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From the editor



After six years at the helm of Prep School Magazine I say a fond farewell. It is always time to venture into new pastures and challenges, I feel that it is time to pass the baton on. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time editing this publication and it has brought me into contact with some of the most exciting projects, imaginative teachers, creative heads and important issues. With the continuing support

of SATIPS and the creative team at John Catt I have seen this publication grow from strength to strength. I have always enjoyed meeting and communicating with so many of you as readers at conferences or by your email correspondence. A huge thank you to all of you who have contributed over that last six years and for sharing your thoughts, projects, ideas about your schools and educational viewpoints.

Over the last six years we have seen our sector continue to grow perhaps bucking the trend of austerity odds and cuts, so often talked about in the news. Sticking to traditions with a careful blend of cutting edge educational practice, strength in the creative and performing arts, presence on the sports pitches and a passion for children being allowed to blossom while retaining a childhood. Our sector could not be accused of creating clones, jumping through hoops and or being dull! We are so fortunate to work in a sector that values the individual and allows its teachers to play to their strengths and creative flair.

Over the next year, hold on to the traditions of the past that are worth passing on to future generations, while tuning into the future global economy into which our young people will need to be confident and fluent.

Do keep in touch on twitter @michelekitto and email Michele@makeartwork.co.uk

If you would like to contribute to the next issue, please email editor@prepschoolmag.co.uk

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SATIPS Challenge 2016

Monday 1st February -
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The Satips Challenge consists of a 45-60 minute written paper of 100 general knowledge questions. There are two age groups: Senior and Junior. Schools may enter as many pupils as they wish in each age group (minimum team of 5). There are prizes for both individual and school performances.

The Senior questions are aimed at pupils in Years 7 and 8 while the Junior questions are meant for pupils in Years 5 and 6.

The Challenge has been going for many years now, and it still proves very popular. Last year, there were 56 schools entering nearly 900 pupils in the Senior Challenge and 84 schools with over 1700 entries in the Junior section. Prizes are available for both individual and team performances. Information on how to enter can be found on the satips website: www.satips.com



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Auto-enrolment: Will schools pass this test?

Gino Rocco, a partner at Doyle Clayton Solicitors highlights the steps schools will have to take in preparation for the government's auto-enrolment pension plan

What is auto-enrolment?

In simple terms, the UK government wants workers to make some form of pension provision during their working life. It has introduced auto-enrolment so that the vast majority of workers save up for their retirement. Auto-enrolment is being phased in and started in October 2012.

Is auto-enrolment relevant to schools?

By February 2018, *all* employers in the UK will be required to auto-enrol their eligible jobholders in a pension

scheme, unless they are already an active member of their employer's pension scheme and the scheme meets auto-enrolment requirements (known as a 'qualifying scheme'). The term 'employer' is broadly defined to mean the person by whom a worker is employed, so an independent school would be an employer for auto-enrolment purposes.

There are limited areas where the employer is exempted from its obligations to auto-enrol. These include; individuals who have tax protected status for existing pension

savings, jobholders who have handed in their notice or under a notice of dismissal and those who have recently cancelled their membership after being contractually enrolled.

Teaching staff at schools are likely to be members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS). This is a qualifying scheme therefore teachers who are members will not need to be auto-enrolled.

However, there may be workers that are not eligible for membership of the TPS (for example support staff), or who are members of another pension scheme

which is not a qualifying scheme. These workers will need to be auto-enrolled in a qualifying scheme once their school becomes subject to auto-enrolment obligations at their 'staging date', unless they opt out. Employers must also pay pension contributions into the scheme.

What happens if schools fail to comply?

Once a school has reached its staging date, it has six weeks within which to auto-enrol its eligible jobholders. The Pensions Regulator can impose a range of penalties on a school that fails to comply with its obligations. For the school itself (such as the governing body or board of trustees), the civil penalties could be as much as £50k and for individuals (such as a sole proprietor) £5k, so it is important to get it right. Criminal proceedings can also be brought against a school (or individual) that wilfully seeks to avoid its obligations.

Once a school has reached its staging date, does the obligation end?

Not entirely. Once a school has passed its staging date and complied with the auto-enrolment requirements it will need to make regular assessments of its workforce to determine whether previously ineligible jobholders have become eligible. It must also re-enrol, once every three years, those that were eligible but opted out. Contribution rates will also increase in the next few years and schools will need to plan ahead for these changes. Schools will have to ensure that their systems are able to cope with the on-going assessment obligation.

So what do schools need to do?

Schools should consider the following action points;

Identify your staging date

To work out your school's

staging date you need to count the workers in your PAYE scheme. It is also possible to obtain your staging date by inserting your PAYE reference on a calculator on the Pensions Regulator's (www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk).

Assess your workers

First of all you need to identify your workers. Look at your contractual relationships to ensure you have correctly identified those who are workers. Self-employed people are not covered by auto-enrolment.

