to the study of literature, rather than me attempting to impose this new vocabulary upon them. In one of their essays, the student in question described Lennie Small – an impulsively destructive character portrayed in *Of Mice and Men* – as being 'unable to self-regulate' when he accidentally kills his puppy by smacking it too hard. It made me wonder if the student had first heard that phrase used to describe his own behaviour by someone in authority.

As important as passing exams or appreciating art is, the opportunity

“Encouraging teenagers to transfer analytical skills learned in the literacy laboratory to understanding their own actions can support good mental health”

Emotional Literacy. By that, I mean they're well-versed in the lingua franca of emotions that are increasingly becoming better understood by everyone. The terminology is pithy, often compressing otherwise lengthy phrases into – decidedly exam-friendly – single words or expressions that are easily remembered, and can be jotted down quickly when writing against

Most members of Generation Z, as well as the younger Millennials that preceded them, have been raised to be emotionally literate, to the point that they can and do freely discuss encounters with ghosting, gaslighting and catfishing across the various online platforms they use. Conversely, some of their teachers – including me – will sometimes need to

OLD STORIES, NEW ANGLES

For every newly minted behaviour arrived at via emotional literacy, chances are a playwright, novelist or poet will have portrayed said behaviour at some point over the last millennium. Here are just a few examples from the current GCSE curriculum...

Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller

Linda Loman is an enabler, facilitating her husband in keeping his destructive

fantasies alive over the course of the play, by not letting the cold, hard truth interfere in his daydreams – despite the best attempts of their son, Biff...

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Jay Gatsby gaslights Daisy Buchanan when he compels her to deny she ever had feelings for her husband Tom, while simultaneously trying to keep his impossible dream of the past alive.

Lord of the Flies by William Golding

Roger becomes increasingly

desensitised as the events shown in the novel rapidly escalate – from deliberately throwing stones that miss one of the younger children, to eventually dropping a boulder on Piggy that kills him instantly.

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson

Dr Jekyll uses his servant, Poole, to ghost the lawyer Mr Utterson, as he seeks to conceal the true identity of the murderer 'Mr Hyde' from his inquisitive friend.

that students studying literature have to develop emotionally can perhaps deliver an even greater lifelong benefit. Encouraging teenagers to

transfer analytical skills they've learned in the literacy laboratory to understanding their own actions, or those of people around them, can help support good mental health.

Under the microscope

Using fictional characters to examine true life situations can take the emotional heat out of challenging scenarios. Holden Caulfield's emotional inner life, as he transitions from youth to adulthood in *The Catcher in the Rye*, makes for both a fantastic read and a penetrating case study in teenaged mental turmoil,

but it would be exhausting to actually spend some time with him. It's far safer for us to meet him in a book.

Another benefit of examining literary characters' motivations is that your opinions will never cause the recipient to bite back or storm off in a huff. Real people are, of course, all too often unpindownable, while even the most well-drawn fictional character will be forever static, unchanging since the day their author finished telling their story. This lets readers revisit them repeatedly over time and really explore their depths – the very opposite of making a snap judgement based on a misheard word or out-of-character action.

Of course, putting the actions of characters in a play under the microscope over a block of lessons is far easier than examining your own behaviours, or those of the people around you.

When it comes to our own actions, we'll tend to be either too harsh or too lenient. The emotional connections they'll have with friends and family will often prevent our young people from coolly analysing the actions of those individuals who are closest to them.

Rejecting repression

From another perspective, it could be argued

that we've all become more emotionally literate as a society.

Witness how far we've moved away from the idea that repressing our emotions is a sign of strength and a desired character trait, and towards a growing awareness of the damage that failing to understand or properly express our behaviour can have on our own mental health and those close to us.

This positive trend is something that we can further build on, with the help of literature. A growing body of evidence shows that the reading of novels, plays and poems supports good mental health, and can help to alleviate anxiety and depression.

The ability to recognise, and articulate through widely understood vocabulary the emotions of fictional characters makes it easier to then name and understand our own feelings – long after we've forgotten precisely why it was that John Proctor was hung for witchcraft...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gordon Cairns is an English and forest school teacher who works in a unit for secondary pupils with ASD; he also writes about education, society, cycling and football for a number of publications

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3

On a literacy mission

Lexonik's mission to ensure 'Nobody should be limited because they can't read' continues at pace in 2024. The literacy intervention provider has seen the fastest growth rate yet in school take-up of its literacy programmes over the first half of the year, and is also evolving innovative new strands of delivery. Alongside its work with mainstream schools, Lexonik is now increasingly delivering to young people in secure care centres. The firm has also embarked on a partnership with Teesside University, through which trainee teachers are receiving instruction in vocabulary and reading strategies via the DfE's Independent Test Assessment Programme initiative. Find out more at lexonik.co.uk



4

Pen and paper power

An English education subject report produced by Ofsted in March 2024 highlighted both significant gaps in pupils' written and spoken language, and the pressing need to build basic skills (see bit.ly/ts135-LS1).

The necessity of balancing writing and reading has been well-documented. To enhance motricity and cognitive ability in the digital age, it's encouraged that pupils focus on cursive handwriting, and practice connecting movement with visual responses. Adoption of traditional pen and exercise books fosters precisely the kind of skills identified in the aforementioned report, which will in turn lead to further development and improvements. To find out more about how YPO can help with curriculum resources for teachers and pupils, visit ypo.co.uk



2

Well read

Reading regularly and by choice can produce profound and wide-ranging benefits that leave lifelong positive impacts on children's lives.

BookTrust's Bookbuzz reading programme for Y7 and Y8 offers schools a curated package of books and resources that will help to embed a 'reading for pleasure' culture, from the primary-secondary transition onward.

To find out more about Bookbuzz, and to receive a free copy of BookTrust's 'Reading for Pleasure at Key Stage 3' guide, visit bit.ly/24rfpbt



5

Oracy essentials

The English-Speaking Union believes every child should be able to make their voice heard. We work with teachers to improve oracy skills and cross-cultural understanding so that all young people – regardless of background – can thrive. Our resources, programmes and competitions help young people to better engage with the world, speak more confidently, listen attentively and understand different points of view. Acquiring these skills will improve young people's standards of attainment, emotional intelligence and social skills, helping them live their lives to the fullest. To find out more, visit ESU.org or email education@esu.org

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2 DOUBLE THE PROGRESS
The intervention provides effective personalised learning support, underpinned by recognised good practice and research. Analysis has shown that learners aged 6 to 14 who received Catch Up® Literacy support for an average of seven

months went on to attain average Reading Age gains of about 19 months.

3 THE COST
Catch Up® offers a complete training and support package centred on three 2-hour online sessions for staff who will deliver it. This includes initial training materials, guidance and proformas required for delivery, and management of the intervention, plus ongoing support. The intervention training costs £450 per trainee - with no subscriptions!

4 FEEDBACK FROM
"Very happy with the training and delivery... the supporting documents are excellent."



"It [complements] the curriculum, is easy to follow and students respond/engage well. It has proven results."

"Reading age of Child A had increased to 11 years 9 months, representing a gain of 39 months over the 8-month period."

CatchUp®

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01842 668 080
catchup.org

Key Points

- + Achieve double the normal rate of progress in students' reading ages
- + Maximise the effectiveness of support staff and tutors by training them to deliver proven interventions
- + Improve learners' confidence, behaviour and engagement with the curriculum as a whole

4 REASONS TO TRY... HUE HD Pro

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2 EASE OF USE
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3 VERSATILE LENS
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At a glance

- + Available in four colours with a multicoloured or black case (subject to availability), alongside a 3-years warranty and friendly, efficient customer support
- + A winner and finalist in multiple awards, including the Teach Primary, Teach Secondary, BETT and ERA Awards
- + "A clever and compact document viewer with a host of additional features" - Mike Davies, TeachCo product reviewer

Maximise tutor time

With the aid of some fast and engaging activities, tutor time can be used to boost some important cross-curricular skills, says **Meera Chudasama**...

Whether you have 10 minutes available or even an hour, tutor time can be difficult to plan for alongside the workload involved in teaching your specialist subject.

We can, however, use this time to support students in developing their literacy and numeracy skills – particularly when helping younger students acclimatise to the new and unfamiliar demands of secondary school.

LITERACY ACTIVITIES

Reading

Getting students to read independently, in pairs, in groups or as a class can provide them with access to an expanded range of vocabulary and develop their creativity. During tutor time you could try experimenting with these reading strategies:

- Assembling a book box every half term
- Printing out and reading engaging short stories together – such as Roald Dahl's 'The Landlady' or 'Lamb to the Slaughter'
- Encouraging students to read out passages from stories they've found especially interesting or memorable

Play, pause, talk

Audiobooks are a great way for students (and teachers) to get acquainted with a wider selection of YA fiction. Try subscribing to an audiobook platform for a free trial and listening to an audiobook, while maybe letting your tutor group vote on the choice of title.

When the reading is

underway, pause at key moments in the story to question your students' understanding of the plot, core characters and key events. You could even use audiobooks to establish links with key topics that students are currently learning about across the curriculum.

This is the news...

Make your students more aware of the wider world by showing them how to be critical readers and develop their own informed opinions of world events. Organise a 'newspaper morning' in which a selection of tabloid and/or broadsheet newspapers are prominently displayed somewhere in the classroom, or project an online news article from a reputable source on the board.

Showing students news

give them a contextual understanding for their studies.

Alternatively, task students with finding articles, blogposts, leaflets and other online media that could provide additional background information for their studies. Ensuring that students are exposed to a breadth of knowledge will provide them with opportunities to broaden what they already know.

Class research

Ask your students what area or topic they would love to study if given the chance, and design half-termly class research projects that focus on these topics of interest.

If, for example, the topic was climate change, you could try to locate key speeches, recent news reports, weather data,

historical reports and other forms of information to give students a wider frame of reference for the issues involved.

At the end of the project, have the students show and explain to each other what they've discovered. Hosting a class project will expose students to reading embedded in many different forms.

Spell it!

Give students a series of nine random letters, making sure that there's good mix of vowels and consonants. Display a timer on the board, and then get them to create as many different words as possible.

You could potentially give out prizes for the longest correctly spelt word, or the

“Show students how to be critical readers and develop their own opinions of world events”

reports from a range of different agencies and providers will illustrate how the same topic can be presented from multiple viewpoints and perspectives.

Cross-curricular links

Ask students about the up and coming topics they'll soon be learning about, and maybe create a calendar detailing key topics throughout the term ahead. Source information that students wouldn't normally have access to, but which will



largest number of correctly spelt words. To make things more competitive, have the students compete in teams or pairs and enter their final scores on a shared leaderboard.

Fancy a poem?

If you're struggling to engage students with lengthy stories, why not try sharing and reading a poem? Websites like Poetry Foundation (poetryfoundation.org) or Poetry by Heart (poetrybyheart.org.uk) can give you quick and easy access to a wide range of poems.

Your students could read poems out loud, read them in pairs and even perform them. To develop their study of poems further, try asking the class:

- What's the focus of this poem?
- What emotions and feelings are expressed within the poem?
- Whose perspective is being shared in the poem?

- Which poetic techniques have been used and why?
- What is the writer's intention in writing this poem?

MATHS ACTIVITIES

Countdown

One way for students to practice rapid calculations is to play the game shown on TV as *Countdown*. There are a number of recreations hosted online that you could use on the classroom display – or, if you're confident in your own mathematical abilities...

1. Decide on a number you want the students to reach
2. Give students a selection of numbers that they can use to reach that number
3. Set a timer for 30 seconds or 1 minute
4. Whoever reaches the sum first within the time set gets to show the rest of the class how they did so

Mathematical problems

You can find plenty of mathematical problems with accompanying answers on the internet.

Copy and paste one such problem for your students (ensuring that you've had a proper go at trying to solve the problem yourself first).

The process of solving the problem will help to develop your students' literacy and maths skills at the same time, since they'll need to be able to read the problem critically. See below for a few examples...

- A shop needs to increase the cost of a book from £25 to £35. By what percentage has the price increased?
- Eight of my pets aren't dogs, five aren't rabbits, and seven aren't cats. How many pets do I have?
- A mouse costs £10, a bee costs £15, and a spider costs £20. How much does a duck cost?

Go shopping!

You can use the language and features of online shopping to help build your students' numeracy skills.

Create imaginary 'baskets' of items and then get your students adding up totals, deducting percentages to come within a sale price and subtracting items from the basket. This can not only help students practice the basic numeracy skills of adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing, but also improve their mental arithmetic through the process of calculating percentages.

Formula of the week

KS4 students who'll soon be heading into the exam room must be able to memorise certain formulas for their maths GCSE – so in the run-up to the exams, prepare a different curriculum-mapped maths formula each week for them to memorise, apply to a specific problem or teach each other about.

If you're unsure about doing this, liaise with a maths teacher in your school and ask if they can pass on any past papers, or



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RESOURCES**

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handout
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'Five a day' handout
template
bit.ly/ts135-FA2

recommend any good websites with advice and resources for non-maths specialists.

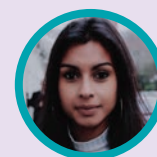
Teach it!

Students who have mastered the skills expected of them in literacy and numeracy could try their hand at teaching their peers within the safe, low-stakes environment of your tutor group - explaining their approach to working out maths problems, or how they go about responding to questions on the GCSE maths paper more generally.

Five a day

Aim to give students a mix of 5 short numeracy and literacy activities each day. If designing and organising these is likely to be difficult, you could potentially have students design them for their peers.

If you can, maintain a mix of activities to keep them guessing – potentially spanning maths problems, story creation, specific reading tasks and other activities.



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



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5 REASONS TO TRY... Subject knowledge for Physics Teaching

If your science department is lacking in specialist knowledge, The Ogden Trust may have just the thing...



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Subject Knowledge for Physics Teaching is a FREE blended learning CPD programme from The Ogden Trust that will upskill biology, chemistry and non-specialist teachers of physics at KS3/4.

1 THE TOOLS TO TEACH PHYSICS

Teaching physics out of specialism can be a daunting prospect. School Workforce Census data published in 2023 revealed that more than one in five physics classes were being taught by a teacher without a relevant degree. Subject Knowledge for Physics Teaching (SKPT) provides teachers with the knowledge, tools and confidence they need to bring physics lessons to life. It is easily accessible, grounded in research and provides teaching ideas that can be taken straight into the classroom. Each module builds a teacher's subject knowledge and pedagogy, helping them develop a range of classroom approaches and explore the required practicals.

2 CHALLENGE AND ADDRESS MISCONCEPTIONS

Science education research shows that misconceptions around physics concepts are common, and can be both deep-rooted and resistant to change. The teacher's role in pre-empting and intervening in problems caused by student misconceptions is a core part of good science teaching, but can be particularly challenging for teachers teaching out of specialism. A key feature of our SKPT programme is the time given to exploring misconceptions so that they can be diagnosed and refuted, with expert practitioners modelling how to translate this effectively into classroom practice.



3 MATHS IN PHYSICS

Students can frequently struggle with the maths in physics. This can present non-specialist teachers with significant challenges to overcome if they're to inspire their classes, with non-specialist teachers of physics often possessing less experience and confidence in manipulating equations, using graphs and working with large and small numbers. In each SKPT module we therefore explore mathematical problem solving, and share effective ways of approaching calculations and the real-world significance of numbers and units.



making physics matter

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4 BUILD YOUR PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO

Confident and engaging delivery of physics in the classroom can help inspire and enable young learners to better understand how the world works and how they can contribute to it. There are six SKPT modules available in total – covering electricity, energy, forces, waves, matter and space, and atomic physics – to help teachers develop the breadth and depth of their physics knowledge, secure the pedagogical approaches needed to teach the topics effectively and build their professional portfolio.

5 LEARN AT YOUR LEISURE

Teachers will join a supportive learning network led by experienced physics practitioners. Each module requires 20 hours of learning over eight weeks, and is introduced via a face-to-face CPD day before concluding with a half-day in-person session. Two webinars and supported online study complete the programme, with teachers also able to take part in activities, quizzes and professional reflections at times that suit them. As one participant comments, "without question, I would recommend SKPT. It's a very important offer, and the benefits are wide-ranging. I'm definitely better equipped to be in a classroom teaching physics."

Key Points

Teachers who have taken part have told us that the SKPT delivery has been 'exceptional' and the content 'incredibly useful'

Sessions are FREE, and schools will receive a £200 subsidy upon completion of a module. Teachers can also earn an Institute of Physics Subject Knowledge Award

A three-module (forces, energy and electricity) residential programme is now available; trusts and school science departments can also book bespoke sessions

Book the modules you need to build your professional portfolio and find your physics classroom confidence. Secure your place now by visiting stem.org.uk/skpt

Is there anybody OUT THERE?

Ann Marie Christian looks at the steps staff should take if communications between school and home aren't where they should be...

As defined in The Children Act 1989, 'parental responsibility' is "All the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property."

The role performed by parents or carers, and how this intersects with the work carried out in schools, is a key factor in securing better educational outcomes and positive results when it comes to attendance, behaviour, homework and child welfare. Consistent and effective communication between between the two is therefore essential.

If a parent or carer is bombarding you with emails that require excessive time and energy to manage, the situation is best dealt with by replying to the email while copying in your line manager or SLT (albeit after confirming this approach with the senior colleagues in question).

Honesty and transparency

As many educators and school leaders will know, however, it tends to be the opposite issue – reticent and uncommunicative parents – that's more common and harder to address.

When parents and carers initially apply for school places they will be highly enthusiastic and forthcoming in their communications with school and make themselves readily available. After the child starts, however, this effective two-way

communication can easily break down over time.

How can we tell when this might have happened? Most schools will require parents and carers to sign home/school agreements at the start of the year which clearly set out what the school requires of them. Over the course of the coming years, the school will communicate with families over various matters relating to the pupil, and expect honesty and transparency from

parents in return – but things aren't always that straightforward in practice.

For one thing, schools are required to keep records of students' parents' names and assigned emergency contacts – but these relationships can and do sometimes change at any moment.

Consider school attendance. If a student is absent, the school will contact home and expect a response within the hour – be it via a voice message or email. The child may be unwell – or it may be that the parents need to be updated on a specific safeguarding or behaviour concern. Cases falling within the latter category are plainly more urgent and will require a faster response.

Consistent communications

The most obvious way of discerning that home/school communications and levels of trust have broken down is when parents/carers fail to return calls or reply to email. You can tell that things have become serious when you find yourself sending lengthy emails and using bold type, capitals and exclamation marks.

The emails in question may well quote polices, contain reminders of DfE guidance

Training staff in how to recognise and manage such situations will help to maintain a consistent approach across the school. We must always remain respectful and be non-judgemental when communicating with families, as we may well need to take into account various external factors, such as the cost of living crisis, family stress, mental health complications, issues of substance misuse, parental trauma and more besides.

“We must always remain respectful and be non-judgemental when communicating with families”

or even clarification of the law, sometimes accompanied by details of formal complaints or interventions by governors.

Staff should be able to readily recognise any signs of resistance, avoidance, and communication breakdown on the part of home. The school should already be committed to partnership working with families, which may mean that gentle reminders will have already been raised at weekly staff meetings, in departmental meetings or at parents' evening.



Meet them where they are

If we don't get a prompt reply to an initial communication regarding a serious matter, we ought to exhibit genuine concern. Up to a point, it may be necessary to think the unthinkable – that something terrible could have happened to family, so we should be sympathetic in the first instance and check in via email or call to see if they're okay, having not heard from them. If leaving a message, be sure to state a time that you'll try calling them again, or suggest a convenient time at which they could contact you.

If scheduling a face-to-face meeting with parents is providing difficult, there are several steps you can take.

Post-COVID, we've become a nation that's now much more open to, and adept at using remote learning and online meetings. Lest we forget, until relatively recently all parents' evenings took place online.

This flexibility now makes it possible for schools to accommodate a much wider range of accessibility needs that families may have. During the pandemic, we actually saw an increase in parental attendance at school meetings, stemming from parents and carers' increased availability, and our ability to make ourselves more accessible via screens in their homes or at their workplace. If you need it, then chances are that option is still very much there.

External advice

Given that children are required to attend school five days a week over a span of multiple years, schools clearly play an important role in a child's early life – but that life will still be profoundly shaped by their family story, which is why home visits can play a vital part in better understanding a child's behaviour, and the wider context of their upbringing.

The school's policy on home visits should be fully explained to parents, clearly setting out when and why these may be necessary. They should always be done with the best interests of the child at heart, and carefully planned beforehand. Families will typically be informed of an impending

home visit, though there may be occasions when visits are unannounced – usually in relation to a serious safeguarding issues. Home visits should always be completed by staff in pairs, ideally including at least one adult known to the family or child.

The stage at which a school should seek assistance from external agencies with respect to a parent's availability/willingness to engage productively with its staff

A school's safeguarding policy will be influenced by child protection laws, government guidance and decisions made by its local authority, and apply to any cases involving children who have gone missing from home or education, and any forms of harm or abuse. A detail breakdown of these can be found in Annex B of the latest Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance issued by the DfE (see bit.ly/ts135-PE1).