There are three categories of worker for auto-enrolment purposes and differing obligations in respect of them. Therefore an accurate assessment of the workforce is needed.

A worker is an **eligible jobholder** if they are aged between 22 *and* state pension age, has qualifying earnings currently between £5,824 and £42,385 and has 'threshold



earnings’ – currently £10,000. Care should be taken by employers who employ workers on an hourly rate or on the minimum wage as these workers may not necessarily fall below the earnings threshold. Also, care should be taken by the employer when changing the workers hours or pay as this may result in exceeding the threshold earnings thereby triggering the auto-enrolment requirement. The obligation arises even if there is only a temporary breach of the threshold earnings trigger.

Eligible jobholders have to be enrolled, unless they are already a member of a qualifying scheme or they opt out. Both the employer and the jobholder have to contribute.

A worker is an **ineligible jobholder** if they are aged between 16 and 74 have qualifying earnings between £5,824 and £42,385 but below the threshold earnings trigger or aged between 16-21 and the state pension age and 74 and earns over the threshold earnings trigger. Ineligible jobholders are entitled to opt into their employer’s auto-enrolment scheme and again both the employer and the jobholder must make pension contributions.

An **entitled** worker is someone who falls outside the earnings parameters discussed above for a jobholder. They can give their employer notice that they want to join the employer’s scheme (even if that scheme does not meet the quality requirements) but the employer is not required to contribute to that scheme.



Determine if your scheme is a qualifying scheme

Employers need to review their existing pension arrangements to determine whether their scheme is a qualifying scheme for auto-enrolment purposes. The TPS is a qualifying scheme and so active members of the TPS do not have to be auto-enrolled. Any teachers who are not active members will need to be auto-enrolled into the TPS (or another qualifying scheme). Other staff that are not eligible for the TPS will need to be auto-enrolled into another qualifying scheme.

If a school has a pension scheme which is not a qualifying scheme, then it may be possible to make changes to that scheme so that it becomes a qualifying scheme. However, making changes to your existing pension provisions may trigger an obligation to consult with the affected members of the pension scheme, so you need to factor this into the overall timetable.

Communicate with your workers

One of the key requirements for employers is to provide certain information to their workers once they become subject to the new pension duties. The exact information that they must give depends on the categories of workers they have and whether they are making use of a postponement period.

An employer cannot postpone its staging date, but it may be able to postpone its obligation to comply by up to three months. Employers need to consider this option carefully so that they can factor it into their timetable.

Put the administrative systems in place

Schools need to ensure that their administrative or payroll systems are able to process auto-enrolment opt outs, those that want to opt in and those who opt out and who then need to be auto-enrolled once every three years. In other words, your systems need to be able to monitor changes in the workforce including workers who may have been assessed as ineligible jobholders but who, due to increased hours worked or a pay rise might

suddenly qualify as eligible jobholders and therefore need to be auto-enrolled (See discussion on triggering the threshold earnings).

Protecting workers

A range of measures are in force under the auto-enrolment legislation which is designed to protect jobholders (and prospective jobholders) and entitled workers in connection with auto-enrolment. These provisions apply regardless of the employer’s staging date. They prohibit:

- Recruitment conduct - An employer is prohibited from asking job applicants at interview whether they plan to opt out of auto-enrolment.
- An inducement to opt-out - An employer is prohibited from offering inducements to its workers to opt out of membership whether in the form of higher salaries or one-off bonuses.
- Detrimental treatment - A worker has a right to claim to an Employment Tribunal if they suffer any detriment because of their employer’s actions in relation to auto-enrolment.
- Dismissal - An employer is not permitted to dismiss an employee for a reason relating to auto-enrolment and any such dismissal is automatically unfair.

The Pensions Regulator also has power to issue an improvement notice to an employer who attempts any form of contracting out of its auto-enrolment obligations by devising complex agreements with an employee or prospective employee. A notice could be followed by a civil fine. Wilful action taken by an employer to avoid its obligations will also bring about a criminal sanction.

Schools, like all employers, need to plan ahead carefully to ensure they pass the auto-enrolment ‘test’ with flying colours. It may seem a difficult test to pass but as with all tests, preparation is important.

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The pros and cons of single sex education

John Towers writes about the benefits of teaching boys and girls separately, and how their educational needs differ

The debate over the positives and negatives of single sex education is certainly not a new one. At the turn of the 20th century, the vast majority of educational establishments in Britain catered for just one gender. However, today single sex schools are more the exception than the rule with many formerly single sex establishments now welcoming pupils of both genders.

One school which has bucked the recent trend is Homefield Preparatory School in Sutton, Surrey. Since its inception in 1870, Homefield has always been an all-boys school and its headmaster, Mr John Towers, is a strong advocate of the benefits in keeping the school that way.