Every school has a duty of care to the children on its roll, and must follow all appropriate protocols if they have any concerns regarding an individual child or their home environment. Parents and carers should in turn contact the school and update them on any important matters relating to their child's wellbeing. If a school continues to have concerns, having received no contact from the family, they will need to liaise with an external social care agency or contact the police.

Usually, a school must have exhausted all other possible forms of communication with parents and carers before taking such steps. Any referral decisions must be recorded on the child's file, explaining the reasoning behind the action taken.

MAKE CONTACT

5 ways in which schools can bring reticent families into the fold

1 Create a culture of transparency in your school, whereby families are invited to be less guarded and more forthright in explaining any reasons for not trusting the school.

2 The resulting 'non-judgemental' culture will help to encourage honesty in conversations and prevent future breakdowns in communication.

3 A parent portal can be an effective positive way of putting families in communication with heads of years, pastoral team members, specific mentors, DSLs and SENCos.

4 Posters around the school, parent newsletters and the school website can all be used to promote the school's role in encouraging families to be more open, and 'sell' the benefits of positive family/school communication on children's learning outcomes, attendance and overall welfare.

5 As well as ensuring your partnership working expectations are properly explained, consider also offering alternative partnership option to any parents who consider themselves 'not heard', or potentially misunderstood.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ann Marie Christian is a safeguarding and child protection expert; for more information, visit annmariechristian.com



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Resource creators



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Cut through the noise

Peter Hughes explains how a core component of the Mossberg Federation trust's attendance strategy involves boosting the visibility of those students with the greatest levels of need...

At the Mossbourne Federation, attendance goes hand-in-hand with high expectations. We're clear about those expectations, and regularly communicate the standards we want to see to our pupils and their parents. But this does come with challenges.

It's important to understand how there's a marked difference between an absent child who simply can't be bothered to show up through laziness, versus a child having to contend with genuine issues at home that present legitimate cause for concern. This latter group are the children we need to be alert to, which tools like the teaching improvement platform ProgressTeaching can help us identify.

Real challenges

As educators, our job is to cut through the noise and hone in on those students who need our support the most. A lot of schools will get wrapped up in the noise – by which I mean scenarios like the following:

"Sarah feels bad, because Jonny said something mean to her in the playground, so Sarah should be out of lessons."

No! I'll be blunt here and say that these types of encounters may be unpleasant, but are an inevitable part of life. We facilitate the noise by allowing the

noise to become our reality. Pupils need to understand that someone else saying something that upsets them, or makes them angry doesn't mean they themselves can't get on with their studies.

Contrasted to that might be the genuine problems experienced by a student whose parents both have mental health issues – which could conceivably cause the student to be affected by further mental health issues in turn, thus impeding their access to school. They're facing real challenges that they need help with.

Lost in the system

The act of merely feeding into the noise gives rise to two fundamental issues:

1. We risk telling children that certain issues are worse than they actually are

A small child falls over and scratches their leg, which prompts them to cry their eyes out – but they're not critically hurt. They're crying because they're *shocked* at what they've just done.

So we comfort them, tell them that everything's okay

and put a plaster on the affected area, if needed. By this point, the child will more than likely be happy once again and ready to carry on with their day. If, however, we turn round and proceed to make a big deal out of the situation, we can end up merely reinforcing 'the noise' and worsening the situation yet further.

As adults and educators, we must show our children how to process life events, and how to distinguish between those 'big deal' developments and comparatively minor incidents of unpleasantness.

2. The more noise we create as educators, the more likely it is that genuine cases will be missed

Children who need our help are getting lost in a system that's too busy dealing with noise, which is unacceptable. It's our job to be straightforward, direct and honest with the children and their families or primary carers.

As someone who had multiple carers throughout my own schooling, I know first-hand the impact this can have on a child. My older brother was a child who was failed by the system; someone we might refer to today as a 'young carer', as he often had to shoulder the responsibility of caring for me and my younger sister.

Making a difference

If we're to make a real difference, we should be spending time on understanding those pupils most at risk of falling behind in their education due to an actual inability to make it into school. What's happening in their lives? What is it they need from us? What supporting services should we bring in to help?

Cutting through the noise has enabled us to consistently maintain an average of 97% attendance across our schools, despite our higher than national average pupil stats for SEN, EAL and PPI. I'm incredibly proud of our team at Mossbourne, and of our pupils for their ongoing commitment to living our core values:

- Excellence
- No excuses
- Unity

Together, we strive for the common goal of being the best we can be so that every pupil, teacher and member of staff fulfils their potential – but to make this a reality, pupils need to be in school.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Hughes is the CEO of the Mossbourne Federation trust and a trustee of the headteacher-led charity, The Elephant Group; for more information, visit mossbourne.org

Thought experiments

Martin Griffin looks at how students' grasp of non-cognitive skills can go on to determine their level of academic success

Recently collected data from The Student Loan Company suggests that there's been another rise in the number of UK undergraduates dropping out of university. Within the last academic year, over 41,000 students took out student loans, but then failed to finish their courses – a figure that's been steadily rising, having stood at 29,630 four years ago (see bbc.in/3KFUv6u).

Because only a proportion of tuition fees are refunded for partial course completion, leaving university early is an expensive mistake to make. Imagine returning home at

incidents of stress, fear and exhaustion.

So the big question, then, is what role we, as teachers, can play in arresting a further increase next year?

I'm going to make a case here for focusing on developing learners' non-cognitive skills. The evidence supports the impact of this approach – the EEF's recently updated Teaching and Learning Evidence Review once again has metacognition topping its list of effective interventions, describing this as, *“Teaching students how to monitor, evaluate and subsequently improve their own learning strategies.”* (see bit.ly/ts126-EEFTK)

in preparation for tests and exams, and exhibit purposeful, positive attitudes.

A model like this can be hugely useful – it gives us a common language, aligns our thinking and codifies our aims – but it's only a starting point. Vast amounts of research may demonstrate links between those five characteristics and academic success, but the words themselves remain abstract notions – until we translate them into replicable behaviours.

Too often in my early teaching career, I would get as far as identifying those non-cognitive skills I wanted to develop, before then resorting to fruitless exhortations. Seeing a student whose files and folders were in disarray, I might have urged them to *‘Stay on top of your organisation!’* or *‘Tidy your resources!’*

“Turning pupils into reflective and active improvers of their own learning sounds utopian, but it can be done”

the age of 18 or 19 with no degree and personal debts of up to, or in some cases even beyond £9,000. So why is it happening, and why are the numbers going up?

Active improvers

According to The Policy Institute at King's College London and the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education, the primary reason students cite for dropping out is 'mental health' – a conceptual catch-all which may, according to separate analysis, cover areas such as difficulties with content, or

Turning pupils from passive consumers of lessons into reflective and active improvers of their own learning? It sounds impossibly utopian, but it can be done. I co-created, and have written extensively about, the VESPA model – a conceptual model that outlines the kind of non-cognitive skills we might seek to develop in learners.

Replicable behaviours

Successful students have a vision. They display high levels of effort. They employ effective systems for organising their time and resources. They will practice



When encountering a pupil who needed to increase their levels of effort or engagement, I might have advised them to, *'Really knuckle down this half term'* or *'Pull your socks up, put a shift in.'*

Yet these instructions, perhaps because they're so vague and idiomatic, are incredibly hard to put into practice.

I knew what I meant when I issued them. I thought I was communicating them clearly. But for the pupils leaving my office, it was a different story. *'What exactly does 'knuckle down' mean? What do I actually*

do? When and where do I do it?'

For a young person who has an older sibling studying for their A levels, or parents who went to university, the answer might be gleaned via osmosis from family discussions. But how many of our pupils have that opportunity?

Shock, experimentation, change

The process of developing non-cognitive skills partly involves moving beyond discussion of abstract characteristics, to focusing instead on behaviours that are both clear and replicable. Talking to high-performing students over the years, I've got into the habit of

recording exactly what it is they do, then making certain I can express their methods with

complete clarity.

Let's look, for example, at the 'E' of the VESPA (Vision, Effort, Systems, Practice and Attitude) model. One high-effort behaviour I've observed is as follows: *'I complete draft work in advance, and then ask the teacher to take a look at it so that I can make any changes before the real deadline.'*

Sharing this with other learners has often resulted in an initial shock – 'People really do that?' – swiftly followed by experimentation, and then, in lots of cases, a genuine change in behaviour. Instead of simply instructing students to 'knuckle down', give them an actual strategy to examine, consider and try out for a week.

Real work

Here's another example, this time from the 'S' in VESPA – *Systems*. We can replace the instruction to *'Get yourself organised'* with a high-systems behaviour I've previously observed in discussions with successful learners: *'At the end of each day, I file my notes in the same place, check they're tidy, then pack my bag for tomorrow.'*

This similarly passes the 'clarity and replicability test', and again, you might encounter initial resistance – *'As if! No-one does that!'* – before the pupils begin to picture what doing that might actually be like in practice: *'I could tidy my bedroom and set aside a place for putting my exercise books. It would only take a few minutes at the end of the day. I could set an alarm to remind me...'*

The VESPA Handbook collects together 100 of these behaviours, 20 under each element of the model. They're collected from real pupils doing real work, and their development is supported by 40 practical, easy-to-deliver classroom or

tutorial activities designed to get young people really thinking carefully about how they study.

Transferable skills

In the EEF's Teaching and Learning Evidence Review, it's suggested that, *"Metacognition and self-regulation strategies are most effective when embedded in a school's curriculum and a specific subject lesson."* My own visits to hundreds of schools bears this out. I've subsequently worked with staff up and down the UK and beyond to design curricula which specify, clarify and explicitly teach the non-cognitive skills students need for success.

And it's not just success at the end of the Key Stage we're currently responsible for. These non-cognitive skills are transferable. Teach a pupil one of our high-practice behaviours – such as, *'I find opportunities to test myself on the knowledge I have gained by covering up information from textbooks or class notes and trying to recall it'* – and they can still be using it years later.

Who knows – it might even make all the difference between them subsequently leaving university early, or successfully completing their degree...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martin Griffin has over 20 years' experience teaching and coaching post-16 students. He was a head of sixth form and deputy head at a successful comprehensive school for eight years, and has since worked with hundreds of schools and colleges in the UK and beyond to design and implement study skills and mindset programmes. Martin's new book, *The VESPA Handbook*, is out now (£19.99, Crown House Publishing); for more details, visit crownhouse.co.uk/the-vespa-handbook

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5 REASONS TO TRY... NST's modern foreign language trips

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As the UK's number one educational travel provider, NST will work with you to create a tailor-made itinerary that helps your students improve their language skills and gain confidence through immersion in their target language.

1 THE EXPERIENCE SHOWS

NST puts all of their expertise and unrivalled destination knowledge into creating amazingly fulfilling educational experiences, making trip planning easier for teachers. From the initial planning stages, the company will work closely with you on bringing your modern foreign language school trip ideas to life. Whatever your focus, NST can plan a bespoke, curriculum-linked trip that matches your learning needs and budget requirements. When it comes to delivering successful school trips, NST's experience shows.

2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

Taking a modern foreign languages school trip offers a plethora of learning benefits. Witness your students' confidence soar as they step out of their comfort zones, immersing themselves in new environments. Plus, with NST's range of engaging experiences, students will have the opportunity to see their target language come to life, expanding their appreciation of the language, and fostering a connection and understanding, helping them with their studies back in the classroom.

3 A RANGE OF DESTINATIONS

Across Europe, NST hosts the widest range of school trips and



diverse cultural experiences for KS3-KS5 students. Whether it's time spent acquiring cultural capital in Northern France, building language skills in Berlin or making lasting memories in Barcelona, students can gain insights into their target language's nuances and practise what they've learnt in real-world situations. Exploring exciting new places is a great way to expand their language skills and open up a whole new learning experience.



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NST's purpose-built accommodation, Château d'Ebblinghem, is situated in Northern France, at an ideal location for groups seeking to enhance their language skills via educational and cultural visits. Challenge, inspire and engage your students with NST's French Language Enrichment Experience, which is designed to develop students' conversational and comprehension skills with support from your very own native French-speaking Group Co-ordinator. Plus, you can add FREE evening activities to your itinerary, including a French quiz and snail tasting!

5 HELPFUL RESOURCES

NST offers a range of helpful and free resources, including their Go Explore journals, a great tool for students to record their language experiences. The journals provide space for them to add details about the things they've seen and learnt, along with any relevant vocabulary. On the @NSTLanguages X feed you'll additionally find fascinating language facts, curriculum-linked resources and study tips for your students, as well as expert advice on the best language topic-themed visits and destinations around the globe.

Key Points

With over 55 years' experience creating expertly planned school trips, NST can offer your students an immersive language trip to a range of destinations.

NST's expert team will use their unrivalled knowledge to create a tailor-made itinerary to meet your group's needs and learning outcomes.

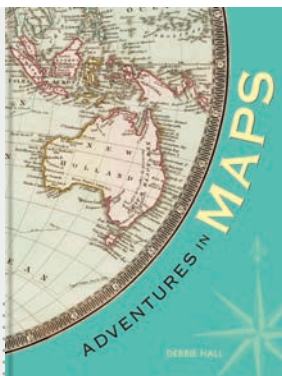
NST's exclusive accommodation, Château d'Ebblinghem, is perfect for groups seeking to enhance their language skills through a range of educational and cultural visits.

NST offers the reassurance of preview visits, safety audited accommodation, 24-hour on-tour assistance and more, all adding up to a safe and reliable experience.



Off the Shelves

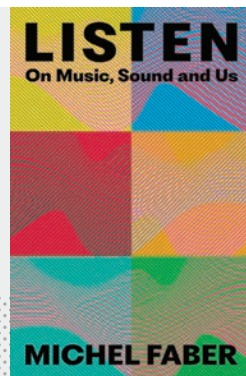
Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore



Adventures in Maps (Debbie Hall, Bodleian, £25)

This beautifully illustrated volume has relevance to several different curriculum areas, containing as it does accounts of intrepid historical journeys that range from 16th century seafaring voyages to Arctic crossings and even the surveys undertaken to facilitate the moon landings. There's certainly some rich material here for maths, geography, English, science and history practitioners alike. Rather than being merely descriptive, the text goes into considerable detail regarding the challenges involved in drawing up maps and how closely those processes are tied to developments in new forms of travel. The book's ambitious scope makes for a delightful read, and a fascinating journey through the history of modern marvels like the national rail network, detailed road maps and robust air and sea travel. Consider it highly recommended.

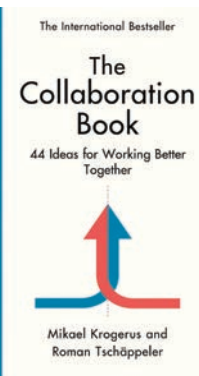
Reviewed by Terry Freedman
(see bit.ly/Eclecticism for more details)



Listen - On Music, Sound and Us (Michel Faber, Canongate, £20)

Part memoir, part love letter to music, *Listen* covers a wide range of areas. My initial impressions of the book were that it was a somewhat random jumble of personal observations with little rhyme or reason, but it soon became apparent just how encyclopaedic Faber's knowledge of the music industry really is. Beyond his frequent mentions of artists and songs lying far outside the mainstream, he also examines the effects of music on physiology and health, as well as the industry's less appealing sides - particularly its historical treatment of women. It might not directly address obvious aspects of the music curriculum, but it can certainly give teachers access to a rich seam of facts and anecdotes with which to embellish their lessons. Faber is nothing if not opinionated, but he does a good job of justifying his arguments. An interesting, and strangely compelling read.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman



The Collaboration Book - 41 Ideas for Working Better (Mikael Krogerus and Roman Tschäppeler, Profile, £10.99)

Most people would agree that collaboration is a good thing - so how can we collaborate more effectively in school settings? This slim volume manages to pack in a huge amount of ideas and information, organised in three main sections - 'Solving problems', 'Achieving your goals' and 'Creating trust'. I especially liked its discussion of the 'two pizza rule', which states that any team should be small enough to be viably fed by two pizzas; any larger, and the team's decision-making power will almost certainly be compromised. The book's chief appeal stems from how it presents each core concept or idea in just a few pages, sometimes with helpfully simplified illustrations, when it could easily have taken the form of a huge academic tome. A must for every team leader.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman

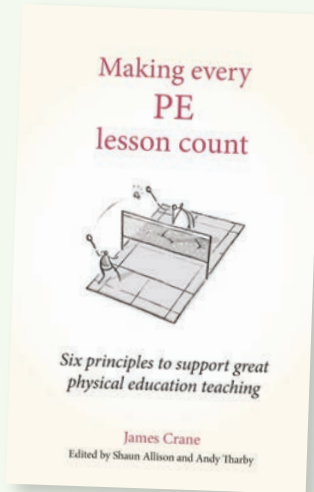
ON THE RADAR

Making Every PE Lesson Count: Six principles to support great physical education teaching**(James Crane, Crown House Publishing, £14.99)**

Books presenting subject-specific teaching advice don't always have to reinvent the wheel. Sometimes it's enough to take readers with you on an engaging tour of a subject's assorted intricacies and quandaries, while showing how cutting edge research can be applied within your practice to winning effect.

That's very much the case here with the latest addition to Crown House's now 10-strong 'Making Every Lesson Count' series, which guides readers through six chapters dedicated to challenge, explanation, modelling, practice, questioning and feedback in relation to a specific subject. For the series' PE entry, Crane draws on what's evidently a prodigious amount of pedagogical knowledge, honing in on how Rosenshine's principles of instruction, advanced feedback strategies, metacognition and the like can enrich your lessons. He also has some helpful suggestions for how to negotiate the tricky balancing act between the practical realm of physical activity and increasing emphasis on theory that's now routinely expected of PE teachers.

Crane's guidance throughout is that of a patient and generous practitioner, with a fierce determination to see students get as much out of their time in the gym, sports hall or playing field as possible – and one which readers will more than likely find themselves inspired by and be keen to emulate themselves.



In the news

**What are we talking about?**

The 16th annual 'What Kids Are Reading' report based on data gathered by the Renaissance Star Reading and Accelerated Reader (AR) literacy tools for schools.

So what are kids reading?

According to the report: "In Y7, Jeff Kinney was popular with boys, but girls became more interested [compared to their preferences at primary] in Alice Oseman and David Walliams. In Y8 Alice Oseman became the top book for girls, but George Orwell was top for boys. In Y9 to Y11 Steinbeck appeared in addition to Orwell, and Rowling sustained her re-emergence."

What newer titles, or less well-known authors are proving popular?

The latest titles from Kinney and Walliams frequently appear in the most-read titles from Y4 right up to Y9-Y11 – a finding that the report's authors note as being 'rather depressing'. One comparatively new author – albeit one for whom most kids need no introduction – was Marcus Rashford, whose motivational book *You Can Do It* and three-and-counting 'Breakfast Club Adventures' fiction series seemed to be embraced by boys and girls alike.

The report observes that, "The average level of difficulty had declined. However, these easier books were not being read with any greater degree of reading comprehension," with "little correlation between a book's difficulty and the comprehension with which it was read."

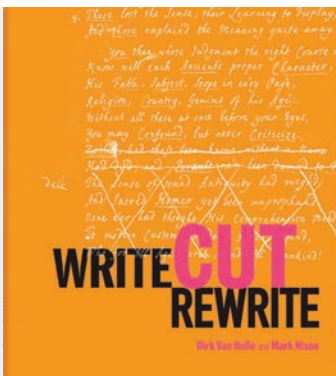
Which authors/titles do students actively enjoy reading?

When called on to vote for their favourite books, Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One* topped the poll among Y7s, while Y9-Y11 went for *Heir of Fire* by Sarah J. Maas.

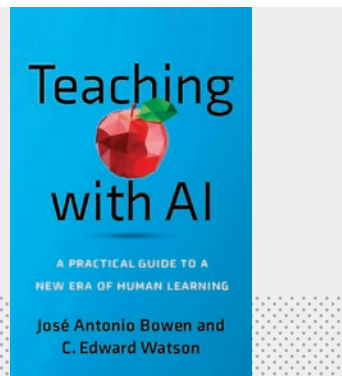
What is this year's key takeaway?

It did seem striking how often the books cited by primary age children as their favourites were some way above their chronological ability – and how dramatically that seemed to change at Y7, at which point "The difficulty of favoured books was no longer well above chronological age," before declining even more sharply thereafter. As the report's authors put it, "It seems that transfer to secondary school has a striking effect, even on highly motivated readers."

The full 'What Kids Are Reading Report 2024' document can be downloaded via bit.ly/wkar2024

**Write Cut Rewrite – The Cutting Room Floor of Modern Literature****(Dirk Van Huille and Mark Nixon, Bodleian Library, £35)**

Perhaps the second hardest thing for a writer to do (after commencing work in the first place) is to delete parts of what they've written – as encapsulated in the well-worn phrase, 'Kill your darlings'. Of course, we usually never get to see those deletions, which could potentially show landmark works in a whole new light – until now. There's something rather magical about getting to view handwritten drafts, complete with crossings out, penned by the authors themselves. Students can often give the impression of wanting their work to land perfectly on the first attempt, so if nothing else, one huge benefit of *Write Cut Rewrite* is how it visibly shows that even the most heralded works of literature rarely emerge from authors' hands fully-formed.