“Boys and girls tend to have very different developmental needs,” he said, “and so, I believe, it's beneficial for educational provision to match

this differential. We have known this for many years and research in education and neuroscience now presents us with ever more depth to the application of this understanding.”

Those with any experience in the educational sphere will agree that boys and girls develop in very different ways at school, both academically and socially. For example, research has shown that boys' active attention spans can be significantly shorter than those of girls. A single sex school like Homefield allows the teachers greater scope to work sympathetically to boys' specific requirements and tailor their lesson designs to allow the boys very regular breaks in concentration. Homefield is very forward thinking and proactive in this area, allowing for 'brain breaks' and 'energisers' to ensure their boys remain focused and attentive throughout the day.

It is hard to avoid the now annual national headlines regarding underachievement of boys, especially when they start school. Government figures demonstrate that girls continue to lead the way in all early learning goals, with 74.3% achieving the expected level of development compared with 58.6% of boys. In stark comparison, Homefield has demonstrated impressive results. Literacy and mathematics remain the subjects in which fewest boys achieve the expected level or higher nationally. However, by the end of reception at Homefield the picture is very different with 94% of boys achieving the expected level or higher in literacy and 87% in mathematics.

Another notion that is supported by much recent research is that boys are likely to lag behind girls in the arts but tend to progress more quickly in mathematics and sciences. Whilst

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there are, of course, exceptions to this rule in any school, Homefield has taken deliberate action to balance things out. John explains: "We have made adjustments in our timetabling, focusing on reading comprehension and, most importantly, our approach to developing boys' writing from a young age."

The all-boys environment also provides a safe setting for boys to pursue and excel in subjects which are traditionally considered more 'feminine', without feeling the pressure to conform to what is considered 'normal' for young boys.

One of the greatest benefits of an all-boys school, in John's opinion, is the nurturing of leadership.

Competition is so important amongst boys and it is crucial, particularly at the ages of 11-13, that it is harnessed broadly. A competitive, but spirited, environment, which inevitably develops in a male-dominated arena, allows boys to get past the cognitive and confidence barrier, which many 10-11 year old boys hit, including in areas like literacy.

Homefield's broad offering of extra-curricular activities allows its boys to grow in confidence and develop leadership skills, which will prove of huge benefit when they graduate to their senior schools of choice. This is not to say that a mixed school wouldn't provide similar opportunities, but the unique challenges of a competitive, masculine environment tend to encourage young men to step up and lead their peers from the front.

"Leadership is massive for us," John stated. "It needs to be brought on really early with boys and our teaching staff constantly reinforce the importance of good grace and responsibility. Democratic systems and the expectation of duty grow as boys come through the school and they tend to regulate themselves really well. Our general approach is to ensure balance with a lot of purposeful activity, both mental and physical. We ensure competition at varied levels - both against oneself in terms of 'personal bests' and in terms

of target setting within a team to develop collaboration and camaraderie and also traditional competition, particularly on the sports field."

However, this is not to say that there is any sort of 'survival of the fittest' culture at Homefield or other all-boys schools. John is very keen to promote inclusivity wherever possible. "Not every boy is an 'A-team' standard rugby player, so our 'C-Team' also gets to play really stimulating league fixtures and benefits from top class coaching.

"Furthermore, competition is not just cultural, it can be cerebral. For example, I am exceptionally proud of our chess players who compete (and enjoy huge success) at county, national and even international levels. We aim to give our boys the chance to develop and excel across the board and, as such, it is not surprising that we see our boys being awarded as many arts, drama and sports scholarships as academic ones," he said.

One of the greatest challenges for John as headmaster, and also one that which stimulates him most, is the responsibility of nurturing the boys under his guidance with a specific pastoral programme. Young men in Britain are growing up today in a world dominated by the strong influence of social media, which can present a real challenge in terms of poor role models and negative peer pressure. Some might argue that young men who have grown up without much feminine input in their lives might not be as rounded or culturally balanced as those who went to a co-educational school. John certainly appreciates this point of view and is well aware of the very good reasons for it. However, there are ways that this can be nullified.

"Our pastoral care and school ethos provide the fine balance of warmth and care together with guidance and boundaries that are crucial in creating well-rounded young men. Boys respond well to the codification of good manners, to ethics, and to explicit support in order to make their way through new media with confidence and poise to become fine young men. We ensure that there

is enough time and space in the curriculum to equip our boys with a real sense of what it is to be a civic citizen, to be respectful and to be dignified. Whilst we are an all-boys establishment, we can still have some levity and our regular collaborations with the local all-girls school, such as discos, are a strong feature of our social calendar."

Many Homefield parents do recognise the benefits of co-educational schools, particularly in the teenage years, and so a lot of the boys do go on to senior schools with, for example, a co-educational sixth form. The benefits of co-education at this later stage, for example better preparing students for university and work, are well known. However, at least for Homefield parents, this foundation, from 3-13, in a boy's most formative years, provides them with a setting which really fits.

Homefield is renowned for its family atmosphere, small class sizes, and fulfilment of individual potential and academic success. The school establishes a safe and happy environment, with a real depth of specialist teaching. Staff work hard to cultivate boys personal interests and passions; whether they are artistic, linguistic, sporting or social.

www.homefield.sutton.sch.uk

John Towers was recently made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA). He was formerly Director of Education at the Reach to Teach charity in India, delivering high quality education to thousands of children in severely disadvantaged areas across the country. He remains a trustee of the charity to this day. Having taken over as Headmaster of Homefield Preparatory School in 2014, John now has plans to transform the school into a coaching hub for other schools and academies in London by using a combination of creativity and inclusivity that is at the core of the RSA's ethos. The hub would share educational best practice and help to significantly improve the levels of teaching delivered to children in the area.

School leadership lessons from the South Pole

October 2015 marked the 100th anniversary of Shackleton's 'Imperial Trans Antarctic Expedition'. It is a story of epic proportions, which can be separated into three parts; the goal, the failure and the rescue. Firstly, the goal was audacious; to be the first crossing of the continent of Antarctica, a colossal journey of 1,800 miles. Secondly, the failure to even reach Antarctica and to become frozen in the ice pack in the Weddell Sea, with the inevitable result of the endurance being crushed and broken up by the pressure of the ice. Thirdly, the survival of every one of Shackleton's 27 crew as a result of a multi stage self rescue. This, however, was far more remarkable than if the expedition had been a success.

At first sight the similarities between Shackleton and his men being marooned in the South Pole and leading a school are not immediately obvious. The stakes of Shackleton's

predicament were obviously higher than a school leader faces in day-to-day life. It was literally life or death with 27 lives depending upon his leadership and decision making; the odds of his success were long. I contend, however, that there are significant lessons to be learnt from Shackleton's leadership of the Endurance expedition, in the way in which he led his men and his adaptive response to the constantly changing situation.

The question of whether leaders are derived from nature or nurture, has long been a topic for debate. Research, received much coverage in the UK national press in 2013 with headlines such as "Proof great leaders are born, not made" (*Daily Express*) and "Great leaders are born, not made: Their brains are just wired differently, scientists say" (*Daily Mail*). Typical tabloid headline over simplification, but the study concluded that some

people have a natural genetic advantage. This is, however, hardly a new concept.

Even if, as this would suggest, that 'hero' leaders are born and not made, especially when discussing leaders such as Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela and of course Sir Ernest Shackleton, it would be wrong to suggest that people without a natural disposition could not draw lessons from and learn skills from a case study such as this. Ordinarily, I believe that there is no such thing as a 'complete leader' and that self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses is necessary in order to fill in any skill gaps. Strong leadership behaviours may come naturally to a few but for most, as Howard Tuckett (Headmaster of Caterham Prep) says "leadership is a constant, conscious, thinking process".

Shackleton was, to use a term



Goleman coined, 'emotionally intelligent'; in other words he knew when he needed to be personally supportive and was good at spotting individual problems, dealing with them sensitively and showing deep understanding. He skilfully maintained constant awareness as to the mood and concerns of his men, whilst giving them sufficient space. He also often showed his appreciation for the men's hard work and forbearance. Thanking staff and showing appreciation for their hard work is an extremely effective motivator, simple to do but often overlooked. Mindfulness in this respect can be learnt by leaders who are not naturally blessed with such 'emotional resources'. This is dependent, however, on a desire to raise their own performance in this respect and the belief in the value of taking steps to improve emotional intelligence.

Shackleton evidently understood group dynamics and realised the importance of maintaining a veneer of calm. The men never saw his insecurities and weaknesses; he hid his own negative thoughts very successfully from his men so that it didn't spread and infect the group.

Maintaining the confidence of the stakeholders in a school setting is also very important. Those in leadership positions need to have a 'public face' and resist the urge to 'wear their heart on their sleeve' too much. Team members will often take cues from the leader as to how to think and act. The mood of the staff, parents and pupils cannot be expected to be positive and calm if the head is running around like dad's army's corporal Jones shouting "Don't panic, don't panic!"

Particularly, after the *Endurance* became stuck in the ice, the maintenance of morale was vital and

humour was found even in the most desperate of situations. For example, below decks, after having been frozen into the pack ice, was called 'The Ritz' because it was marginally warmer and more sheltered; this was typical of Shackleton and his men. Finding amusement in adversity is an effective way of remaining positive and de-stressing situations; he was evidently successful in this. A sense of humour and fun is infectious and will have a tremendous impact on the atmosphere of the common room.