Reviewed by Terry Freedman**Teaching with AI: A Practical Guide to a New Era of Human Learning****(José Antonio Bowen and C. Edward Watson, Johns Hopkins University Press, £20.50)**

Given the speed at which AI technologies seem to be developing, one has to wonder how long *Teaching with AI's* literal shelf life is likely to be. At least for now, it presents forward-thinking educators with an approachable overview of key AI milestones and guidance on its potential classroom applications (albeit from a US perspective, and with a fair amount of discussion dedicated to the college/university experience). If you can get past that, you'll find some carefully considered and thoughtful discussion of the technology's potential applications and ethical implications that extends much further than the practical 'how to' suggested by its title. Bowen and Watson make a compelling case for the need to develop new forms of assessment that can bypass AI's facility to enable cheating by students, while also serving up numerous suggestions for useful AI prompts that will have you speedily bringing ChatGPT to heel.



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DON'T PANIC!

Mubina Asaria outlines the latest updates and changes to the Prevent duty that school staff need to be mindful of

The world has changed significantly since the Prevent duty was introduced in 2015. There's been a pandemic. Young people are spending more of their lives online than ever. There are new and growing risks from the spread of fake news, emerging ideologies and conspiracy theories, all adding up to a very different risk and threat landscape.

However, my message to designated safeguarding leads and leadership teams would be, 'don't panic'. Here, I want to go through some of the main changes and updates to the latest Prevent duty guidance, and offer some practical tips to help meet your safeguarding role.

Updated and refreshed

The first thing to note is that the latest guidance places no new legal requirements or additional responsibilities on education settings – rather, it has been updated and refreshed so that it promotes current best practice.

The Prevent duty continues to focus on tackling the ideological causes of terrorism. In recent years, we've seen Islamist ideology remain resilient, while extreme right wing ideologies have undergone a resurgence. Other ideologies, while still a factor, have comparatively less potential to motivate, inspire and be used to justify acts of terrorism.

We've also seen how conspiracy theories can act as gateways into radicalised thinking and sometimes violence, making it crucial that DSLs are aware of what these ideologies and how they are propagated.

The Prevent guidance



“There is now a greater emphasis on local context.”

underlines the need to embed age-appropriate online safety within the curriculum and develop young people's ability to think critically, equipping them with skills that will enable them to challenge, ask questions and check their sources, so that they don't simply believe everything they see on their screens.

‘Susceptible’, not ‘vulnerable’

Some language in the guidance has been changed to reflect current best practice and updates to official terminology. Instead of referring to individuals being ‘vulnerable’ to radicalization, the new term ‘susceptibility’ implies that individuals retain full agency, should they choose to adopt a terrorist ideology.

That said, the government readily acknowledges that minors are inherently more vulnerable to radicalisation, due to their age. The latest guidance therefore includes a glossary of terms that may be helpful for schools wanting to better understand the language around online

radicalisation that adolescents are likely to use.

In the wake of the government's 2023 counter-terrorism strategy, the ‘Risk and threat landscape’ section of the guidance has been fully updated, to the extent that schools should carefully consider whether their most recent risk assessments accurately reflect and account for these changes.

Local and proportionate

There is also now a greater emphasis on local context. Decision making should be informed by the broader terrorism threat picture, so that any Prevent activity is proportionate to the size of the setting and local provision. The risk picture for a school in Ealing, for instance, will be markedly different from that of a school in Wales.

You can find out more about your local risk and threat picture – sometimes referred to as a counter-terrorism local profile, or CTLP – by engaging with your local authority or local

policing body. The DfE's Regional Prevent Education Coordinators (RPECs) can help to identify relevant partners in your locality and advise on how to contact them.

To support this, the DfE has produced a series of new Prevent risk assessment templates that can help schools better understand the national and local risk, and the response they should deploy – see bit.ly/ts135-PD1 for more details.

Stay up-to-date

The guidelines' authors have also provided greater clarity with respect to staff training requirements. I'd recommend that schools complete the government's online Prevent duty training for all staff. Thereafter, DSLs and leadership staff will need to refresh their Prevent training every two years, enabling them to regularly update their staff and wider school community on relevant issues.

Finally, a new national referral form has been introduced for all Prevent partners. Schools should continue to follow their existing information sharing protocols, but it's critical that any Prevent concerns are securely transferred when a student moves school.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mubina Asaria is a safeguarding consultant at LGfL - The National Grid for Learning; for more details about the organisation's free interactive curriculum resources for students and staff training materials, visit prevent.lgfl.net

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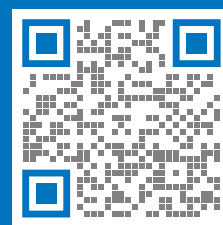


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[MATHS PROBLEM]

MIXED NUMBERS WHEN COMBINING FRACTIONS

When calculating with fractions, students are often confused about how to handle mixed numbers, says **Colin Foster**

In this lesson, students contrast how mixed numbers behave in different situations

THE DIFFICULTY

Enaiya is calculating $4\frac{2}{5} + 1\frac{3}{4}$. She adds the $\frac{2}{5}$ and the $\frac{3}{4}$ and then adds on the 4 and the 1. Is this method correct?

Would it work if the two numbers were **subtracted**, instead of added? Would it work for multiplication? Would it work for division?

Enaiya's method is correct for addition, and she obtains $5\frac{23}{20}$, which simplifies to $6\frac{3}{20}$.

For subtraction, she tries $\frac{2}{5} - \frac{3}{4} = -\frac{7}{20}$, which might be challenging if students aren't confident with negative numbers - but it does work: $3 - \frac{7}{20} = 2\frac{3}{20}$.

For multiplication and division, separately multiplying (or dividing) the $\frac{2}{5}$ and the $\frac{3}{4}$, and the 4 and the 1, will **not** give the correct answers.

THE SOLUTION

Mixed numbers are an abbreviated way of writing numbers that contain both integers and fractions.

Just as

$$42 \text{ means } 40 + 2,$$

$$4\frac{2}{5} \text{ means } 4 + \frac{2}{5}.$$

The plus sign is **implied** in both cases.

Whenever we're unsure, we can write out mixed numbers as sums to help us see how they behave.

$$\begin{aligned} (4 + \frac{2}{5}) + (1 + \frac{3}{4}) &= 5 + (\frac{2}{5} + \frac{3}{4}) = 5\frac{23}{20} = 6\frac{3}{20} \\ (4 + \frac{2}{5}) - (1 + \frac{3}{4}) &= 3 + (\frac{2}{5} - \frac{3}{4}) = 3 - \frac{7}{20} = 2\frac{3}{20} \end{aligned}$$

This shows us that Enaiya's method works for both addition and subtraction. But, for multiplication:

$$(4 + \frac{2}{5}) \times (1 + \frac{3}{4}) = (4 \times 1) + (4 \times \frac{3}{4}) + (\frac{2}{5} \times 1) + (\frac{2}{5} \times \frac{3}{4})$$

This is quite complicated, and it is easier instead to write the two mixed numbers as **improper** fractions (i.e. as fractions greater than 1):

$$\frac{22}{5} \times \frac{7}{4} = \frac{11}{5} \times \frac{7}{2} = \frac{77}{10}$$

We could convert this to $7\frac{7}{10}$, if we wanted to get back to mixed numbers.

Improper fractions are also easier when dividing, and the answer comes to $\frac{88}{35} = 2\frac{18}{35}$.

Students may conclude that it's **always** safer to turn mixed numbers into improper fractions, even when adding and subtracting. This will always give the correct answer, but it won't always be the easiest way. You could ask students to invent cases where it's much easier to use mixed numbers, such as $123\frac{1}{13} + 27\frac{3}{13}$.

Note that if students are using calculators to check their answers, they **must** use the $\frac{\square}{\square}$ button to enter mixed numbers, otherwise the calculator may interpret, for example, $4\frac{2}{5}$ to mean $4 \times \frac{2}{5}$, instead of $4\frac{2}{5}$.

Checking for understanding

Make up two mixed numbers, and add, subtract, multiply and divide them correctly. Choose your numbers so that the calculations are about as challenging as with $4\frac{2}{5}$ and $1\frac{3}{4}$.



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

4 REASONS TO TRY... National Army Museum CPD

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2 CURRICULUM-LINKED ACROSS KS3-5

The online CPD sessions are designed to support teaching key areas of history at KS3, GCSE and A Level. The sessions examine aspects of topics that include the British Civil Wars, the British Empire, the World Wars and the Cold War.

3 FREE TO ATTEND

The CPD sessions are free to attend – you just need to register by completing a simple online sign-up form. Sessions are delivered online via Zoom between 4pm and 5pm, and it's also possible to schedule group bookings, so that CPD can be delivered to multiple history department colleagues at once.

4 BESPOKE DIGITAL RESOURCE PACKS

Every attendee of the CPD sessions will receive a bespoke digital resource pack containing a range of source material based on the museum's collections. Tailored to the topic of each session, these include photographs and images of artefacts and artworks that can be used to further support your teaching.



Contact:
education@nam.ac.uk

At a glance

+ For full details of the online History Teacher CPD programme and to book your place, visit nam.ac.uk/schools/cpd-history-teachers

+ You can explore our selection of free online learning resources at nam.ac.uk/schools/learning-resources

+ The Museum offers free workshops for schools either in person or online. Find out more at nam.ac.uk/schools/workshops

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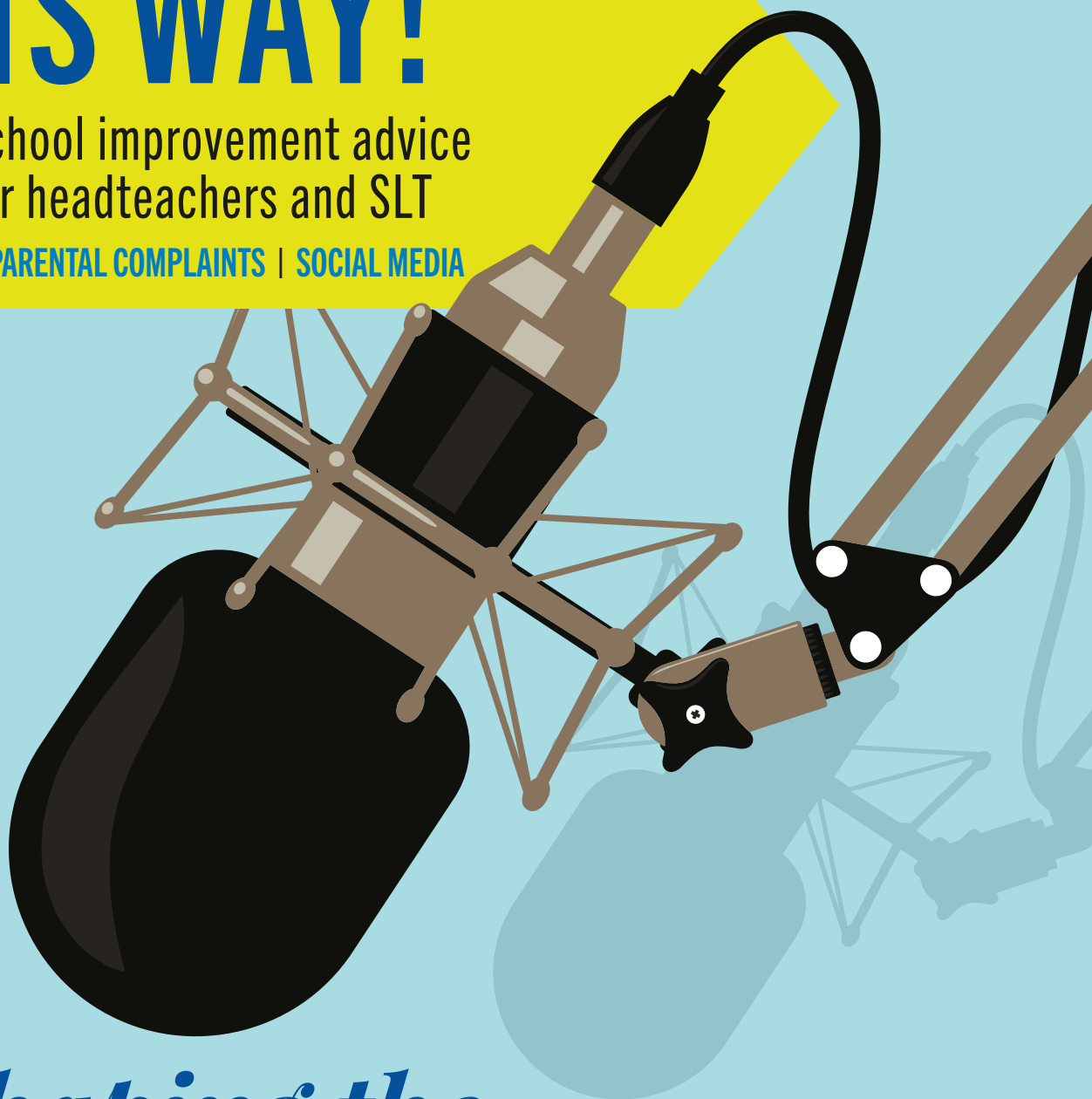
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Shaping the NARRATIVE

I write this at the heady mid-point of the 2024 General Election campaign. Children – my own and my school’s pupils – ask me who I’m voting for. I try to explain how, when I vote, I’m not really voting for the party leaders, but rather for my local MP.

This doesn’t make much sense to them because most of the noise across the airwaves is predominantly focused on those key players. They’re centre stage;

they’re the ones who are making all the music and dominating the conversation.

In a similar way, while you may have developed a strong, distributed leadership model, as the headteacher, you will be the main spokesperson for your school. And this exercise in public relations – whereby you build a picture of your school with the things you say and the stories you tell – will typically be an unfamiliar experience when stepping into headship.

Strategic thought and time

On the other hand, you may be an experienced headteacher who has served in a school that’s had a relatively settled period. The community knows it, values it, understands it and supports it.

Should you then find yourself moving to a different headship at a school with an altogether rockier history, or one going through a period of transition, this ability to build a positive narrative about your school will be a real asset. As those of us seasoned in school leadership know, it’s a process that takes strategic thought and time.

Another consideration to bear in mind is that you may sometimes be sought out by members of the media for comment. A parental complaint might have made

its way into the local press, or some complicated set of circumstances may have led to a risk of reputational damage. What's important in the first instance is to invest proactively in your everyday story.

What is your everyday story?

Your 'everyday story' is what's being told and discussed about your school each day. This can be done through a multiplicity of media – your own website and newsletters, notifications sent home via ParentMail apps or similar, assorted social media channels, conversations at events, any public talks and addresses that you give. Use these opportunities to paint the picture you want to paint, since you get to choose the colours.

For example, I'm a big fan of the weekly newsletter. I've produced mine for some time using Google Slides, in a way that lets the whole team access that week's newsletter and contribute to it directly. This kind of cloud-based approach is great, because it lets class

teachers provide updates of their own.

Crucially, I also dedicate time to writing something meaningful; something that shines a light on what we value and what we're aspiring to be as a school.

Communicate the best bits

If, on the other hand, your newsletter starts with a grid of attendance figures, followed by a dreary box about lost property and then a reminder about the need to order school lunches in time, your readers will get the impression of an uninspiring, slightly messy administrative machine.

Instead, open with something celebratory that brings your school values to life – a story about children taking the initiative with a new club, or some feedback from teachers and students about the impact of some new equipment. You'll then be showing your school to be what it is: a vibrant, ever-evolving

learning community.

Seek out other ways of communicating your best bits. Your website, while undoubtedly a convenient destination for parents needing key information, will actually be viewed more frequently by the wider public. Among those visitors may be prospective candidates for jobs, future families, members of the local press – and potentially Ofsted...

Again, what story is your website telling? Images speak volumes, so make sure your visual language is coherent. Is there a sunny, naturalistic vibe? Or are you going for something more scholarly and sharper? Either is fine, but the more coherent the better.

It's also worth investing time in pushing out positive news stories to the local press. A 'bake off' event may seem trivial, but the effects of your school being written about positively are manifold. Your families will enjoy seeing the coverage, it gives

PARENTAL COMPLAINTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

When it comes to social media, schools must carefully juggle individual rights to freedom of expression with various protection duties, including safeguarding their staff from harassment and upholding the school's reputation.

Make constructive communication your first priority

It's important to remember that posting on social media is often a last resort for parents who have issues they wish to highlight. Therefore, whilst schools may have legal options to call upon, taking such action could stoke the flames further and lead to a collapse in relations between the school and parents.

Schools should take a proactive approach to their relationship management that involves reviewing complaints procedures and staff training needs, and maintaining open lines of communication to help build trust. Should social media suddenly become a battleground, you can de-escalate the situation by reverting to analogue, simply picking up the phone and having an old-fashioned conversation.

Parental complaints on social media

Taking the 'softer' approach doesn't always work as intended, however, so

schools should have a social media action plan they can refer to if necessary. In most cases, the best course of action will be to simply retain a copy of the offending social media post and monitor any further activity.

When deciding whether or not to take action in response to specific posts, consider how long it's been since they were posted. Have there been any further interactions with the posts from parents and others? Have the posts caused anyone (including staff) genuine distress, and have the posts resulted in any media involvement?

Sending a general reminder to parents about the appropriate use of social media may also have the intended effect.

Contacting parents, providers or police

If a school has any concerns around statements made on social media, they can use the relevant platform's reporting

function to request that the content be removed, as per the acceptable terms of use policies that all platforms operate. The school may also wish to write to the parent who made the post, asking them to edit or delete it, though this could risk encouraging the parent to publish further posts.

Another measure could be to issue restricted communication plans to any parents found using social media to target the school or its staff. This might involve restricting a parent's ability to telephone or email the school or staff. Any posts the school suspects may constitute a criminal offence should be reported to the Police.



Dai Durbridge is a Partner in the education team at the UK and Ireland law firm Browne Jacobson





“The effects of your school being written about positively are manifold”

you something to share on your social media channels, and many of your school’s neighbours will read local news stories. As each positive story makes its way out into the public sphere, you’re banking reputational capital. And you’re controlling the narrative.

‘Care to comment?’

There are two common scenarios in which you might be asked for a comment as the headteacher of a school, and both need sensitive handling.

The first might relate to something specific to your school, such as a parent contacting the local press about something they’re dissatisfied with. The second might involve someone from the local (or indeed national) press looking for a sector expert willing to provide insight into a key news issue. The rising prices of school trips, for example, or the state of school buildings. In either case, I’ve found it helpful to observe the following points:

1. You can decline

Remember that you can always say no. If the subject is too hot, or you feel you don’t know enough, politely decline.

This is coming from someone who was recently interviewed on BBC Radio 4’s *Today* programme, regarding changes to sex education in primary schools. Should I have declined? Possibly.

2. Written or spoken?

Speaking to someone can be much riskier than writing something down. Send in a few written sentences, if that feels safer.

3. Ask for questions in advance

If you’re happy to be interviewed, ask to

see the questions beforehand. A radio interview will obviously be somewhat dynamic, and you can’t completely control where the conversation goes – but you can get at least get a sense of what the main thrust will be.

4. Do some research

Have something quantitative on which to ground your position. If you’re commenting on increases in bus fares for your students, get some national data. Know what last year’s percentage was (of whatever it is you’re talking about) so that you can highlight why the current percentage is better or worse.

5. Prepare three things

Be ready to provide three insights that relate to the issue. You might not use them all, but it’s good to have such material to hand.

6. Enlist some support

Your trustees, governors, LA advisors or MAT leads are there to support you. If you’re in a MAT, be aware that they may prefer for their CEO and/or central team to do the talking.

7. Don’t leave a hole for others to fill

If you don’t communicate to the outside world what your school is, or is becoming, you risk leaving a hole that others will fill for you. Dedicating time to telling the story of your school will be time well spent. Own your role here, and be proud of the fact that you get to choose the colours.



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.



WHAT CAN AND CAN’T WE DO?

Social media was a popular topic during one of our recent webinars on handling parental complaints. Here, we examine some key questions for schools:

Can you send a warning letter to an ex-parent writing wrongful information on social media?

Yes, you can send a warning letter to any ex-parents who may be posting inaccurate or inappropriate information on social media, stating that their behaviour is unacceptable and outlining the consequences of them continuing. This will, however, generally only have impact where individuals have made the comments in a ‘private’ social media page or group chat, and didn’t expect the school or its staff to see them.

If a parent’s Facebook comments risk causing reputational damage to the school, does the school have the right to remove said comments?

If the school owns the social media page, it can freely remove any inappropriate comments and/or block individuals from accessing the page if they’re breaching community standards.

Can anything be done if a parent labels a member of staff as a ‘bully’ on social media?

Parents can lawfully make statements of fact, or express heartfelt opinions or beliefs, in person or online, about the school and its staff – even if these could be considered as unkind, unpleasant or disagreeable.

However, comments made online by parents could, in some cases, be considered defamatory in relation to individual members of staff. An action for defamation is a personal action, meaning that only the person who believes they have been defamed may bring proceedings. Legal advice should always be sought if a claim for defamation is being considered.

Victoria Hatton is a Senior Associate in the education team at Browne Jacobson; find more FAQs on parental complaints via bit.ly/ts135-HTS1

5 REASONS TO TRY... Pursuing a career in logistics

Show your students how rewarding careers in logistics can be with this online information resource



30 SECOND BRIEFING

90% of the UK population has never considered a career in logistics. The Generation Logistics Education Hub provides teachers with free resources to introduce young people to the sector's rich opportunities.