On the *James Caird*, en route to South Georgia, one of the men started to flag. Shackleton ordered fresh milk for all the men so that he wouldn't be singled out and be made to feel as if he was being carried. The result was that both morale and nourishment was maintained. Looking after and showing concern for staff, not only is a decent way of leading people, but sets the tone of the organisation

and will win loyalty and hearts and minds in the long run. Schools are communities to which staff should feel a sense of belonging; after all, many will spend more time with their colleagues than with their families during term time. Through their nature, they need to be so much more than mere places of work. Keeping abreast of the general atmosphere, therefore, is vital in maintaining morale. Shackleton was all too aware of this necessity and knew what would resonate with the crew. He was rigorous in keeping national events and holidays which were small treats, but which boosted the mood of his men. Morale was also maintained by social events, such as evenings around the fire, singing, games and shows; during which he closely observed the men's interaction with each other.

Shackleton almost preached optimism to his men and he consciously made himself think positively. He was, however, firmly in touch with reality and he knew exactly the extent of the predicament that they were in. People undermining the unity of the crew, however, were not tolerated and he kept a sharp lookout for potential troublemakers. Relating this to the school community, heads would, no doubt, be all too aware of the effect a small number of disenfranchised staff has on the staff room. Understanding and awareness of the causes of negativity is necessary if it is to be addressed.

Shackleton made sure that the men were properly briefed as to their situation and the plan; he was, however, sometimes selective with the detail and the timing. Similarly, although staff cannot be consulted on every decision that is made, it is important for them, as stakeholders, to feel some inclusion in the direction and running of the school. They are far more likely to take ownership and less likely to feel merely like an employee, if there is an understanding

and alignment with 'the vision'.

Leading by example is vital in any context of leadership, not least school leadership. This was a key feature of Shackleton's style. He did not ask of his men anything that he would not be prepared to do himself. When the ship was abandoned they did not have enough sleeping bags, some had to use blankets; the boss purposely drew a short match and made sure that he got a blanket. He took individual care of the men, giving his gloves to a crew member with frost bite and some of his rations to another.

When he enforced the rule, when about to set off over the ice, that nothing could be taken with them that couldn't keep them alive "...he himself set the example, throwing away with a spectacular gesture, a gold watch, a gold cigarette case, and several golden sovereigns." (Frank Worsley)

Shackleton was not, noted for the practice of empowering his men with opportunities to take the initiative. The weight of leadership often sat heavy on him and he even went as far as to say that "loneliness is the penalty of leadership". Many modern thinkers on leadership, however, take a rather different view from Shackleton for today's leaders. They posit that leadership is no longer necessarily regarded as a solitary activity. They also advise today's school leaders that a top down model is most effective when combined with a bottom up style.

Shackleton did, however, have the support from a number two he could trust completely and confide in; this was Frank Wild. By all accounts he was a remarkable leader in his own right. He was charged with the vital task of staying with the 21 men left behind on Elephant Island, whilst Shackleton left in the James Caird for help. These men were hungry, cold, frostbitten and uncertain as to whether their rescue was possible.

Despite this, none perished and Shackleton described them as "cheerful" when they were eventually picked up. Shackleton understood the importance of having influential members of the crew onside, who would provide support to his message and direction when he wasn't present; influence by proxy in other words. Similarly, in schools, it is vital that heads have a senior leadership team and/or group of colleagues that they can rely upon, both as a source of support and also to implement the vision and strategy. Key to the success of any school is its staff. An effective team is the result of an effective selection process by an effective leader. Shackleton took the selection of his team extremely seriously. Take for example his advertisement in the national press for volunteers.

"Men wanted for hazardous journey. Low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in event of success." On the face of it, a humorous notice; if one, however, considers it rather more deeply it is calculated to achieve a highly specific purpose and very effective it was too. Shackleton knew exactly what would appeal to the type of person he wanted to accompany him; which were simply, men who were prepared to endure extreme hardship and who were not motivated financially but by the glory of achieving a goal, whatever that may be.

In the event, there were over 5,000 applicants, most of whom would have been seduced by the wording in the advert which was heavily laced with the romantic ideals of the early 20th century explorer; dreamers, in other words. The selection process was rigorous. To begin with they were sorted into three categories "mad, hopeless, possible".

He met and held intense interviews with each of the 'possible' candidates; he was looking for specific character

traits, rather than the content of their responses to questions. Getting the right people was absolutely vital; firstly to stand any chance of success and secondly and probably most importantly, for integrity and safety. Antarctica was largely an unknown quantity; people would not have known or appreciated its extreme and savage conditions. As Shackleton himself identified, it was also important to focus on the 'dynamic' of the team. In the event, Shackleton's success in saving his team was due in large part to him selecting a capable team.