1 WHAT IS GENERATION LOGISTICS?

Generation Logistics is a campaign that aims to change perceptions and broaden people's understanding of the logistics sector. It's crucial to the global economy, and hugely diverse in terms of available roles and required skill sets – everything from driving tankers, to complex engineering and advanced robotics.

While part of the initiative has focused on engaging young people directly via social channels, it's also been about engaging educators, and helping students better understand the prospects and opportunities on offer to them within logistics. This is why we created the Education Hub.

2 INTRODUCING THE EDUCATION HUB

The Generation Logistics Education Hub is specifically aimed at teachers and educators, with the intent of providing a library of logistics-related content – all fully aligned to KS3-5 learning objectives – that can be simply and easily integrated into lesson planning.

All content is free to download and can be tailored to explorations of foundational concepts in maths, geography and business studies, via a series of engaging activities and challenges rooted in real-world logistics scenarios.

3 MEET OUR AMBASSADORS

Generation Logistics Ambassadors help to spread key messages regarding the importance, value, rewards and opportunities available within the sector. They engage and liaise with educators and students directly, helping to deliver guest lessons, site visits and more. To request Ambassador engagement for your school, visit the website below and complete the online form.

4 THE CAREERS BOOKLET

As well as the teaching resources hosted on the Education Hub, you can also download our Careers Booklet, which contains an overview of the Generation Logistics project and a detailed outline of exactly what the modern logistics sector looks like, as well as information about the career prospects in the sector young people can pursue.

The Careers Booklet also breaks down some key logistics areas ('job families') and includes case studies that draw on the experiences of junior and senior logisticians currently working in every area across the sector.

5 GENERATION LOGISTICS WEEK

In June 2024, we held the inaugural Generation Logistics Week. The idea behind this event was to hold an online summit for



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educationhub.generationlogistics.org

both the next generation of logistics talent and their school and college educators. Over the course of the week, a wide range of interactive content aimed at students and teachers alike was shared via our social channels and the Education Hub, all with the aim of raising wider awareness of the sector and the various career opportunities it can provide.

If you'd like to access any of this year's content, it can still be found and downloaded via the Education Hub.

Key Points

Help your students understand the fascinating and rewarding career opportunities available to them across the wider logistics sector

Access freely downloadable KS3-KS5 lesson plans and resources for maths, geography and business studies via the Generation Logistics Education Hub

These resources include challenges and activities designed to hit key learning objectives within the context of real-world logistics scenarios

For a breakdown of the opportunities logistics offers, download the Generation Logistics Careers Booklet via bit.ly/ts135-GL1

A new way TO THRIVE

Ray Boxall explains how the practice of remote learning has come a long way – to the point where it’s now ideal for delivering alternative provision

I remember my reaction in 2014, when my headteacher at the time was briefing me about the need for us to offer ‘alternative provision online.’ *Online?* Experienced, inner-city assistant head that I was, I remember thinking, ‘*How will they engage the students? A lot of thought will have to go into tracking and monitoring their progress...*’

She explained to me then that this was different; that it would all be taught by qualified teachers, and that the outcomes were excellent. Fast forward to 2024, and I’m now an evangelist for how online settings can provide environments that are flexible, engaging and inclusive.

A solution for a challenging time

As we know all too well, we’re currently contending with two substantial challenges in the education world – a growing demand for SEN assessment, and the post-pandemic uptick of emotionally-based school avoidance (EBSA).

As teaching colleagues will know from our pandemic experiences, a particular skill set is necessary in order to teach effectively online. When I began teaching online myself, the first thing that hit me was the quiet – an unsuccessful lesson in the online space is likely to be one where there isn’t a great deal of engagement. You won’t be able to tell if your students have become overwhelmed or confused.

Fundamentally, the successful online practitioner



has to quickly build rapport, master concise exposition and deliver an impeccably paced lesson. Then, and only then, might you get the ultimate teenager compliment: ‘*Thanks sir/miss – that lesson went really quickly, but I feel like we did a lot*’. You can also be more certain that next time, their camera will be on for longer.

Adaptive teaching and tech development

Many of the aspects involved in inclusive teaching via an online school will be instantly familiar, such as the need for careful modelling and scaffolding, supporting language acquisition and so on.

Perhaps the biggest challenge that’s less commonly understood is the amount of thought that has to go into making learning accessible, so that we can reduce friction for young people with additional needs who are learning online at

home, or online in a separate area at school. The tech has to wrap around them and guide them.

The fact remains that the typical school is a very challenging sensory environment, what with the noise, bustle and myriad social relationships and negotiations. Many of the schools and commissioning services with whom I work will have initially approached us because these challenges have just proven too great for the young people in question.

It’s therefore vital to not recreate that overwhelming sensory experience in your online classroom environment; otherwise, we’ll be providing no solution at all. All instruction must be carefully thought through, broken down and dual coded. Tech tools must be integrated carefully, in a user-friendly way, with accessibility options provided for text-to-speech, speech-to-text and dyslexia-friendly formatting. The technology has to enable,

and only be used where it will enhance teaching – not just because it’s novel.

Recruiting and training specialist practitioners

In a school like mine, where we use a bespoke platform with a lot to it, an extensive induction process and ongoing training will be required.

That said, we do quickly get very good at teaching online effectively, because our school has recruited the right people. That is, fully qualified teachers who have chosen to work online, and are trained in connecting through screens.

We currently have multiple applications per role, which is a good sign. We love to test things out and tweak things, so that we can better understand how tech-based teaching tools should be integrated. Inter-staff conversations are regularly abuzz with clever tips, advice and shared ideas for how to support specific students.

It’s tremendously exciting to be involved in providing a truly inclusive school environment online. No longer is it a poorly thought-through alternative, but nor is it an instant panacea to the challenges we all now face in supporting our students. It’s now a serious alternative that’s truly here to stay.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Ray Boxall is Head of SEN Services at Academy21

‘Let’s hear it FROM THEM..’

Debby Elley explains why the ability to self-advocate is so vital for the future lives of pupils with autism – and what schools can do to help foster it...

‘Workplace skills – Learn what a CV is, practise interviews, gain some work experience.’

Sometimes, we can have a fairly literal interpretation of what it means to prepare for the world of work. In the case of autistic pupils, however, educators need to work on a much deeper level.

If a youngster has different needs from their average future co-worker, then the biggest favour our schools can do for them is to teach them self-advocacy.

This is an essential component of independence, and could well make all the difference between quitting at the first hurdle and retaining employment. Here, I’ll outline seven distinct stages through which self-advocacy can be taught.

1. Recognising dysregulation

Before you can advocate for your own needs, you need to have a good understanding of how you’re being affected by your environment and a keen awareness of when your body and mind are feeling overloaded.

Some schools will use ‘traffic light’ images to help young children identify how they’re feeling at each stage of emotional arousal, encouraging them to point at ‘green’ to signify calm and ‘amber’ to warn teachers of growing distress.

These can still play a role when they’re older, but be sure to first talk to them about how their body and mind feels at each stage – from ‘calm’ to ‘overloaded’

– and how this might come across to others. Don’t assume that pupils will know how their mental state affects them physically. I’ll never forget the time I suggested to my autistic son that his stomach ache was probably linked to anxiety – it was as if a lightbulb had suddenly been switched on.

Personalise your traffic light diagram. How do they know when they feel calm? Ask them to think about the nature and pace of their thoughts. Help them to tune into their breathing and muscular tension levels. What starts to change when they feel anxious?

“We tend to expect far more from our autistic population than we do from anyone else”

One person I know twiddles her hair. Another starts swaying from side to side, in an effort to find some sort of equilibrium. My own son used to fold his arms tightly, literally wrapping himself up. These are subconscious actions; raising a person’s awareness of them will enable them to spot and report dysregulation.

The traffic light system can be introduced to very young children in a simple way, but it can be worth revisiting in secondary school, as young people start to articulate their emotions and behaviours in greater depth.

2. Identifying stressors

Maturing to the stage where you can self-advocate

involves being able to identify what exactly it is that switches you from green, through to amber and then red, mood-wise.

Most of us actually aren’t this self-aware. Unfortunately, in this respect at least, we tend to expect far more from our autistic population than we do from anyone else. That’s because we can generally guess the causes of distress for people whose responses are similar to our own – but often not for those whose triggers may be different, and whose internal alarms may be more sensitive to external stimuli. It therefore

falls to them to be able to accurately pinpoint where they’re at.

According to Gareth D. Morewood (with whom I co-authored the book *Championing Your Autistic Teen at Secondary School*), great schools will compile ‘Stress Support Plans’ with input from teachers, pupils and their carers. These identify potential stressors and strategies for heading them off before they become problematic, and present an ideal opportunity for working with the pupil alongside their parents and encouraging self-insight.

You may need to dial down the parent voice so that the student’s can be heard more clearly. As parents, we won’t be setting out to steal our

children’s platform – it’s just that advocating for them can become so hard-wired that we might need a gentle nudge to remind us that our maturing adolescent might now be able to represent themselves. The words ‘Let’s hear it from them...’ can a subtle way of redressing that balance.

3. Finding strategies

At primary school, children’s calming experiences will typically result from decisions made by adults. As a maturing self-advocate, they should be encouraged to actively note the effects of various calming strategies for different situations.

The day after they’ve headed off overload, have them analyse the strategy that proved successful. I’ve found that assigning scores out of 10 to ‘How I felt before’ and ‘How I felt afterwards’ is especially useful, since this helps to keep things objective and enable recent experiences to be compared with past ones.

To support this process, help pupils identify not just what’s important to them in a looming crisis, but also any activities, items or environmental factors that help them retain a sense of stability and control. It could be anything from knowing they have ear defenders within easy reach, to understanding what they must do in order to move a quiet spot, without having to go through a long-winded permission system.

4. Explaining it to others

In Just the Job! – a new book I’ve co-written with Maura

Campbell – we point out that explaining aspects of your autism doesn't mean apologising for it. If you tell someone that the buzz from the air conditioning is annoying you, they might not be all that receptive to adaptations. If you tell them you have highly sensitive hearing, and that what sounds like a small background noise to them sounds like a thousand wasps on the rampage to you, they should be far more willing to help and advocate on your behalf.

To help them advocate for their own needs, encourage pupils to calmly explain their personal experiences if they feel comfortable in doing so. During teamwork activities with their peers, they may not wish to draw attention to themselves, but could perhaps be encouraged to make suggestions like, *'I prefer to be the observer in this one, but I can take notes?'*

Identifying how they can use their strengths to enhance their focus and minimise discomfort – all the while communicating that to others – is genuine work experience!

5. Persuasive presentation

When discussing adaptations in *Just the Job!*, we use the terms 'Poor Cinderella' and 'Ball Cinderella'. 'Poor Cinderella' lists everything she *can't* do to her employer, in what looks like a list of

complaints. 'Ball Cinderella', on the other hand, expresses herself more positively, highlighting what she *can* do when adjustments are made.

Being a good self-advocate means learning how to communicate positively and persuasively. Predicting how the words you choose will land on another's ears isn't easy if you're autistic, as it means taking an alternative viewpoint (the 'aut' in autistic literally meaning 'self'). It would be slightly naïve to assume that someone who makes demands without first weighing up their words will work easily alongside others, but keeping quiet and saying nothing at all ultimately isn't an option.

Learning the art of negotiation and persuasion isn't about becoming someone different; it's about ensuring you have the tools to be influential when it benefits you.

6. Predicting challenges

The next step towards self-advocacy is learning how to use self-insight to predict potential stressors, and coupling that with a proactive approach. This kind of initiative – when a pupil requests change – should be rewarded, even if you aren't able to meet their exact request. Negotiating a good compromise can be an important exercise in itself.

7. Knitting it all together

The final stage of developing self-advocacy is gaining experience of putting all of these elements together so that you're able to predict challenges, successfully communicate how you work well and manage your own needs with tried and tested strategies.

A proactive and planned effort on the part of school at knitting these learning elements together could help autistic pupils successfully transition from being victims of their environment to authors of their own success.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Debby Elley has twin autistic sons and is co-founder of *AuKids* magazine; her book *Just the Job! – A Light-hearted guide to office life for the autistic employee*, is co-authored with autism advocate and author Maura Campbell and is available now (£13.99, Jessica Kingsley Publishers)

IN THE KNOW

Effective self-advocates will be aware of...

- ▶ The law when it comes to employers' obligations.
- ▶ How they feel when they're beginning to experience overload
- ▶ A range of self-calming strategies
- ▶ Which environments they work best in
- ▶ The adaptations that suit them
- ▶ How to articulate their experiences to others
- ▶ How to request adjustments in a positive way

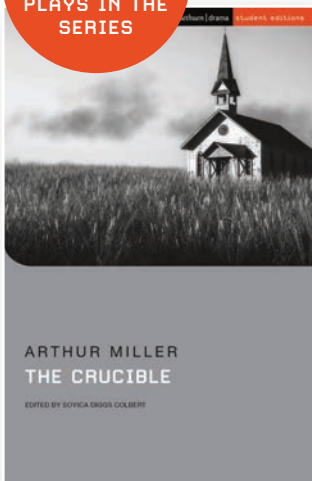


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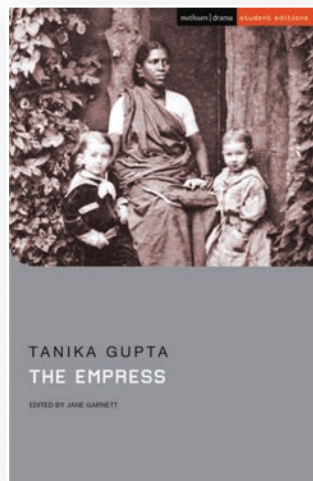
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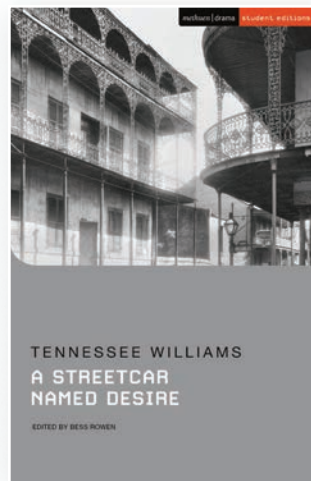
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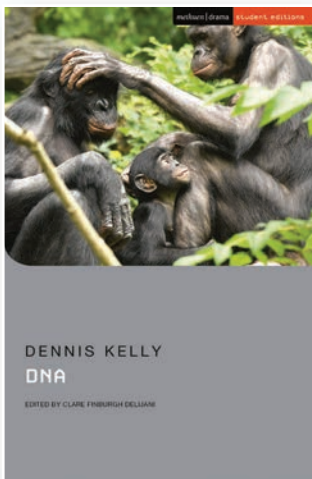
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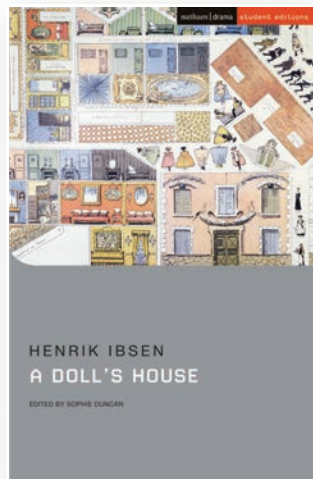
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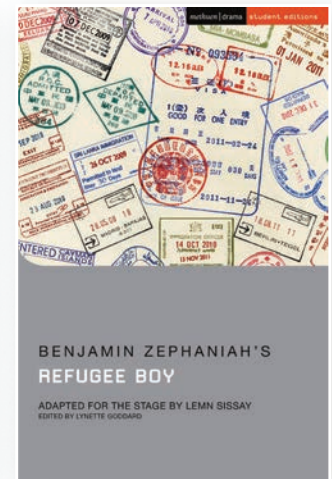
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5 REASONS TO TRY... Methuen Drama Student Editions

Great works of theatre, presented with compelling context and scholarly expertise for English and Drama

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Jenny Stevens teaches literature at the City Lit, London and is an Ofqual Subject Matter Specialist. She has taught English in schools and universities, and is a Methuen Drama Student Editions editor

1 A ONE-STOP RESOURCE

A Methuen Drama Student Edition has all you need to prepare your classes for exam assessment. Each one contains the complete play text, supported by an in-depth introduction divided into easily navigable sections.

Also included is a handy timeline of the playwright's life and work, as well as carefully crafted notes to explain unfamiliar phrases or allusions. Some editions additionally feature an exclusive, fully transcribed interview with the author – an additional bonus that's sure to inspire both you and your students.

2 SUITED TO ALL SPECIFICATIONS

Introductory material is skilfully tailored to meet the assessment objectives common to all English and Drama specifications. Social, historical and cultural contexts are comprehensively covered and brought to life through memorable examples, ranging from acts of political protest to popular television shows.

The characteristic language of the play is precisely defined and analysed, illuminating how meaning is created on stage. Key themes are set out in clearly labelled sub-sections, and the distinct qualities of major characters are considered in ways that encourage students to think of them primarily as dramatic creations.



3 EXPERTLY WRITTEN INTRODUCTIONS

Methuen Drama Student Editions are written by established academics, who provide up-to-the-minute interpretations in a direct and accessible style. Specialists in the field of modern drama, they alert readers to the uniqueness of a performance text, encouraging them to imagine how the words on the page might be performed on stage. Carefully selected snippets from contemporary theatre reviews and scholarly articles are woven into these introductory discussions, providing useful quotations for



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classroom consideration and title setting. Landmark productions are also highlighted and explored.

4 A DIVERSE CATALOGUE OF PLAYS

The series ranges from classic works in translation to recently premiered stage productions. As well as editions of popular set texts, such as *Blood Brothers* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Methuen Drama Student Editions also offer a wealth of contemporary drama texts that are ideal for non-examination assessment. Centres looking to refresh their post-2000 texts will find themselves spoilt for choice – Laura Wade's *Posh* (2010), Inua Ellams's *Barber Shop Chronicles* (2017) and Morgan Lloyd Malcolm's *Emilia* (2018) are just a few of the plays guaranteed to generate energetic student debate.

5 INDEPENDENT STUDY AND PROGRESSION

Student Editions are perfect for independent student study. Exam candidates who are developing coursework topics or looking to deepen their knowledge of a set play's literary context will benefit from the 'wider reading' section. Teachers can meanwhile pick up ideas for expanding their subject knowledge, plus some suggestions for non-examination assessment texts. These research-informed editions are produced with the whole ability range in mind, so that all learners can reach their full potential as drama critics.

Key Points

This series offers everything you need to enthuse students and guide them to exam success – all bound up in one attractive, neatly portable book.

Every edition is authored by an academic specialist, and directly informed by contemporary and timely drama knowledge and criticism.

Each edition combines an engaging, highly readable introduction with comprehensive, yet easy to follow notes and explanations.

The series continues to be regularly updated with new plays, thus helping teachers bring the vibrancy of modern theatre into their classrooms.

SUMMER SEND-OFF



Reflections and advice at a joyful, yet bittersweet time

SAYING FAREWELL | LEAVING EVENTS | REWARD TRIPS



The End of the SCHOOL YEAR

Schools are places in which everything revolves around steady progression through a packed calendar. Staff are constantly looking ahead to the next important event or milestone, while the students keep on keeping on. Even so, the end of the school year can still seem to arrive suddenly – especially after a gruelling exam season.

With staff and students often being so tired come July, end of year events can serve as a way of raising everyone's

spirits and giving your departing students a proper send-off, before your school community goes its separate ways over the summer holidays.

Staying sane

“Keep calm, and don't overreact.”

So went a very simple, yet effective nugget of wisdom from one of the wisest teachers I've worked with. Completing a school year is hard work at the best of times, and post-COVID, it seems to be harder than ever.

That exhortation to 'keep calm' will therefore often be heard among some senior colleagues – a necessary reminder expressed towards the end of the year, mainly to try and avoid any unnecessary dust-ups among the wider staff body. It's a mantra I frequently observe myself, especially when making sure everyone gets through that final half term safely and securely.

During difficult weeks, inter-staff discussion of what we plan to do over the summer holidays can help to keep us sane. I know that some of my colleagues will allow themselves a few minutes to daydream about how hot the beach will be, or how long it will take them to forget what day it is.

The myth of 'gained time'

One myth that can take hold around this time of year concerns the 'gained time' that some of us will supposedly see once our scheduled lessons with Y11 and Y13 are concluded. No, we might not need to schedule those lessons from mid-June onwards, but at the same time, there's always something that has to be done.

Speaking for myself, I'll be visiting all 13 of my school's feeder primaries – some on multiple occasions – to develop full and proper profiles of our incoming Y6s, while also running transition days and planning several events – those being our Y11 prom, an upcoming Awards Evening and a reward trip to Drayton Manor that I'll be leading for our top 250 performing students.

Our school tries to ensure that every student gets to enjoy, at the very least, one enjoyable and engaging day outside of the premises – and the end of the academic year, even with just those brief amounts of gained time, provides the flexibility we need to ensure such trips go smoothly.

Y11 high jinks

A number of secondary schools will opt to not put their students on exam leave, and instead have them remain in school working when not sitting their exams. This approach can certainly be effective when it's still early on in exam season, with plenty of revision and exam preparation to focus on. But as those exams are steadily completed and subject courses reach their conclusions, some students can't help themselves from blowing off steam and indulging in some daft capers.

Those repeat visits to pick up yet more flashcards or past papers inevitably give way to more chaotic pursuits, such as water fights. By now, our students will

CROWD CONTROL

For many schools, the Y11 prom will be a much-anticipated highlight of the year – but for those staff tasked with organising the event and ensuring everyone has a great time, it can also involve negotiating some tricky challenges. Here's my own checklist for devising a great evening that will have everyone talking – for the right reasons...

VENUE SELECTION

Make sure that the venue you choose can cope with the numbers and plans you have in mind, and will actively help you create a successful event. Some venues will lazily coast by on their reputation and repeat bookings; it's worth remembering that there are some great venues out there that will go the extra mile for you.

WORKING OUT THE DETAILS

As you set about hiring all those third party firms to take the photos, provide the music or just make candy floss, sharing what you'll be doing early on will help the venue to better deliver on your decisions and promises. Be sure to share your contractor details with the venue, so that they're clear as to when the various set-ups will commence.

CHECKING FOR CLASHES

Proms are big business for hotels and other large venues. For some years, we would hold our prom nights at a hotel that usually had another local school in, hosting a prom night of their own. More than once, we'd observe some unfamiliar students 'visiting' our prom to see what was happening and then staying. We now



try to avoid this at all costs, in favour of keeping the focus on our own event and students.

VEHICLE PARADE PLANNING

The arrival parade is always a spectacle that starts the evening off in spectacular fashion. The best hotels will know how to organise this so that vehicles don't have to wait too long and can be seen by everyone, while giving students sufficient time to savour the warm welcome from their peers. By clarifying the details with the venue in advance, you can ensure that your event timings stay on track from the start.

ARRANGING PROPER SECURITY

Your school's SLT will likely be monitoring events throughout, while various other members of staff remain on the lookout for youthful tomfoolery. Hiring proper security guards will see to it that

students don't bring in anything they're not supposed to, and ensure that any signs of possible trouble are acted on immediately. This can help to take pressure off staff, freeing them up for other tasks – such as searching bags for smuggled alcohol and/or other substances...

FINAL FAREWELLS

Decide who'll manage the end of the night and ensure everyone travels back safely. Students will often be in a hurry to head off to their own after-parties, but you can always rely on there being some stragglers who have left it too late to organise their own lifts. At our past few proms it's been my job to make sure all students have left – which can sometimes be awkward when a parent gets lost and arrives two hours late...

have become restless and tired – prompting school leaders to decide whether a student (or even the cohort as a whole) should be granted study leave, if only to diffuse the tension and release some of that built-up stress.

The very last day of Y11 brings with it the now hallowed practice of shirt signing and mad scrambles for pens and signatures. I've often wondered what happens to those signed shirts in the subsequent weeks and months. Do the students keep them? Do they ever see the light of day again? Or are they left to languish underneath beds until parents and carers finally decide to bite the bullet and throw them out?

And then come the tears – often from staff and students alike – but also no

small amount of joy and jubilation: *'I'll never have to wear a school blazer again!'*. Some plucky members of staff will take it upon themselves to record a song video as a combined treat and farewell for those students who'll be leaving (which can sometimes prompt the tears all over again).

One tradition our school has put in place more recently is for staff to form a line after the final assembly and then clap the students out of the building, by way of a final salute.

The end of year prom

Does your school hold an end of year prom? We've hosted annual proms and sixth form graduation dinners for the past 20 years, and both events have

historically been well-attended by staff and students.

In many staff offices and workrooms you'll see photos taken at numerous proms in years gone by. I feel we're lucky in that we regularly have over half of our staff attend these events, at which there will be many students asking for pictures to be taken of them with their teachers by the event's official photographer.

A good number of students will, of course, have been planning their attendance at prom for years beforehand – what they'll be wearing, the transport they'll be arriving in, how their hair will look, the nails and jewellery they'll have – and we'll have been hearing about the formation of those plans over a similar



PUPILS ON PARADE

By the time prom rolls around, you'll have not long delivered the leavers' assembly and told them that they're now ready to live their lives as adults.

You should trust the personal development curriculum you've planned and implemented for them in school. You've given them the skills they need to make the right choices as advance into adulthood, so now it's time to trust them.

For many, this may well be their first experience of a late night party atmosphere – so consider what you and your staff can do to ensure that everyone has a good time and gets to feel safe throughout.

One potential barrier to that could be acquiring appropriate outfits that they feel comfortable and confident wearing, and which they can afford. Consider flagging up second hand prom apparel services that could help some pupils avail themselves of rented clothes or transport within their budget.

If you have any practical concerns regarding students' behaviour at the event, consider doing the following:

- Printing a concise 'code of conduct' on the back of event tickets
- Informing parents that they'll be contacted immediately if anyone's behaviour fails to meet an agreed standard (while obviously ensuring that you'll have all relevant contact details to hand on the evening)
- Barring students who have consistently engaged in antisocial behaviour at school from attending
- Putting in place a good level of staffing and supervision

My final piece of advice would be to risk assess the event as thoroughly as you would for a residential trip, being mindful of everything down to allergy medication and ensuring that qualified First Aiders will be present. As a final step, have your planning okayed by SLT or other senior staff.

Kit Betts-Masters is a lead practitioner for science and produces physics, education and technology videos for YouTube under the username @KitBetts-Masters. For more information, visit evaluateeverything.co.uk

span of time.

When the day itself finally arrives, virtually everyone will have a great time from the moment the first limo or Hell's Angels motorcycle escort pulls up outside. The students are always enormously grateful for the event, and effusive in their thanks on the night for their teachers' efforts and support over the preceding five years.

Reward visits

As previously mentioned, my school runs an annual reward scheme for the 250 best students in Y7 to Y10, who get to go on a fun outing on the penultimate day of the school year. The problem is that many other schools in the Birmingham area organise something similar.

As a result, it's not unheard of for multiple school cohorts to arrive at the same attractions on the same day. Once staff have sent the students off to enjoy themselves, that's when the queues for the features and rides will begin. I'm always amazed when I see staff who proceed to spend the next few hours solely sitting in an on-site café, though, working away at their laptops. For me, such days mark a welcome change from the regular routine, and afford an opportunity to sit with colleagues and discuss at length the year just gone.

That said, I'll typically be the day's on-duty staff member, and thus have to accompany the students on the attraction's biggest and scariest rides as the 'responsible adult' – sometimes as often as five or six times over the course of the afternoon...

This is the end...?

Is the end of Y11 or Y13 really *the end*? Will we ever see these students, who have been the focus of our professional lives for so long, again?

Secondary schools will, of course, see nearly all of their outgoing Y11 and Y13 cohorts again soon enough, once their exam results come out in August, with a good proportion of staff on hand to provide support and reassurance on that momentous day.

But still, life inevitably moves on. I



don't doubt that there are many readers who have great stories of random encounters with former students, which vividly show how our memories of certain individuals never quite leave us (even when, from time to time, we'd perhaps prefer to forget).

Quite by chance, I've previously purchased two cars from ex-students working at local dealerships over the last decade. When my wife was admitted to hospital, an ex-student was one of the nurses assigned to care for her. I recently fell into a chance Twitter conversation an ex-student from over 20 years ago, who's now a Cambridge don advising sixth form students applying to study there, with some success.

More poignantly, I've lately completed several transition visits to feeder primary schools where several Y6 teachers are ex-students of mine. One of the heads was a student in my very first GCSE class over 30 years ago.

(Oh, and for younger colleagues who may be reading, know that nothing can fully prepare you for the day when you see former students return to your school as parents to that year's new intake).

So with that said, I wish you all a peaceful and restful summer holiday.



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

WE WENT TO...

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS KEW

“The trip is usually a joint endeavour between our art, science and geography departments. I led the trip this year, and tried to incorporate elements of the science and geography curriculum that the pupils would have been covering at school.

We chose to do different sessions each day – KS3 ‘Plant Reproduction Investigation’ on the first day, and KS3 ‘geography’ and ‘Rainforests’ the next. In Kew’s Princess of Wales Conservatory, for example, students looked at the desert and rainforest zones, and from a geography perspective, considered what it would be like to inhabit those different environments.

In terms of their science studies, the focus was more on the anatomy of the plants, while for art, we always try to take in Kew’s art galleries and explore its various collections.

The pupils tell me that they now have a good understanding of the rainforest, in that they’re able to explain the



different layers within the rainforest, and how what they observed reinforced what they’d previously learnt in Geography.

This year I sat in on the plant reproduction session, where I could witness the pupils improving their knowledge in real time. One activity saw them move between plants, counting the different types of pollinators on each. This way, they get to see science in action through active learning in outside spaces.

A separate activity saw Y7 pupils labelling the different parts of a plant’s reproductive system, as part of an exercise that will have helped them develop knowledge relating to topics they’ll encounter in Y8.

Our students get really excited about

being at Kew and having the chance to experience its different environments. They’re always eager to look at things and explore its rooms – and you can tell that many of them will be looking at their houseplants in a whole new way once they’ve returned home. Being there creates in them a real sense of enthusiasm and enjoyment of the natural world.”

– Tim, secondary art teacher, Sutton

For more information about the school services provided by Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, visit kew.org/kew-gardens/school-visits

WHY NOT VISIT...

Three reward destinations your students will enjoy, while learning something in the process...



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hrp.org.uk



JANE AUSTEN'S HOUSE

Transport students of all ages with a visit to Jane Austen’s House – the inspiring Hampshire cottage where Jane Austen lived and wrote her groundbreaking novels. Engaging house tours help to bring Jane Austen’s novels to life, while emphasising their relevance and accessibility, and there is also a series of fun, interactive workshops that further explore the period’s wider historical context.

Activities ranging from traditional garden games to Regency letter writing and Regency dress-up are all included.

janeaustens.house



AN INSPECTOR CALLS

Winner of 19 major awards and hailed as the theatrical event of its generation, Stephen Daldry’s multi-award-winning National Theatre production of JB Priestley’s classic thriller has thrilled more than 5 million theatregoers worldwide. When Inspector Goole arrives unexpectedly at the home of the prosperous Birling family, their peaceful dinner party is shattered by his investigations into the death of a young woman... Suitable for ages 12+ and more relevant now than ever, this is an unmissable play.

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TECH IN ACTION

Thistley Hough Academy and FlashAcademy®

A collaborative journey towards EAL excellence

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

Thistley Hough Academy, nestled in Stoke-on-Trent, is more than just a secondary school with EAL (English as an Additional Language) requirements; it's a vibrant tapestry of diversity.

Heading up the secondary school's EAL provision is Alice Legaska, who proudly states that, "At our school, we celebrate diversity, with over 40 different languages spoken among our students."

However, diversity comes with a unique set of challenges. Language barriers can prevent students – who may arrive not just at the start or end of the academic year, but throughout – from making academic progress and integrating socially.

The school's principal, Noel Kennedy, is enthusiastic about addressing EAL challenges: "Our mission is to ensure every student, regardless of their linguistic background, gets the best possible education."



ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

FlashAcademy® is a digital learning platform designed to support EAL students in accelerating their English language acquisition. Students can develop key skills via interactive lessons and games, with teachers easily able to monitor their progress and conduct regular assessments. The platform has played a vital role in Thistley Hough Academy's response to the complex challenges posed by the ever-evolving EAL landscape.

The school uses FlashAcademy® to weave learning interventions seamlessly into its curriculum. Alice elaborates: "Our EAL provision incorporates FlashAcademy® into lessons and intervention sessions. Whether accessed in the classroom, during one-on-one sessions or as homework, FlashAcademy® caters to our students' language learning needs."

"We're lucky to have FlashAcademy® as our main resource. It helps students access language skills – speaking, listening, reading, and writing – that are crucial for their everyday lives."

MEASURABLE SUCCESS

The success of Thistley Hough Academy's EAL approach isn't just anecdotal – it's quantifiable. Students at the school undergo EAL assessments hosted within FlashAcademy® itself. The resulting data then becomes a compass, guiding educators in how to tailor their EAL teaching strategies to students' individual needs.

The subsequent impact has been staggering, with more than 95% of EAL students making tangible progress using FlashAcademy® and its assessment features.

As Noel explains, "What we're trying to develop is the skill set of our staff to meet the needs within the classroom. FlashAcademy® provides us with valuable reports and assessment data to inform key strategies for each individual across various subjects, allowing them to access the curriculum more effectively."

Thistley Hough Academy's journey with FlashAcademy® exemplifies the real difference that can be made in the lives of EAL learners. The platform becomes a catalyst for unlocking their potential, ensuring that language need never be a barrier to limitless possibilities.



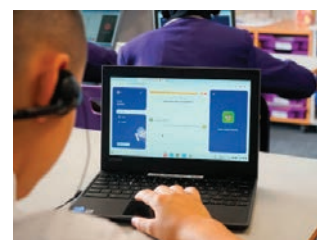
Contact:

team@flashacademy.com

flashacademy.com/secondary-schools

THE PLACE:

Thistley Hough Academy is a secondary school in Stoke-on-Trent. With 40+ home languages spoken, the school embraces the rich cultural mosaic its students and community embody.



THE CHALLENGE:

40% of Thistley Hough Academy's school population comprises students from different countries and nationalities. Providing effective support for every student is a vital challenge that the school actively embraces.

Did we mention?

FlashAcademy® is the UK's number 1 EAL platform, now used by over 250,000 learners to accelerate English language acquisition.

Interested in improving your own school's EAL provision? Find out how you can start your journey by accessing a free trial at flashacademy.com

SCHOOLS OUT – or is it?

Nikki Cunningham-Smith examines the practicalities, risks and benefits of organising a school study programme over the summer months

For years, teachers have discussed whether there's a dip in students' attainment at the start of the autumn term, compared to the end of the previous summer term. A 2023 analysis of standardised scores by FFT Education Datalab found that *"In general, Autumn term results tend to be lower than the previous Summer term. By contrast, Summer term results are, on average 3 points higher than Spring term results."* (see bit.ly/ts135-SS1)

Interestingly, the same analysis also found that the greatest variability between pupils' results seemed to occur during autumn, suggesting that *"The summer affects some pupils more than others."*

Proof of progress

One way of responding to this need has been the top-up funding made available to schools to facilitate the catch-up of Y7 pupils. The need to support those pupils with lower starting points, remains ever present and carries over throughout the Key Stages – but could it be possible, with sufficient creativity, for schools to embed systems that consistently show students' results and progress over time? And could such a system perhaps be instrumental in levelling the playing field when it comes to students' attainment?

It's been reported that lower income students tend to have fewer opportunities to access summer clubs or

visit museums and libraries, which can provide valuable learning opportunities over the period when schools are shut, so could having access to prescribed extracurricular activities in school help to remedy this?

There would, of course, need to be careful consideration of how such programmes would be

"The programme had been poorly attended – and upon closer examination, I could see why..."

staffed. If what we're trying to do is raise pupils' attainment, then it follows that we would need access to QTS-qualified educators. This should, at the very least, provide a level of quality assurance, since we will need to later demonstrate how our summer study system attendees have been able to make tangible progress.

'Pre-learning' versus 'standalone'

While this wouldn't (and indeed shouldn't) become a new expectation for staff during the holiday season, I do believe that there will always be teachers willing to sign up for a summer study scheme in return for financial remuneration. After all, just look at the market for exam markers.

A more difficult question is whether our system should be an exercise in 'pre-learning', and hence be informed by the National Curriculum, or if it should

function a separate, standalone programme.

I think this would ultimately be for schools to decide, based on engagement levels and determination of need. Would there realistically be enough time in the teaching year to carry out a form of assessment that could identify the learning gaps needing to be

addressed by a summer programme? And even if there was, should this process be executed by individual schools, or might there be some shared capacity for creating centralised tests and a scheme of work for students to follow?

Alternative ways to learn

As a SENCo, I once set up a summer holiday provision myself. I was handed a set of names and told I had to improve the students' basic English, maths and science attainment based on their SATs results. The school had run a summer programme previously, but it had been poorly attended – and upon closer examination, I could see why.

Select pupils had been told that they needed to attend a 'summer school' to catch up with the rest of their peers. These were pupils who had no



real interest in school, and were now being told that they had to exchange their eagerly awaited summer holiday freedom for *more time in the classroom*, engaged in topics they had no interest in.

I decided to use the programme as an opportunity to reignite their love for learning, by packaging the week as 'Alternative Ways to Learn'. We visited a local science museum. We went on an ice-skating trip. We visited a local beach and arcade. We built dens in a nearby forest.

Different environment, same outcomes

So how did this exciting timetable of day trips result in any actual summer learning? Well, each day and activity was attached to a class-based lesson. The science museum obviously tied into one of our science days. The ice-skating trip was

used as the basis for discussion of how the ice beneath the blades of ice skates generated sufficient pressure to undergo a phase change from solid (ice) to liquid (water). Thereafter, we spent a whole afternoon working on the different phases of matter.

Our beach trip then fed into an English session built around the writing of a scene, with the view as our stimulus. As we sat on the sand, we used differentiated reading comprehension materials and engaged in a mark-making session intended to improve some of the students' fine motor and handwriting skills. Our beach activity also helped students to engage with oral language skills, giving them opportunities to answer questions freely in an environment they didn't associate with being in a classroom, yet which still delivered the same outcomes.

Our arcade trip meanwhile provided a chance for them to work on their maths skills, with the 2p machine challenging their skills at multiplying by 2. Each pupil was given an equal budget and then tasked with keeping track of their spending. They were also given a watch and told to make sure they reported to specific places at specific times. The games within the arcades supported a deeper subsequent lesson on problem solving and computer coding.

The den building supported another day of English work, which saw them devising a world where they had to survive in the wild. Once their dens and 'villages' were created, we came up with sets of rules for their new society and wrote descriptive pieces reflecting on what had led them to having to flee for the woods in the first place.

Built-in learning

Yes, the letter that got sent home did invite the pupils to attend a solid a week of fun that most of them would have likely struggled to access otherwise, simply due to their socio-economic status – but I would argue that another factor

contributing to the programme's eventual

SET-UP CONSIDERATIONS

- ▶ Consider your staffing capabilities and seek input from staff whose creativity and engagement levels are their superpower.
- ▶ Identifying pupils who might benefit from the programme and delivery of the programme itself should be possible with the aid of free resources that are readily available online.
- ▶ Investigate possible sources of funding so that pupils can attend for free.
- ▶ Understand your cohort so that you can get those who need to attend to actually... attend.
- ▶ Ensure that your summer activities are appropriately impactful, and devise a system for measuring the extent of that impact.

success was how these pupils – who could otherwise have expected to see a drop in their results – didn't bargain for the built-in learning opportunities that they got.

Attendance at the summer programme was high, and the following year we even saw pupils wanting to engage who hadn't been identified as requiring the additional intervention. That can be a common issue after a programme proves successful – but pupils actively wanting to engage more with school than they already are is at least a nice headache to have.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Nikki Cunningham-Smith is an assistant headteacher based in Gloucestershire



POWER UP

Top of the class

What schools need to look for when investing in this new age of technology

Need to know

Education has experienced a profound metamorphosis, with digital and blended learning taking centre stage, and it's a change that's here to stay. However, these novel learning approaches pose unique challenges for schools – challenges that we understand and are here to help you navigate.

Students now need to collaborate securely and at scale with their classmates and teachers. They also need access to inspiring and forward-thinking technologies to prepare them for whatever comes next.

Educators must personalise learning for students of all abilities and learning styles, and enable engagement from any location. Simultaneously, school administrators must ensure that all students have equitable access to digital learning, regardless of their backgrounds.

School IT teams, meanwhile, need to manage and deploy devices remotely, minimising the technical issues that can eat into crucial teaching time while ensuring that all school, student and teacher data is safe and secure. All this needs to be done while balancing tight IT budgets in the face of reduced funding.

Thinking ahead

As we navigate this new territory, AI provides innovative ways of supporting digital learning that are hugely beneficial for teachers and students. This may soon become integral to how we teach – so schools need to be forward thinking, and prepare for this eventuality.

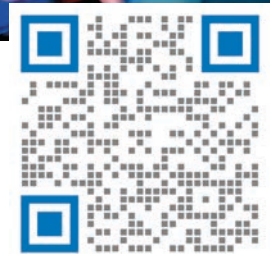
Generative AI models, for example, can create virtual simulations of a classroom or laboratory, so that students can collaborate and participate in practical learning from any location; a concept that supports online education at scale.

Generative AI can also help teachers assess students' abilities and tailor their learning for a more personalised experience. It can even automate grading, saving teachers a significant amount of time.

With this in mind, Dell and Microsoft have reimaged Windows for a new era of the digital classroom, while unlocking AI's potential. Their goal is to help every student reach their potential by supporting learning, collaboration and creativity in a secure and trusted environment.



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FOCUS ON: EDTECH

This month, we consider the issue of tech-related inequality, and why your students need an IT diet that takes in both ‘light’ devices and higher spec workstations...

What issues should we be mindful of when incorporating edtech within classroom practice?