Shackleton was skilled in both leadership and management. Every day there was a duty roster; no matter how bad the situation became, accomplishment and achievement in day-to-day tasks enabled the group to maintain a focus and keep going. He also kept the men moving and although it was not certain that the outcome would be good; it was as he said, better than sitting down and waiting for death. He used structure to keep the men going. Great attention was paid to feeding and watering the men both actually and figuratively. He maintained protocol and formality throughout; for example the youngest member of the crew was to be the first to step onto Elephant Island, as tradition dictated. Shackleton's strength not only lay in his skill in leading people, he also had a deep focus on the task. All members of the party survived and were rescued because they kept going and kept their focus on and maintained a course towards

their goal. Shackleton's persistence was reflected in the ship's name Endurance; he didn't give up. In a school setting, this would be the quality of learning and teaching. Shackleton was quite prepared to take tough decisions, particularly when he saw a threat to the mission. For example, when he met the Endurance in Buenos Aires he fired several of the crew for being drunk and insubordinate. He was only too aware that 'a chain was only as strong as its weakest link' and that unreliable members of the team could endanger the expedition.

As with many success stories, the leader often gets the lion's share of the credit. It would be rather blinkered, however, to think that Shackleton's skills as a leader was the only factor in the survival of the expedition members. The members of a team are key in determining its success; the men, by and large, responded positively to leadership and wanted to keep going, demonstrating considerable stoicism. If they were of a different mind set or character, the outcome would have been very different. I would venture that this was not solely owing to Shackleton's leadership but also their natural toughness and resilience. The undoubted leadership skills of Frank Wild were also highly significant. It is evident, however, that common principles are shared by successful leaders; the story of the Endurance and Ernest Shackleton's leadership is one, which provides inspiration and examples of many of these.

Personal leadership checklist from Shackleton's Endurance expedition

Staff orientated

- Empathy and thoughtfulness
- Recognition and appreciation
- Optimism and sense of humour
- Maintenance of an outwardly calm exterior
- Maintenance of morale
- Active management of the disaffected
- Lead by example
- Maintain a visible presence
- Decisiveness
- Delegation of power and responsibility
- Hire judiciously
- Maintain the structure of routine

Task orientated

- Focus on and articulate the vision
- Protect the mission and take difficult decisions if necessary
- Act on credible, expert advice
- Take risks

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Two little words

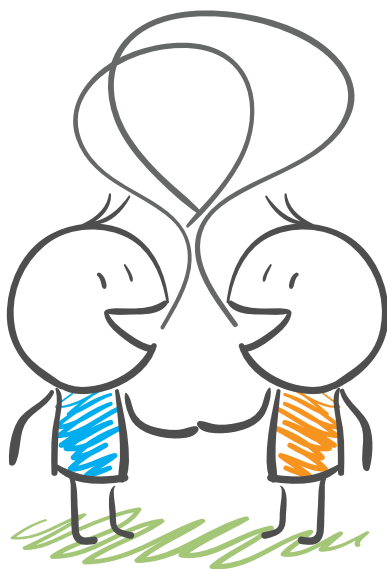
Do you want to build the morale and loyalty of the people you work with? Well, start by saying thank you. Kris Spencer suggests that we would do well to foster a culture of gratitude in our schools

"Haven't you forgotten something?", the question we sometimes ask our children to encourage them to say thank you. But do we say thank you enough? When was the last time you took a colleague aside or sent something to them to show your appreciation for what they do? It is all too easy to take other people's work for granted and miss the opportunities to show recognition and gratitude - achievement is its own reward, right? And, we can just as easily be bland in our praise: a sweeping thank you to staff which covers all is a way of ticking the praise box but it can seem rather throwaway if you are on the receiving end.

To support our colleagues to excel we need thank them for the reasons that matter to us, but if we want to really engage them we also need to focus on what matters to them. There is evidence that tailoring the way praise is delivered, to different ages and personalities, is important. For each person the words we use might differ, and the medium might change. A handwritten note is favoured by many but emails can also be effective. Some might bask in public thanks and others prefer something more personal and private. Most memorable are often those face-to-face encounters celebrating the small wins - positive feedback from a parent or a pupil which is passed on, the noting of a well written report at a busy time, or celebrating the investment of time behind a victory, or even honourable defeat, on the sports field. In these cases a few

sincere words at break in the common room, or even in passing on the corridor, may be all that it takes to make someone walk a little taller for the day.

There is an element of enlightened self-interest to this. A report from One4all, *The Power of Thank You*, says that business leaders who say 'Thank you' have more motivated staff, higher rates of staff retention, find it easier to recruit and have better reputations. But 20% of employees say they never



receive any form of thanks from their employer. Despite the importance of making employees feel appreciated, 75% of workers feel that they do not receive sufficient gratitude from their boss for the work that they do. The research reveals the significance of rewarding staff and the huge effect it can have on employees. One of the most stand out statistics uncovered in the report is that out of the 1,000 UK employees surveyed, 71% said they

would forgo a higher salary if it meant they could work for an employer that regularly thanks its employees for their efforts. For Declan Byrne, the UK Managing Director of One4all, the power of thank you is clear: "In a busy working environment it's easy for leaders to forget to say thank you as often as their employees would like them to, but failure to correct this will severely impact on performance. Clearly, we all want to be rewarded for the work that we do, but ultimately it's the personal recognition that makes a 'thank you' so powerful. We want to know that we are seen as an individual, not just one of a number, and that the personal time and dedication we have committed has been noticed."