THE AGENDA:

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What good are the learning advantages afforded by digital technologies if they only extend to students from some backgrounds but not others?

79 6 WAYS YOU CAN USE AI RIGHT NOW

With the market for artificially intelligent products, services and add-on features continuing to grow ever larger, Lyndsey Stuttard sets out six practical and potentially effective uses for the technology within your classroom

80 ACCESS ALL AREAS

Your students will likely be more familiar with tablets and Chromebooks than ‘full’ PCs and Macs – but, says Rob Wraith, they could do with knowing about both device categories...



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Find out more at dell.co.uk/education

The digital divide

Jason Tomlinson offers some suggestions for tackling those persistent inequalities that separate the edtech ‘haves’ from the ‘have-nots’...

Despite technology having long become an integral part of our modern lives, a joint recent research project between several British universities recently found that nearly half of all British households don’t meet a ‘minimum digital living standard’ – included in which is ready access to technology, an internet connection and possession of digital skills.

“People may be surprised, because in every show – from crime, to romance – people

assured. It may well be that something’s better than nothing – but that doesn’t mean we should accept it as a feasible solution in the long term.

Without access to appropriate learning devices, children from poorer families will be at higher risk of falling behind their peers for whom access isn’t a problem, simply due to their personal circumstances. This can in turn create a vicious cycle, whereby those pupils with the least access to technology go on to have fewer opportunities later in life.

The government has tried to address education’s digital divide in the past, albeit with limited success. Perhaps the best example to date was its response to the pandemic. This was a time when the digital divide between school students had never been so stark, with all classes moving online at once, and for extended periods of time. Those lacking access to appropriate devices or reliable internet connections lost out in a big way.

One government

“Parts of the education sector can become ‘stuck’ in older modes of practice”

are living a digital life,” the project’s lead researcher said, *“But we know that a very large number of people don’t live in that world.”*

A vicious cycle

This divide – between those who live successfully in the digital realm and those who do not – is nowhere clearer than in schools. A number of schools adopt ‘Bring Your Own Device’ policies, meaning that students whose families lack the financial resources to own appropriate technological devices can experience education – albeit in a rather different way compared to those among their peers with the means.

Schools will typically endeavour to make some kind of device available, though the quality of that device is never

Preparing students for later life is arguably schools’ core mission. Living as we do in one of the world’s largest economies, surely we can all agree that enabling pupils access to suitable devices when in school should be a non-negotiable? And yet, we still find ourselves far from achieving that aim today. So how can we get closer to it?

Free laptops

What we need to do is approach digital inclusion initiatives in smarter ways.



attempt at addressing this division was to hand out over 800,000 laptops to those students who needed them – an astonishing logistical feat that should be genuinely applauded. Fairly soon, however, it became clear that many of the laptops in question struggled to sustain their functions for the duration of the lessons students were attending. Other devices, including tablets, were handed out too, but these often lacked some core functionality, such as camera hardware that was sufficiently powerful for all necessary tasks.

In many cases, however, the issues simply come down to a question of money. In February 2021 the government appointed Sir Kevan Collins as its ‘digital recovery commissioner,’ whose job was to help young people whose education had suffered as a result of the pandemic. It was an appointment made with apparently good intentions and some suitably ambitious goals in mind.

In June of that year, those ambitions all but collapsed

when the government offered Collins less than a tenth of the £15 billion in funding he’d originally asked for. That amounted to far less per child than other Western economies – including the US and the Netherlands – were setting aside for the same purpose.

Learning the lessons

It’s understandable that governments need to make tough decisions during difficult times, like those we experienced during the pandemic. Under pressure, mistakes *will* be made – but in many cases, such schemes seem to have only further accentuated the divide between wealthier areas and poorer ones. The education sector must start learning from these lessons.

And perhaps the most crucial lesson of all is ‘*Spend your money wisely.*’ Though we could also add a requirement to ensure equal access, plus a further obligation to check whether any devices offered can definitely facilitate the carrying out of those tasks that students will be set by their teachers. Otherwise, what’s the point?

Schools should research and consider the best available options, but parts of the education sector can become ‘stuck’ in older modes of practice. Many schools don’t realise that there are, in fact, specific schemes available to help them flatten the playing field for all their students – even in areas with the least funding. These include RM’s

StudyKIT programme, which aims to provide affordable, uniform devices that are easy to manage, making staff training and classroom management much easier to administer than a bring-your-own-device (BYOD) scheme.

Benefits of leasing

Another option is to lease devices in bulk over long periods – an approach that has several key benefits over both BYOD policies and traditional purchasing programmes for schools struggling to provide appropriate devices to all students:

It can be cheaper – When equipment is leased out in bulk over long periods, technology partners will typically offer schools much better deals, with the subsequent costs potentially saving schools as much as £120,000 per year group, per year. They can also often include insurance and accessories as add-ons, thus reducing those costs even further.

It addresses the digital divide – By ensuring all students have access to the same devices, everyone can start to finally occupy the centre ground. This closes the digital divide by bringing everyone onto the same playing field.

It improves flexibility Through a leasing scheme, schools can choose what they’ll specifically need and when they need it for. Experienced technology partners should also be able

to further tailor the solutions provided according to schools’ stated requirements.

It affords access to cutting edge technologies

Given that leasing contracts will usually come to an end every few years, schools can now choose whether to upgrade to newer devices for a similar cost, or keep hold of their existing devices for a lower cost.

It can improve the experience of teaching

There are distinct benefits to be had from device consistency and uniformity. If all students are working from the same platform, teachers will consequently find it far easier to instruct them inside and outside the classroom. IT teams will also naturally find it much easier to manage updates, since all devices will be using the same operating system.

Cost-effective leasing schemes can certainly help, but they’ll only be successful in combination with students who already possess a firm grounding in digital skills.

Research from the University of Liverpool has found that in almost four out of ten cases, digital skills were the factor holding families back. Measures here could include organising lessons and workshops around tech-related troubleshooting, software use and information literacy.

If these forms of support could be put in place, perhaps then the UK could begin working towards achieving a more equal education system.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Jason Tomlinson is managing director of RM Technology





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HODDER
Education

6 ways you can use AI right now

With the market for AI services growing ever larger, **Lyndsey Stuttard** sets out six practical and effective uses for the technology within your classroom

At ACS International School Cobham, we've seen many benefits from introducing AI into the classroom. Based on our experience, here are my six recommendations for how you can make use of AI in your setting – as well some potential pitfalls practitioners should bear in mind...

1. Exploring alternative perspectives

Many teachers can feel out of their depth when approaching new themes as part of their school curriculum and syllabus planning. We've experienced this at ACS Cobham, when our staff were tasked with rewriting the entire Lower School curriculum to ensure each unit included a theme from the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

It's not always obvious how teachers can make new curriculum material relevant to students – which is where AI tools can be leveraged to highlight any gaps that may have been missed. By entering the new criteria and unit into ChatGPT, teachers can quickly see if there are

any additional topics that might be relevant for specific age groups.

2. Providing real-time learning feedback

Sadly, teachers aren't always able to provide as much feedback as they'd like for homework or assignments. At ACS Cobham, we use the tool Quizlet in Middle School, which helps students practise their vocabulary and make flashcards. Quizlet's Chat Robot tests students on the meaning of a term, and if a student submits an incorrect answer, that answer is analysed. Feedback is then provided, explaining the term in more detail and helping the student understand where they may have gone wrong.

3. Supporting reading comprehension

Another recent addition to Quizlet is a set of AI features aimed at making vocabulary learning more accessible and engaging. Via the app's 'Magic Notes' tool, students can

insert longer articles into Quizlet and receive a summary or outline of the key points, thus saving teachers time while supporting students who might struggle with comprehension tasks.

4. Making revision plans

AI tools can be highly beneficial for students who find it difficult to structure their own learning. Students can use ChatGPT to create workflows, study strategies and even revision plans that work for them, making a potentially overwhelming task much more manageable.

5. Teaching unfamiliar topics

AI can aid teachers with delving into new, hitherto unfamiliar teaching topics. We sought to incorporate the aforementioned Sustainable Development Goals into our curriculum, but are by no means experts in each of the Goals. AI tools can serve teachers as helpful 'idea generators' by providing an introduction to a topic and recommending one or more age-appropriate learning activities.

6. Elevating professional development

AI presents clear opportunities for teacher CPD, but it's important that teachers are only shown what functionalities and commands will be useful in their education setting, since the possible avenues can be

overwhelming! We're planning to hold educator workshops at ACS Cobham later this year, by which time we should know a little more about the technology's capabilities and how it could be useful for our teachers.

On the other hand...

With so many AI tools having only become widely available to the public within the last couple of years, we're still in the process of investigating the potential for AI to support teaching and classroom learning in ways beyond those outlined above.

Because the truth is that not all schools will benefit from using AI. For many, there can be multiple, much more pressing issues to consider. If you have the capacity, it may be helpful to designate a member of staff to research possible AI applications within the context of your school's needs and present summaries of any avenues that might be worth exploring.

AI's never going to be foolproof – which ultimately means that any teachers looking to harness the technology effectively will need to do so responsibly, and only after identifying those tools that will be most purposeful for students.

“ChatGPT can create workflows, study strategies and even revision plans”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lyndsey Stuttard is a digital teaching and learning specialist at ACS International School Cobham, and was previously recognised as Digital Innovator of the Year (Silver) at the 2023 Pearson National Teaching Awards; for more information, visit acs-schools.com/cobham

ACCESS ALL AREAS

Your students are likely to be more familiar with tablets and Chromebooks than ‘proper’ computers – but, says **Rob Wraith**, they could really do with knowing both...

Computers really are everywhere these days – yet despite making frequent use of them on a daily basis, how *au fait* are teenagers and young adults with what they actually are, how they ought to be maintained and how to fix them when something goes wrong?

Computing wasn’t even part of the National Curriculum when I attended school, only becoming mandatory much later in September 2014. Back in the day, students at school would have predominantly had access to the BBC Acorn, RM 380Z or (in rare cases) the Sinclair Spectrum.

Myself, I remember using a BBC Acorn (Model B) in CDT, when it was wheeled out on a trolley once a week for around 30 minutes. It had no internet connection (though a nascent version of the online connectivity we know today did exist), nor was it linked to any kind of central server. Yet this fully self-contained, standalone computer was something that I and some of my friends at school greatly enjoyed using. It felt like a privilege to have access to it when planning our next projects.

That machine would go on to kickstart my interest in computers, and later the World Wide Web. I wanted to know what this machine was capable of and what could be done on it. It was an interest that would drive me to spend weeks at a time building my first game by typing out code published in a weekly magazine, which would eventually turn out to be a *Lemmings* clone. That was a genuine thrill.

Let me take you back...

Computers first began arriving in workplaces from the 1950s onwards, but it wasn’t until the 1960s that the first commercially viable computers were made available to the public – and even then, they were heavy and prohibitively expensive. Technological breakthroughs in the 1970s led to the invention of the microcomputer – a device category based around a self-contained processing

“Many companies still rely on traditional desktop machines and operating systems”

unit and microchip that enabled the production of computers that were much smaller in size and therefore much more practical.

The 1980s then saw the development and widespread adoption of more powerful ‘personal computers’, such as the IBM PC, which ran full operating systems and software applications. At the same time, the IBM PC standard saw competition from Apple’s Macintosh line, which ran an operating system specifically developed for the hardware – the descendants of which evolved into the computers we’re familiar with today.

Advances in graphic cards, data storage, software development and the internet would fuel the rapid forward momentum that characterised the computer industry of the 90s, leading to further innovations in laptop form factors, and as the 21st century dawned,

tablet devices and smartphones. They might be exponentially more powerful, but the devices we use today can be clearly traced back to technologies and standards first developed in the 1970s.

In the early 2000s, a milestone was passed when sales of fully integrated laptop devices finally overtook those of traditional desktop PCs (which still typically consist of a bulky

base unit connected to a separate monitor, mouse and keyboard). That gap grows ever wider to this day, with even laptops now increasingly getting edged out by mobile devices.

Key advantages

Does this mean we’re now fully in an era of ‘light’ computers – i.e. laptops, notepads, tablets and phones? Do we really need that residual knowledge of how to correctly configure desktop machines so that they run our full operating system of choice in the way we want them to? Or should our focus really now be more on how our students use Chrome OS, iOS and Android?

There are certainly some key advantages to be had come from schools’ use of ‘light’ computers for most of

their IT-assisted tasks. There’s usually a lower upfront cost for Chromebook-style devices that run streamlined operating systems, as well as their greater ease of use to consider, which usually ensures that the technology itself doesn’t obstruct the important business of learning. Then there’s the very welcome ability to prevent the installation of unwanted apps and lock in certain system settings.

Another crucial factor is the inherent portability of ChromeOS and how, say, the wider Google for Education platform can be easily accessed via



Where can I find...



smartphones, tablets and/or laptops in classrooms that bear little resemblance to traditional ‘computer rooms’. The ability to access technology anywhere, at any time via Wi-Fi has been a genuine game-changer, completely bypassing the cabling requirements that were once such an important edtech consideration.

A useful combination

At the same time, however, we can’t ignore the fact that students will also benefit greatly from getting to use more powerful desktop machines and laptops that run full operating systems, such as Windows, OS-X and

Linux. These higher specification machines will have more memory and much greater storage capacity, and enable access to specialist, subject-specific software like computer aided design tools for D&T projects and digital audio workstations for music lessons.

It should be noted that ‘Full OS computers’ can also help to familiarise students with the sorts of productivity software, file formats and data storage methods that are commonplace in the modern workplace.

Would it not be better for students to use a combination of all these devices – ‘light’ computers,

as well as more heavy duty workstations? I genuinely believe it would. Not just for the valuable knowledge of how PCs and modern operating systems work, and the history of how they came to be what they are now, but also for how they can be upgraded to become faster and more efficient.

Another important factor to bear in mind is that of accessibility, and the potential need among students with SEND for inclusive and supporting software that might be compatible with comparatively ‘open’ environments like Windows, but less so with the likes of ChromeOS or iOS.

Having access to, and the knowledge needed to grasp the technologies being used daily in workplaces right now will ultimately help your students be better prepared for entering employment. There are still a great number of companies that rely on traditional desktop machines and operating systems, whether it be due to choice or budgetary reasons.

Giving your learners opportunities to use and understand desktop machines will ultimately give them a greater appreciation for the many different uses that specialist software can be put to, and provide some important lessons in the capabilities of non-mobile computing devices.

WORKSTATIONS VERSUS DEVICES

1 ChromeOS, iOS and Android-based devices can effectively turn any classroom into a ‘computer room’, enabling classes to instantly access and engage with digital learning content.

2 Computers that run Windows, OS-X or Linux can be used to demonstrate the use and purpose of software commonly encountered in modern employment.

3 Maintaining, repairing and upgrading the hardware components of Windows, Linux and (to a lesser extent) OS-X devices is often less expensive than replacing ‘light laptops’ and other mobile devices, which are typically not user-servicable.

4 PCs can provide access to specialist software and file formats that might not be accessible via mobile devices.

5 PCs and laptops afford access to larger screens and sometimes specialist software designed to support students with SEND; modern mobile devices usually include a number of accessibility features as standard (scaleable interfaces, verbal menu prompts), but these can be limited.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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



POWER UP

Let's roll

If you need a way of sustainably storing, charging and even updating your learning devices, look no further than the ever-reliable charging trolley...

Need to know

In the rapidly evolving landscape of education, access to technology has become synonymous with learning opportunities. Providing devices such as laptops, Chromebooks and tablets to students is not just beneficial, but now essential for fostering digital literacy and participation in modern educational activities.

To address this need efficiently, campuses are increasingly turning to self-service, technology-enhanced solutions that can streamline students' access to devices and promote equity.

One cost-effective solution for facilitating more reliable access to education technology is to utilise charging trolleys. These units provide a practical means of storing, charging and even applying software updates to devices in volume. By helping you to centralise your device management, Charging Trolleys can save valuable time, space and financial resources – all while at the same improving your standards of security.

This approach is particularly valuable for institutions that frequently loan devices out, thus eliminating the need for manual distribution. Instead of having to appoint dedicated staff, manage queues and contend with the logistical difficulties of handing out devices in person, students can simply call at the trolley and collect a device themselves.

Once devices are ready to be returned, they can be simply plugged back into the trolley, ready for the next learner – a process that enhances productivity by ensuring charged devices are always readily available, while offering a seamless experience for learners.

Feedback from users has highlighted the tangible benefits of Charging Trolleys, ranging from increased device lifespan to significant cost savings. Additionally, the managing of updates and maintenance of devices in volume ensures optimal device performance while minimising downtime.

By providing a secure environment for your devices, Charging Trolleys can play a role in developing a more sustainable approach to technology use, and help reduce the environmental impact of tech waste.

This form of self-service technology can thus not only help institutions enhance the learning experience for their students, but also contribute to an eco-friendly future.



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TECH TALK

LapSafe®'s best-selling ChargeLite™ storage and charging range (previously known as ClassBuddy™) offers an unrivalled and cost-effective solution for safely storing and maintaining your devices.

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Mobility in mind

Designed for ease of use, ChargeLite™ Trolleys feature built-in handles and 360° castors for effortless manoeuvrability. This allows for easy transport of devices between classrooms and adaptations to changing instructional needs. With security and protection foremost in mind, ChargeLite™ is built with a robust locking mechanism and sturdy construction.

As well as trolleys, the ChargeLite™ range also consists of wall cabinets, desk units and a standalone locker – all available for supply within seven to ten days.

Next Generation

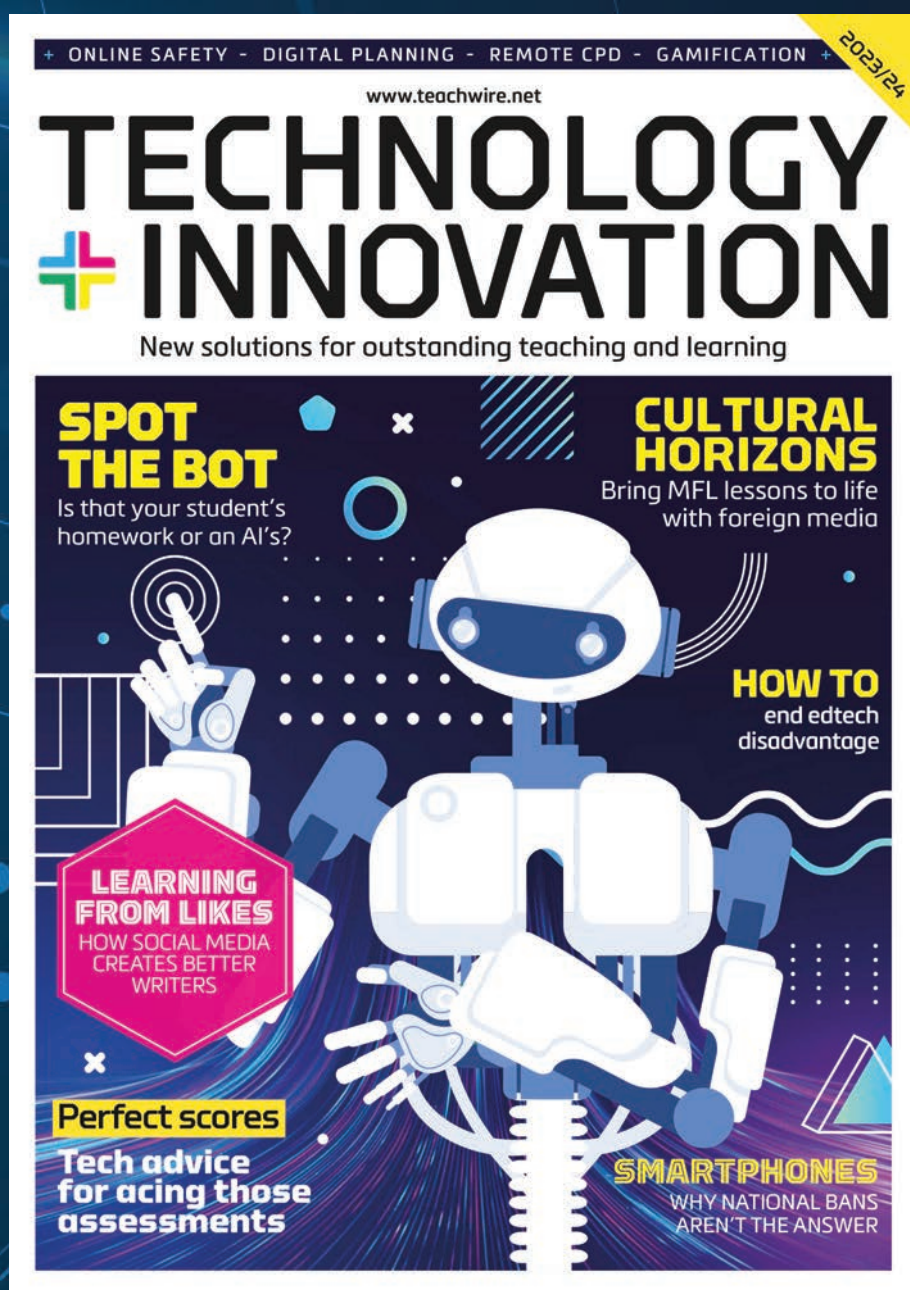
Revolutionising your device management, ChargeLite™ Trolleys eliminate the need for dedicated team members to manually hand out devices, allowing students to gain control and responsibility. Its compact construction and ease of movement result in a practical and convenient solution for storing devices, whilst its charging and data transfer options facilitate seamless device management.

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How are the latest developments in technology affecting your students' learning?

How might your school's safeguarding, data protection and procurement strategies be improved?

These are the questions we seek to explore in **Technology & Innovation** – a specialist publication by TeachCo aimed at teachers and school leaders working across secondary schools and academies.



Scan me

Inside this issue...

- How to tell if that homework was completed by a student or an AI
- Why addressing digital inequality should be a priority
- What the Online Safety Act means for your students' internet use
- The age of the digitally-taken GCSE is upon us – but are we ready for it?

Like, share, ask, learn

Online spaces play hugely important roles in teenagers' lives – so let's ask them how we can make the platforms they use better and safer, writes **Rebecca Westcott**

As a deputy head and parent of three children, I've long been interested in how being a teenager has changed since my own experience of those roller-coaster years.

Many things are universal and have remained the same – the stresses of peer pressure, the need to fit in, working out how to handle things if you don't. But there are some differences, too – the biggest of which has to be the emergence of the internet and social media.

Nowhere to hide

When I was 14, a rough day at school could be left behind when I closed my front door. I had respite and sanctuary, at least until 9am the following morning. Today, there's nowhere to hide. Kids are contactable 24 hours a day, and negativity can find them everywhere. As we know all too well, this can end in disaster – and in some cases, it tragically has.

Breathless headlines link social media activity to increases in depression, anxiety, mental distress, self-harming behaviours and risks of suicide, but that's a list none of us can afford to ignore. So we endlessly discuss the ways in which young people now seem to live their lives online, and the huge value they place on gaining clout or likes. We ask ourselves why they opt to spend so much time on their phones, and bemoan how they often seem happiest when in front of screens.

I was curious about the true impact of social media on teenagers' mental health – and so, when I devised the

idea for a YA novel centred on teenage girls and how their wellbeing is affected by cyber-bullying, I went looking for evidence.

First-hand experience

The sea of opinions out there – mostly variations on the 'evils of the internet' and their consequences for the teenage mind – are largely written by adults who grew up before even mobile phones were a thing, never mind Snapchat or TikTok. Notably absent was published commentary and data from those people who actually know what it's like.

I wanted to find out what they thought, because if we want to genuinely help our young people navigate this new world, then we need to hear the thoughts and ideas of individuals with first-hand

experience of the issues involved. So I asked them.

With the help of Scholastic, we sent out the 'Say It Like It Is' survey, and were amazed to receive just over 1,000 responses from young people around the UK. I asked them questions regarding their use of social media, and what they would like adults and other kids to know about the internet more broadly.

I also asked whether they felt that the person they are online is the same as the person they are in real life. I

asked if they'd ever been made to feel uncomfortable online – and whether they'd ever behaved negatively themselves from behind a screen. Above all, I asked what rules around internet use, if any, they would put in place if they were in charge.

The responses I saw were intelligent, thoughtful and sometimes heartbreaking.

The kids are alright

Age restrictions came up a lot. There are clear concerns among teens around younger children being given unrestricted access to the internet, as well as a desire to prevent anyone over the age of 18 from being able to contact them unless they've been specifically approved by a trusted guardian. The kids, it seems, are alright. It's often the adults who present

was another area that caused these respondents distress – not that they're moaning about it. The matter-of-fact way in which they offered these suggestions for simply *limiting the chances of them seeing horrifying posts, pictures and videos* was one of the hardest things to stomach about the survey's comments.

“Many issued a plea for better filters that could prevent them being exposed to disturbing material”

the threat.

Many of the survey's respondents issued a plea for better filters that could prevent them being exposed to disturbing material. 'Pro-ana', diet culture, rape culture, racist and body shaming content were all mentioned as things they didn't wish to view or stumble upon – as well as content and views conveying homophobia, transphobia and animal abuse.

Sexual material, as well as requests to send nudes or the sending of unsolicited nudes,

Some suggested handing out time restrictions for antisocial internet users. Others thought that permanent bans should be issued to repeat offenders who ignore guidelines – including the senders of death threats. A large number believed that the issues at hand could be solved if people simply tried to be 'kind' and 'respectful', and 'didn't bully or give hate'. They're not wrong.

Risk versus reward

In the opinion of just over 1,000 young people, what we *shouldn't* do is take away their phones or arbitrarily restrict their access.



That's because doing so could result in teenagers deciding not to seek our advice or support when things have gone wrong online, because they would rather try to cope alone than tell their teachers or caregivers what's actually going on.

Additionally, the high probability of them losing their devices when such incidents come to light means that they feel silenced out of necessity. When weighing up the risk versus reward, many believe that their lives will be seriously diminished without the ability to connect, discover, explore or create online.

It's important to remember that removing their online access effectively amounts to taking away their friends, their links with family, and freedom to entertain and educate themselves.

So, what

can we in schools do to create more relevant and nuanced pastoral policies that will support our students, rather than push them away? Well, we first have to involve them. That means writing policies *with* them, rather than *for* them.

If we want to help our students navigate those online pitfalls and minefields, then we need to properly understand how they use social media. We should let them know that they won't be punished for telling us the truth, and we need to be honest with ourselves. That e-safety training you did 12 months ago is already woefully out of date – but that's okay, because we can now all have access to cutting-edge CPD right here in our classrooms.

Openness and honesty

We need to educate our

students about the things that can go wrong when they're online, and then equip them with strategies for what to do when they encounter content that disturbs them.

Yes, we already do that, sure – but what if the strategies we've given them don't, or even can't work for them? What if 'telling an adult' simply isn't an option? Many of the survey responses called for better education around the use of different platforms' 'block', 'report' and 'mute' buttons, rather than using crude scare tactics in an attempt to put them off using the internet altogether.

A surprising number of responses mentioned wanting help with finding a healthy amount of time for them to be online. They expressed worries around their eyesight, posture and overall health being impacted by too much screen time, and acknowledged the knock-on effect that lack of sleep was having on their ability to focus at school.

If we can create a culture of genuine openness and honesty around internet use, it could open up new conversations around how students can be helped in setting their own boundaries.

What's abundantly clear is that social media isn't going anywhere, and that we educators have to stop seeing it as the root of all evil. It's a life tool. Our kids are using it to relax, escape, learn and communicate. They're using it to find themselves and likeminded acquaintances. Most importantly, they're *asking for support in how to use it healthily*, from understanding adults who won't threaten to remove their devices every time something goes wrong.

Mind you, the respondent who earnestly wrote that '*Racists and homophones should be banned*' is probably asking for a few more lessons on word definitions...

'SAY IT LIKE IT IS' - KEY FINDINGS

28%

spend 3 to 4 hours a day on social media; 17% spend 6 hours or more

26%

would like to reduce their usage.

78%

have experienced feeling happy and accepted because of social media

68%

say they have never personally had a particularly negative experience on social media

65%

have witnessed someone being racist, homophobic, sexist, or bullying another because of their religion

The 'Say It Like It Is' survey was conducted in 2022 and completed by 1,024 participants aged 10 to 15 across the UK

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Tell It Like It Is survey



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rebecca Westcott is a deputy headteacher and author; her YA novel, *Like a Girl*, is available now (£8.99, Scholastic)

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5 REASONS TO TRY... A careers visit to the Science Museum



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Experience a world of careers in *Technicians: The David Sainsbury Gallery* at the Science Museum and introduce your pupils to an array of fascinating and often hidden careers in science, technology, engineering and maths.

How a visit to *Technicians: The David Sainsbury Gallery* can focus your students' career ambitions

1 CAREERS UNCOVERED WORKSHOPS

In this 60-minute session, pupils will meet real life technical professionals from top organisations and experience what it's like to do their jobs. Through hands-on activities, Q&A sessions and conversations with technicians, pupils will learn about entry requirements, salaries and job availability for the sector they're interested in. By the end of the session, pupils will recognise their own skills, identify what they enjoy and understand how they can find a fulfilling career. (Visits must be booked in advance.)



2 A WORLD OF STEM CAREERS

At the *Technicians* gallery, your class will learn how technicians work behind the scenes to save lives, make energy greener, provide entertainment, create everyday items we couldn't live without and much more. Students will have the chance to operate a robotic arm, solve problems on top of a wind turbine and even create lifesaving medicine as a technician for the NHS. They'll also get to try out interactive exhibits that have been created in collaboration with Marvel Studios, the NHS, the National Grid and many more.

3 SUPPORTS GATSBY BENCHMARKS

A visit to the *Technicians* gallery and a Careers Uncovered session will support you in meeting Gatsby's

Good Career Guidance benchmarks. With a range of industries on show, it will help to address the individual needs of each pupil by encouraging them to reflect on their own interests and skills. These experiences provide opportunities for your pupils to encounter employers and employees, experience different workplaces and consider their further and higher education options.

4 NO NEED TO CREATE RESOURCES

To help you save time in preparation for your visit, the Science Museum has created a gallery guide and activity trail to help you on the day. The guide includes a map of the gallery, key sections to explore and suggested discussion questions to try with your group. The trail will take you through some of the museum's most exciting

SCIENCE MUSEUM

Contact:

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03300 580 058

galleries, from *Medicine: The Wellcome Galleries* to *Making the Modern World*, showing how technicians have helped to form the world around us.

5 FREE FOR SCHOOL GROUPS

It's completely free to visit the *Technicians* gallery and book the Careers Uncovered sessions. Plan your visit through the museum's online booking portal, where you can check availability, build an itinerary and book your tickets. You can also use the Science Museum's hazard identification sheet and insurance confirmation letter to help write a risk assessment, and add other free galleries to your itinerary, including *Energy Revolution: The Adani Green Energy Gallery* and *Engineers*.

Key Points

For the ultimate experience, book a free Careers Uncovered session where students will meet professionals from top organisations and find out what it's like to do their job

Add a visit to the *Technicians* gallery and introduce your pupils to roles across multiple sectors, from renewable energy to the creative arts

Download the gallery guide and activity trail to help lead your group around the museum, and watch the gallery film in advance to get your class excited for the trip

The Science Museum's education newsletter can keep you updated with details of events for school groups, our latest classroom resources and the support we can provide for teachers

What's New?

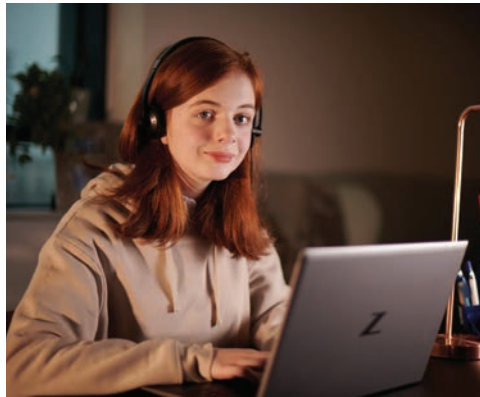
Our pick of the latest solutions and innovations for secondary education

1 Supporting additional needs

Academy21 is delighted to present a new programme of services for students with additional needs – a compelling and comprehensive offer of courses and individual support that equips learners with special educational or additional needs to thrive.

At Academy21, we're proud of our innovative, effective and inclusive solutions that allow students to grow in confidence and skill. Our additional services include anxiety management classes, social skills classes and support for literacy and maths up to KS4. We can also provide one-to-one counselling support, wellbeing mentoring and EAL classes.

For more information about our services for students with additional needs, contact contact@academy21.co.uk or visit academy21.co.uk

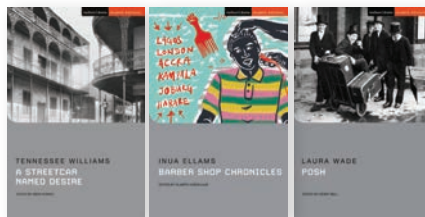


2 In touch with drama

Bloomsbury English and Drama for Schools is the go-to place for all secondary English and Drama teachers!

Home to the Methuen Drama, Arden Shakespeare and RSC Shakespeare series, as well as the award-winning digital library Drama Online (dramaonlinelibrary.com), Bloomsbury is the leading publisher in drama and the performing arts.

Whether you're looking for set text plays, new playwriting to introduce to your classroom or professional development books, there's something for you – and don't forget to take a look at their free teaching support resources! Find out more at bloomsbury.com/DramaForSchools



3 Get lockdown-ready

In anticipation of the measures set out in the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, AKA Martyn's Law, Bodet Time wants to ensure your educational setting is ready to protect your staff and pupils against acts of terrorism by having an effective lockdown procedure in place.

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4

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5

Plan your next move

Generation Logistics is a government-backed initiative aimed at highlighting the career opportunities available within the logistics sector. It's about broadening the understanding of a sector that's crucial to the global economy, but also hugely diverse in terms of the roles it spans and the skill sets needed for those roles.

The initiative has partly focused on reaching young people directly through social channels, but has also sought to engage via education, helping students better understand the prospects and opportunities on offer within logistics. With that in mind, our central campaign hub, GenerationLogistics.org, has now been joined by a second online destination that's packed with curriculum-aligned resources for teachers. Find out more at EducationHub.GenerationLogistics.org



6 Seeing is believing

The HUE HD Pro is an affordable, multipurpose, plug & play visualiser suitable for use in any classroom. Flexible and portable, it enables teachers to capture images and videos, livestream and share documents in person and online.

Priced at £49.95 + VAT, it's easy to set up, has 1080p image and video resolution,

is compact in size and convenient to transport between classrooms. It can be used across multiple subjects and curriculum areas. "A clever and compact document viewer with a host of additional features" – Mike Davies, TeachCo reviewer; find out more at huehd.com/contact.



9

Societal good

High-quality citizenship education develops the knowledge and skills pupils will need to play a full part in society, as active and responsible citizens. Pupils learn about vital topics such as democracy, human rights, media literacy and finance.

At the Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT), we understand the challenge this poses to schools, in terms of finding curriculum time, resourcing lessons and navigating controversial topics. An ACT membership gives your school the tools and assurance needed to teach citizenship effectively, and ensures we're on hand to help through our supportive community, training and resources. For more details, visit teachingcitizenship.org.uk



10

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8

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LEARNING LAB

IN THIS ISSUE

- + The impact that a well-organised classroom environment can have
- + Why the 'assumptive close' sales technique is a viable behaviour strategy
- + What's gone wrong with music education?
- + The geography lessons we can learn from the countries taking part in the Olympics
- + How the voices of Holocaust survivors are being preserved for future generations
- + 5 ways in which students can benefit from receiving actionable feedback

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Thinking about...

THE EDUCATION SECRETARY'S IN TRAY

Whoever wins the General Election will have a huge inbox. There will be decisions to make on all manner of things, including health, defence and the economy. There is, however, one thing that they shouldn't tinker with too much, at least in England – and that's education.

Since the National Curriculum was revised in 2014, England has been moving up the PISA rankings – the OECD's regular evaluation of different educational systems across the world, based on measuring the academic performance of 15-year-olds in maths, science and reading.

The most recent PISA figures show that England had risen to 11th in maths; up from 29th in 2009. The country also ranked 13th for both reading and science, compared to placings of 25th and 16th respectively back in 2009.

I would argue that these positive shifts are due to a greater emphasis being placed on traditional teaching methods in recent years, and a move away from more progressive, yet ultimately ineffective methods. For comparison, look at Scotland and Wales. Both systems went their own ways by embracing progressive teaching, and now the OECD ranks both below England.

Of the two, Scotland's decline is perhaps the more alarming, since there was once a time when its education system was lauded around the globe. It's currently placed 25th in the overall PISA rankings, 25th in maths, 24th in science and well

behind England in reading.

The plain message here is that next month's incoming Education Secretary shouldn't deviate from the present route – which works – and not be swayed by fashionable techniques that don't.

I would also make the case for the retention of T Levels – those two-year, technical qualification courses developed for 16- to 18-year-olds with input from employers and businesses. They're a good idea that warrant further development.

Tony Blair's ambition to send half of all young people to university has now largely become a reality, but with unforeseen consequences. Instead of university graduates pursuing better careers and earning higher incomes, we see graduates working in jobs that simply don't require a university education – in some cases, while tens of thousands of pounds in debt. University should be an academic route that only serves around 25-30 per cent of young people well.

So let's develop technical and vocational training in education to a much higher level. Germany has done so with considerable success, sending just 30% of its young people on to university compared to the 70% majority engaged in various forms of vocational and technical training.

In a nutshell, I'd say to any incoming Education Secretary:

- Continue to pursue traditional teaching methods
- Turbo-boost T Levels and halve the existing university entrant targets

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Stephen Curran is a teacher and tutor, and author of the Accelerated Education series of educational books

CLOSE-UP ON... CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS



An organised and tidy classroom is more than just a neat space; it's a reflection of high standards and professionalism. When students walk into a well-organised room, they can sense that learning is taken seriously. This kind of environment fosters respect and a positive attitude toward schoolwork. It also reduces distractions, allowing students to focus on their tasks, and enhances their ability to learn.

LEARNING THROUGH VISUALS

Posters and subject-relevant materials should dress the walls, promoting an atmosphere of learning. Displaying what students will learn and why it's relevant will help them see the purpose behind their learning. Another powerful tool is to include lots of student work on the walls, which not only celebrates their achievements, but also links the quality and success of said work to

National Curriculum outcomes, providing clear, achievable goals.

BRAIN BREAKS

Incorporating brain break materials and resources, such as board games, puzzles, magazines and books, can encourage reading and provide students with much-needed mental breaks. These kinds of resources will help you maintain a balanced classroom atmosphere, in which students can refresh and recharge before diving back into their learning.

VISUAL LEARNING INTENTIONS

Maintaining a visual display of daily learning intentions for your classes can build curiosity and set clear expectations. Include success criteria and models, and you'll help your students better understand what they're aiming for and how to achieve it – a form of transparency that can increase student motivation and engagement.

GOOD LIGHTING

Lighting is a crucial element in creating the right atmosphere. Just as we'll adjust the lighting in our homes to suit our mood, the same can be done in the classroom. Dim the lights for a more relaxed atmosphere when required, and brighten them when you need students to be more alert. Proper lighting can enhance the learning experience, while accommodating different activities and moods.

TIDY WORK AREAS

Clear areas, where students can keep their work stored in a neat and tidy fashion, are essential. Ensuring students know where their materials are and can access them easily will reduce chaos and enhance their ability to focus on their learning. The ability to stay organised is itself a valuable life skill, and will contribute further to maintaining a structured learning environment.

DO THIS

ASSUMPTIVE CLOSE

Exercise better class control with these tips from Robin Launder...

Salespeople will often make use of something called the 'assumptive close' technique to secure a sale.

Put simply, this refers to the way in which a salesperson intentionally assumes that the customer wants the product that is being sold: *"Just pass me your credit card and I'll get the paperwork ready..."*

Teachers can deploy a similar technique with respect to their students – except it's not their credit card we want, but a specific behaviour. For example:

"Sam, I know that you're keen to go through your homework with me, so I'll see you at first break in my classroom."

"Lee, I know that you're keen to impress me with your behaviour, so put your pen down, sit up straight and eyes on me."

The assumptive close technique will often prove to be more effective than direct instruction, since it assumes – and therefore prompts – a positive response.

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



ED CARLIN IS A DEPUTY HEADTEACHER AT A SCOTTISH SECONDARY SCHOOL, HAVING WORKED IN EDUCATION FOR 15 YEARS AND HELD TEACHING ROLES AT SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND ENGLAND

24%

The average proportion of secondary pupils requiring additional financial support (i.e. anything beyond EHCPs, other forms of SEND support or Pupil Premium)

Source: National Foundation for Educational Research

A study from the School of Psychology at the University of Surrey may have uncovered some hitherto overlooked insights into the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Researchers recruited 42 volunteers aged between 20 and 24, who were tasked with reflecting out loud while examining a photo of themselves taken in their mid teens, and offering advice to their younger selves. Common suggestions included:

- Choose supportive friends, let go of harmful relationships, set clear boundaries and stand up for yourself
- Broaden your outlook, recognise that you're not alone in the struggles you face, and value yourself for your actions and character, rather than your appearance and social standing
- Trust yourself – listen to your intuition, attend to your emotional needs and pursue personal growth in a way that goes beyond just comparing yourself to others

According to the study's co-author, Professor Jane Ogden, *"In a world quick to categorise young adults as fragile, our study reveals that they are, in fact, deeply complex individuals trying to navigate a rapidly changing landscape, often under the constant scrutiny of online exposure."*

"These insights are invaluable not only for the young people themselves but also for educators, counsellors, and mental health professionals who support them, pinpointing key areas where focused support and guidance can make a significant difference."

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN...

MUSIC



Hester Cockcroft and David Ross of the music education charity Young Sounds UK share their thoughts in the challenges currently facing music teachers...

How are schools currently faring with the teaching of music?

DR: Some are thriving and doing really well, others are struggling for various reasons. Things remain difficult, especially against the backdrop of the ongoing teacher recruitment crisis. Numbers are down, especially at KS4/5, with children from low income backgrounds in particular less likely to study music. There are some positives – many schools have invested heavily and continue to value the arts, despite the EBacc and exam pressures – but I've also had conversations with headteachers who have told me that investing in music is 'elitist'.