So, what are the best ways to say thank you. The first thing to do is to find the people doing the things we want to praise. This process of harvesting the good and best practice should involve ring-fenced time for every manager and leader. Some things will be happened upon - it helps if we are consciously looking - but other things depend on intelligence about what is going on, day-to-day: we need to go to the rehearsal not just the play; the first round as well as the final. And if we can't find anything then either we are not looking in the right way or the right places, or we haven't properly communicated our core values. Recognition should be prompt and spontaneous. Busy leaders can be tempted to store up their praise for the end of term or the weekly staff meeting. This kind of public recognition is valid but it is rarely sufficient. It is also important

to recognise the kind of effort and achievement we want to see. This means linking praise to the core values of the school so that recognition is contingent on the behaviour and performance which we value. Our recognition needs to be specific, too. We need to tell the person why we are thanking them. This shows that we are paying genuine attention. And we need to ring the changes - we can't just say the same things in the same way to same people.

Dr Geil Browning, Founder and CEO of Emergenetics International, has led research into how business leaders can most effectively thank and recognise their staff, based on their individual personalities and traits. The research indicates that most employees would enjoy a personal thank-you, but they want it customised to them. The key is to be specific. We all want to be recognised for our unique strengths and talents, and for those things that we think do best. Feedback that can focus in on a person's specific gifts is going to hit home. This takes time and presence - it is the visible leader who is most likely to get the specifics which makes praise authentic. It would seem that key is knowing what makes each person tick and then shaping what you say to celebrate things, all in a way which chimes with them.

Shaping what you say

Here are ten ways to say thank you inspired by Dr Browning's research at Emergenetics:

1. To the life and soul of your teaching staff you might pass on: 'Thanks for keeping the lines of communication open.'
2. For people who are quieter, and might appreciate one-on-one contact with you, you could say: 'I appreciate the respect and time which you give to new ideas.'
3. Those people who are forceful in meetings could be told: 'Thank you for keeping the momentum going' or 'I appreciate your decisive action.'
4. For those who are more easy going and want everyone to get along, you might say: 'Thank you for helping to keep the peace,' or, 'I appreciate your amiability more than you know.'
5. Some staff rise to difficult situations and pride themselves on their calm under pressure. You might tell them: 'I depend on your grit and resilience' or 'Thanks for how you handled that potentially difficult situation'
6. Leaders often struggle with the more fixed-minded staff who might be reluctant to embrace change. But convictions are important and a disagreement can be useful in testing new ideas. You might tell them: 'I depend on your rigour,' or 'I respect your viewpoint.'
7. Many teachers are analytical or define themselves through their intelligence and critical thinking. To them, you might say: 'I appreciate your penetrating questions,' or 'I respect the depth of your knowledge.'
8. There are others who are more detail-minded, your proof-readers and policy writers. You could let them know: 'Thanks for spotting that mistake, we'd have missed it without you,' or 'You always meet your deadlines - impressive!'
9. You will have some who are happiest when pleasing others. You could tell them: 'I am so grateful for your team building skills,' or, 'We couldn't have done it without you.'
10. Those on your team who revel in their individuality and by nature want to feel unique could be told: 'Your solution to that problem was stunning,' or 'I am not sure that anyone else could have come up with that strategy.'

Developing from Dr Browning's work we might also use praise in the context of performance management and professional development. Because of this, we may need to focus and contextualise our recognition to make it useful. McKenzie Cerri, CEO of coaching specialists Graydin, suggests an approach which celebrates

each person's excellence, but also builds on what has been achieved. She suggests that praise can support even better outcomes by using a technique she calls, *two stars and an arrow*. The stars represent two things that went well - the praise - but then the arrow is formative: what might move things forward?; what has been learned? and, what would the person need to do to make things even better, next time?

Acknowledging what other people do is a key part - perhaps the critical responsibility - of leadership. The way we celebrate excellence needs to be democratic, authentic and specific. We should be prepared to be open and surprised by what we praise, but we should also search out the actions and behaviours which we want to celebrate. This might be an example of the effort and resolve needed to go the extra mile when reports are due, appreciating the care and warmth offered to an anxious pupil, recognising the resilience of a colleague who works past their own problems, or celebrating their sense of community in supporting another member of staff.