HC: When we're challenged on that, our response is that you wouldn't say the same about sport or maths. Every teacher is there to make the most of their students' potential and help every young individual blossom – and music is no different.

What are some of the main barriers prevent schools from offering quality music provision?

DR: There can be conflicts between how I want to teach and pressures stemming from the exam machine, or sometimes a

particular school-wide approach to teaching and learning. Knowledge-rich curriculums and direct instruction have many benefits, but can also be interpreted in narrow ways that don't work in music classrooms.

HC: Much of the work we do around inclusive practice involves encouraging teachers to really think about the individuals they're working with. That can be challenging in larger classes, but there are tools that music teachers can use. For example, we're working with the music learning platform Charanga on something called the Individual Learning Plan, which sees teachers and students working together to set musical goals for each term. Crucially, these aren't necessarily technical goals, but instead focused on what excites students musically.

What can music teachers do to nurture the musical talent in their classes, given the time pressures they're under?

DR: One thing I've introduced to my practice is filming the classroom. I'll capture the start of a lesson and the last few minutes, review the footage and often spot something I missed in the moment because there was so much going on. Phenomenal moments or breakthroughs can then be picked up on and developed further.

HESTER COCKCROFT IS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF YOUNG SOUNDS UK; DAVID ROSS IS A MUSIC EDUCATOR AND FACILITATOR FOR THE ORGANISATION'S IDENTIFYING MUSICAL TALENT AND POTENTIAL PROGRAMME; FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT YOUNGSOUNDS.ORG.UK

82%

of teachers do not believe that teaching is competitive with other professions in terms of pay and rewards

Source: NASUWT's 'Big Question Survey' conducted in May-June 2024

Need to know

For some time now, arts subject specialists have been expressing concern over the apparent sidelining of their disciplines at KS3 and KS4. A 'Report Card' issued by the Cultural Learning Alliance has now sought to put some numbers on those suspicions, and found that there's been a 42% decline in the number of arts-related GCSE entries since 2010.

The report points to the introduction of EBacc and the rapid academisation programme as key factors in an apparent deprioritisation of arts education, noting that there are now 15,030 fewer full- or part-time teachers of arts subjects in English schools compared to 14 years ago, and that over 40% of schools no longer enter any students for music and drama GCSEs.

Proposals put forward by the CLA to remedy this include setting a minimum 4-hour weekly arts entitlement up to the end of KS3; establishing new 'purposes' for education built around several 'core and equal curriculum areas' (including one for 'Expressive Arts') and abandoning the EBacc.

Commenting on the findings was former ASCL general secretary Geoff Barton: "At a time when far too many children and young people appear to be turning their backs on a utilitarian model of education, now is the opportunity - ahead of a general election - to move the arts in from the margins, to make them matter again, before it's too late."



TEACH THEM ABOUT... HOW THE OLYMPICS CAN RELATE TO GEOGRAPHY

The Paris Summer Olympic Games will commence on 26th July, bringing together some 10,500 athletes from over 200 nations, who will take part in 32 separate sports. The Olympics can, of course, provide numerous opportunities for geography lessons – from activities based around categorising and comparing countries, to studying the impact of geopolitics on the wider globalisation of sport.

COMPARING COUNTRIES

The wider public will be closely following Great Britain's successes on the medals table, but geographers can add some illuminating context to this, by comparing relative medal success against other global indicators, such as wealth or population size, as shown in Table 1 below.

GLOBAL TOP 5

The USA and China appear in all three 'Global Top 5s', yet despite India's GDP and population size, it hasn't achieved comparable medal success. Geographers can, and should ask why.

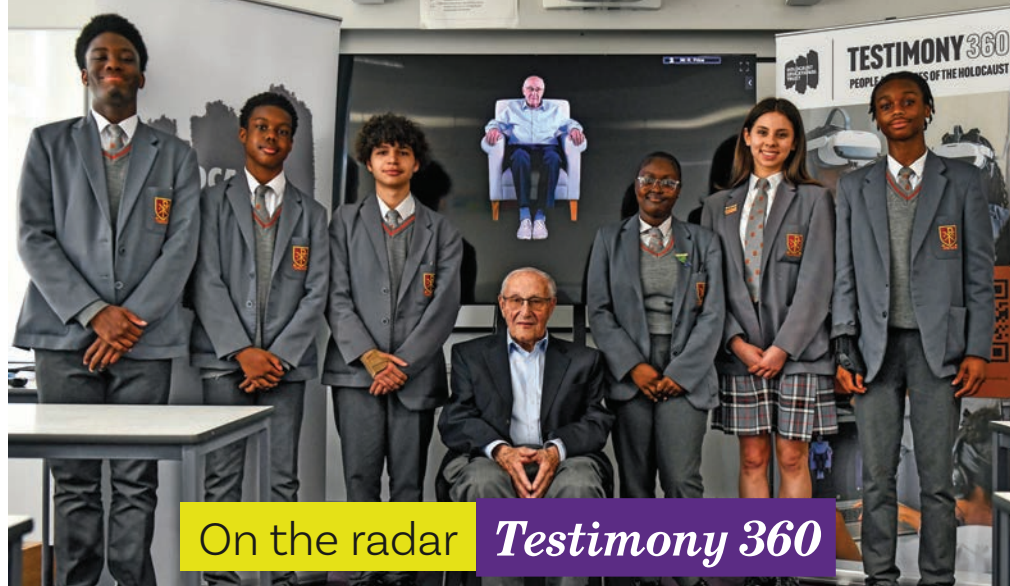
Further statistical tests can be used to explore whether medal tables are 'fair', such as a resource based on the 2012 Games. In this alternative medals table (see opposite column) – where the USA falls to 15th place – the number of medals is compared per capita wealth – which promotes Kenya, Ukraine and Uganda to create a new top 5.

Top 5s by GDP/capita

Medals Ranking (2020 Olympics)		Gross Domestic Product (2024, \$trillions)		Population (2023, billions)	
USA	113	USA	\$25.43	India	1.43
China	88	China	\$14.72	China	1.42
Russia	71	Japan	\$4.25	USA	0.34
GB & NI	65	Germany	\$3.85	Indonesia	0.28
Japan	58	India	\$3.41	Pakistan	0.24

Table 1

STEVE BRACE IS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL ASSOCIATION; FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [GEOGRAPHY.ORG.UK](https://www.geography.org.uk)



On the radar *Testimony 360*

Schools' teaching of the Holocaust has long included in-person visits by Holocaust survivors willing to discuss their experiences and answer students' questions. The Holocaust Educational Trust has recently embarked on an initiative to preserve the voices and testimonies of Holocaust survivors – who are now in their 80s and 90s – so that they can be shared with future generations.

The project forms part of the HET's larger *Testimony 360: People and Places of the Holocaust* learning

programme aimed at Y9-Y13, and consists of two components. The first sees Holocaust survivors interviewed and recorded with the aid of 3D filming rigs, and their responses processed and organised by an AI search tool. The end result is a 'living portrait' of the individual viewable via classroom displays and laptops, which can verbally 'answer' over a thousand different questions in a natural, lifelike way.

The second component is a VR experience that lets

students explore simulated locations connected to survivors' memories – from their childhood homes, to the sites where they were subsequently imprisoned.

Manfred Goldberg BEM, the first Holocaust survivor to complete the filming process, remarks that, *"I have spoken to thousands of pupils over the years - perhaps now I will make it millions. If this is my legacy, it will be a truly remarkable one."*

To sign up, visit het.org.uk/testimony360-signup

TRENDING

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

AUTOMATIC FOR THE PEOPLE

Oak National Academy is now giving teachers access to an experimental, AI-assisted lesson planning tool called Aila. Via a step-by-step process, users can instruct Aila to produce resources and even whole lesson plans matched to specific requirements, locations or approaches – such as a geography lesson based around a local landmark, or a reading passage tailored to a specific reading level. labs.thenational.academy/aila

ALL MAPPED OUT

A new online information resource is seeking to raise awareness of the logistics sector among KS3 to KS5 learners. The Generation Logistics Education Hub features an extensive library of downloadable, curriculum-mapped resources and activities for use in business, careers and maths lessons. educationhub.generationlogistics.org

1-MINUTE STUDENT CPD

5 WAYS TO USE ACTIONABLE FEEDBACK

SOME QUICK TIPS FOR HELPING STUDENTS DEVELOP BETTER STUDY ROUTINES...



1

REDRAFT WORK

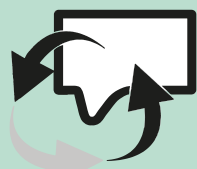
Going back over your work, and making corrections or adding some more detail, will help embed that knowledge into your long-term memory



2

REPEAT/ REHEARSE

Revisit specific questions, topics or themes and answer questions on them; practising exam-style questions builds fluency and aids memorisation



3

RESPOND

Revisit a piece of work, review the feedback and try to improve on the work; this can be effective as a spaced task several weeks after initial submission to identify any gaps



4

RETEST

Retake the test, redo the quiz, practice the questions, eliminate any errors and try to improve your level of consistency as much as possible



5

RESEARCH

Struggling with a concept, received feedback and still need clarification? Research the topic further, elaborate on the question and add more detail

ZEPH BENNETT IS A PE TEACHER AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT LEADER WITH 25 YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE; YOU CAN FIND MORE OF HIS EDUCATIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY FOLLOWING @PEGEEKSCORNER

Got a great learning idea? Email editor@teachsecondary.com or tweet us at [@teachsecondary](https://twitter.com/teachsecondary)

LITERACY



Bookbuzz

An imaginative initiative that offers early KS3 children the chance to choose and own a book from a carefully curated selection



AT A GLANCE

- Schools receive the resources needed to launch a reading engagement scheme
- Pupils are introduced to an expertly curated range of books
- School libraries receive two copies of each title
- Pupils get to each choose one book to keep from the list
- Organised by BookTrust - the UK's largest children's reading charity.

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES



It has to be the Holy Grail of the literary world – getting 11- to 13-year-olds into reading. Yet I don't think the difficulty of doing so comes down to lack of choice. Enter any major bookshop and you'll be faced with an almost overwhelming range of 'young adult' titles. No, the challenge, I suspect, is getting the right books in front of the right children at the right time. And this is where Bookbuzz can be a real boon for secondary school libraries.

Managed by BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity, Bookbuzz is an imaginative initiative that works on multiple levels. First and foremost, it's a scheme intended to get younger secondary students reading, building on or re-instilling a love of books that would hopefully have been nurtured through primary school. It also helps to smooth the transition from KS2 to KS3 by fostering a sense of communal interest in books that can draw pupils together.

At the core of Bookbuzz is a carefully curated collection of age appropriate titles. And to the cynics among you, no, said selection is not based around those publishers with the loudest marketing

departments. Instead, it's the result of a panel of librarians, teachers and other relevant experts whittling a longlist of over 300 nominated titles down to a final 16. And as you'd hope, the final selection spans fiction and non-fiction and reflects admirable diversity, so that there really is something for everyone.

As part of the launch pack, schools signing up to the scheme will receive two copies of each book, plus a host of other goodies such as bookmarks and posters to generate interest in the scheme. They'll also gain access to videos that provide brief introductions to each book, along with a host of other online resources.

Once they've seen what's on offer, each pupil is then allowed to order one book from the list to keep. This is important, since personal book ownership *really matters*. I've personally held on to a number of books from my childhood – not least because they were chosen by me, and belonged to me.

Schools already part of the scheme report that it has helped to boost reader engagement and build bonds between new pupils during that crucial transition

phase. Furthermore, with the price of admission set at only £3.45 per head, that makes each pupil's personal copy almost as cheap as a politician's remaindered memoirs, while at the same time providing a very welcome boost to their school library's stock. Now, that's what I call a happy ending...

**teach
SECONDARY**

VERDICT

- ✓ Excellent value
- ✓ Promotes engagement with books
- ✓ Encourages book ownership
- ✓ Boosts school libraries
- ✓ Supports the primary to secondary transition

SIGN UP IF...

... you want to boost reading engagement amongst Y7 and Y8 pupils via a targeted and generous book selection scheme.

Priced at £3.45 per pupil; for more information, visit booktrust.org.uk/bookbuzz



AQA GCSE Science Now Teacher Resource Pack

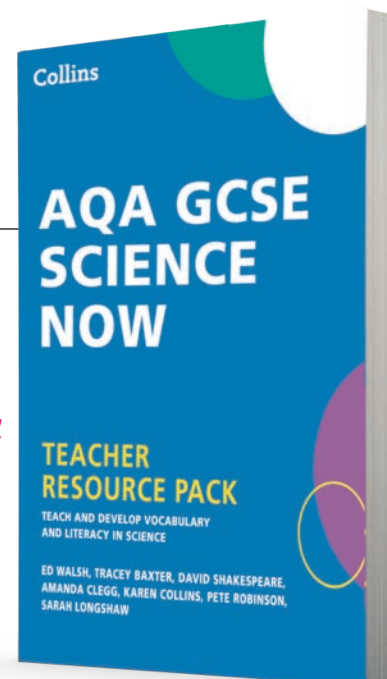
We examine a resource designed to develop literacy in science to boost outcomes for students

AT A GLANCE

- A teaching resource aimed at improving disciplinary literacy in science
- Enable the whole department to take ownership and increase confidence in systematically teaching literacy through science
- Contains over 200 activities to boost attainment with accompanying slides, diagnostic assessments, notes and worksheets
- Includes customisable materials developed by the award-winning 'Science Now' team

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

“Empower students to conquer the blank page, boost skills, and build confidence and engagement in science”



The process of developing students' scientific literacy involves hard graft – because at a certain level, every science lesson can be a language lesson too.

To that end, Collins is set to publish in September 2024 a teacher-oriented resource centred on the development of scientific literacy, and it's quite the package. Its GCSE Science Now Teacher Resource Pack is a book that focuses on quality sentence construction, how longer responses should be structured and how text can be organised so that students are better able to decipher new keywords, definitions and command words – and then use them accurately.

It achieves this using a pedagogical framework Collins calls 'Tiers of Vocabulary', whereby various activities and assessment tasks can be integrated into a series of scientific topics in ways suitable for differing ability levels. The well-structured Teacher Notes provide plenty of useful pointers on how the resource should be used, complete with notes on questions, model answers and next steps. Users are also granted access to a wide range of ready-made, time-saving 'Do Nows', homework tasks, and lesson starters.

GCSE Science Now gives teachers a plethora of ways to help students practise their active reading skills in relation to scientific texts, extending into areas one might traditionally consider more the preserve of English teachers, such as sentence construction, how to use paragraphs and how

to present written responses more confidently. The unlocking of such skills will in turn enable students to further develop scientific knowledge and aptitude for the subject.

Perhaps key to the resource's success is the way in which it encourages deeper exploration of topical issues, real-life events and pressing challenges faced by different communities around the world. The lesson content contained within GCSE Science Now is informed by leading data scientists, with a visual style close to the clear, concise and easy-to-follow summaries of websites like 'Our World in Data' (ourworldindata.org).

Overall, this is an impressive teaching resource that sets itself the commendable aim of teaching students how to identify, read, write and ultimately utilise the conventions of scientific communication. There are effective strategies that teachers can incorporate into their practice, valuable insights into relevant research, and a host of classroom ideas and suggestions for further reading that can take your students' grasp of scientific vernacular and vocabulary to the next level.

GCSE Science Now provides the kind of support and assistance that extends far beyond 'bolt-on interventions'. It will enable you and your colleagues to devise viable, long-term and sustainable strategies for helping students gain a deep and enduring understanding of how to think and write like a scientist.

**teach
SECONDARY**

VERDICT

- ✓ Improves literacy skills – both science-specific and otherwise
- ✓ Promotes metacognitive talk and dialogue in the classroom
- ✓ Helps your students to become better science communicators
- ✓ Can be used to upskill teaching staff via the inclusion of evidence-informed, ready-to-teach resources
- ✓ Helps science departments devise a more focused, less scattergun approach to developing scientific literacy

PICK UP IF...

...you're looking for practical strategies, suggestions and activities for developing students' literacy in science, while boosting GCSE outcomes and ensuring your teaching staff are informed and confident.

Package priced at £200; for more information, visit collins.co.uk/GCSEScienceNow



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

Hidden hurt

The increased sensitivity to matters of wellbeing in schools has created openings for problematic ‘solutions’ peddled by bad actors, warns **John Lawson**...

The social media platform ‘X’, formerly Twitter, occasionally throws up posts that prompt a change in our mindset. So it was when I saw an astute educator recently share the modern aphorism that *‘Hurt people, hurt people.’*

Some traumas and challenges are inescapable. Most of us really *aren’t* okay every day. Extremely challenging children (and sometimes even teachers) will occasionally lash out because they’re suffering, which why students should be *sensitively disciplined*, rather than harshly punished.

We’ll rarely know the full story in every case, but we do know that lengthy or permanent exclusions can further hurt some already severely hurt children.

Hubs of hubris

What we can’t always address in lessons can often be resolved elsewhere within the school system. I’ve found that some of the wisest counsellors in schools will frequently be non-teaching staff – but at the same time, if we insist on trying to address and heal every hidden hurt experienced by our students, there’s the risk of schools turning into poorly-equipped mental health hubs of hubris.

In my experience, many teen problems tend to be transitory, and are often resolved within peer groups. When molehills become mountains, our doors should remain open. And when we can’t resolve problems ourselves, most of us know of kindly souls who perhaps can.

Since retiring from full-time teaching I’ve been able to connect with stressed ECTs seeking support via social media – though one downside of leaving my direct messages open has been the deluge of approaches from assorted traders promising to make me rich, while making me much poorer in the process of showing me how.

Among the most persistent of these individuals has been a bullish academic coach, who’s called me an ‘Old-fashioned refusenik’ for failing to recognise the power of his meta-mystical approach to mental health interventions. *‘All is not lost’*, he counsels, because he can save my soul for the bargain sum of £2,000 while teaching me how to salve teenage angst. I’ll also receive ‘mental health expert’ certification in *‘No time at all!’*

Really? His persistent sales pitches certainly aren’t helping *my* mental health. And in any case, as a self-

proclaimed ‘internationally accredited wellness coach’, he should surely know that teaching isn’t *‘all about relationships’* – because it’s rarely ever that simple.

Selling problems and solutions

The most effective advertising has always been that which simultaneously sells us both a problem, and the solution to that problem. You’re too fat, too thin, too tall or too short. You’re too talkative or excessively shy. Unfulfilled or unattractive. We go through life blissfully unaware of our debilitating maladies, until the latest guru ‘expertly’ projects their expensive cures onto them.

My social media messiah and his crack team of rapid response ‘mental health experts’ profess to being eager to visit schools and identify problems that require expert interventions – but can you imagine how many teenagers we might unsettle by encouraging them to take deep dives into the ‘black boxes’ of their mental health? Will our ‘experts’ keep probing and encouraging ‘deeper reflections until a productive pipeline is exposed, thus justifying their expensive services?

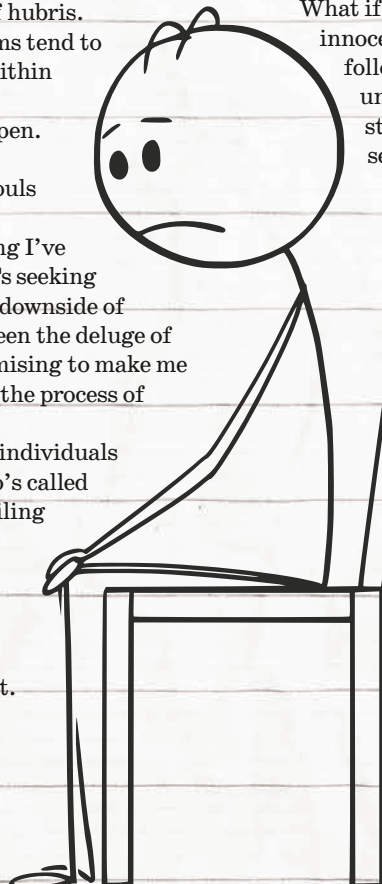
What if the children fabricate stories against wholly innocent peers or adults? Are schools ready to conduct follow-ups in the event of this initiative ‘successfully’ unearthing multiple complex problems, when most still can’t afford even entry level examples of such services?

Partners in parenting

Growing up, my peers were assaulted daily by assorted adults in positions authority. The way (most) of us resisted lifelong Weltschmerz was by using our natural talents to make something of our imperfect lives. Our troubles often inspired us to become the supportive adults that we had rarely encountered ourselves.

That schools are now acutely conscious of their students’ mental wellbeing is to be commended – but for their sake, let’s continue to tread carefully, and with humility. We need to work as partners in parenting with families.

Underfunded and overstretched schools can’t be expected to solve every societal problem independently. Our primary mandate is to educate by teaching hearts and, yes, sometimes troubled minds. Because it’s often the case that empowering students, and getting them excited and optimistic about their futures, can be the most productive and holistic way forward.





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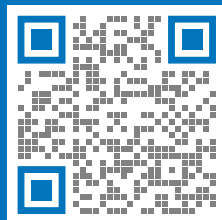
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