When we recognise the contributions of our staff or team, we are reinforcing the kind of things we want to see repeated from them, and others. And, when people feel their efforts are noticed and acknowledged they also feel supported and reassured to go the extra mile; not because they have to but because they want to. By communicating our belief in our staff we are empowering them to rise to meet our expectations. And, if we foster a culture of gratitude then we are supporting excellence and warmth, and a sustainable sense of community. Gray's *Elegy* warns us that; "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert air." Gray's image can be read as a call to arms: our aim should be to bear witness and celebrate all our desert flowers in all the ways we have to hand.

Kris Spencer is an Assistant Head at Latymer Upper School and a Governor and Director of Notting Hill Prep School



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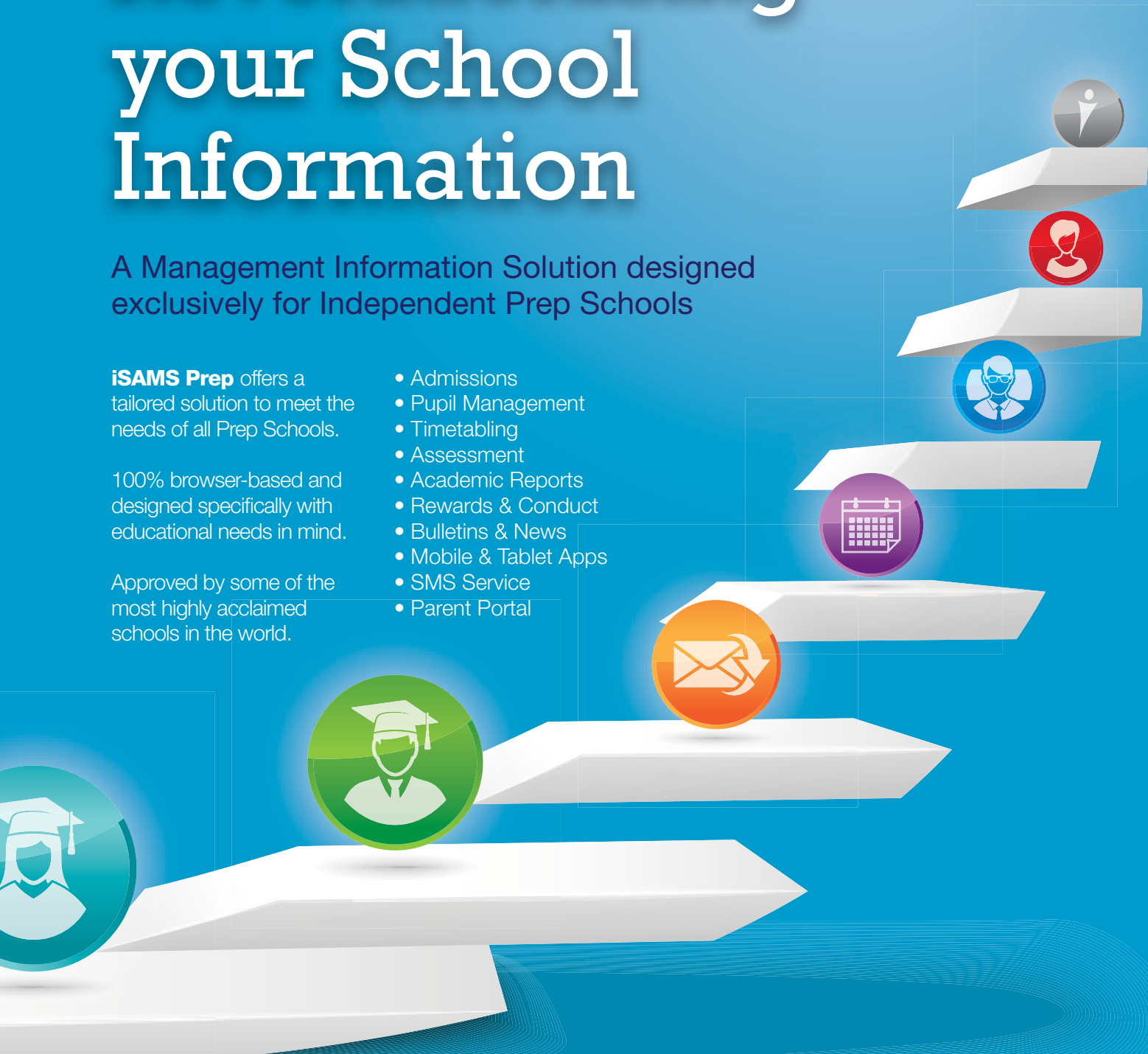
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The architecture of learning

The University of Sussex write about the importance of providing inspiring teaching spaces

The library and lecture theatre have long been the battlegrounds within which students grapple with Fermat's Last Theorem, or go to war with a towering pile of Shakespeare and a 9am deadline. But education is an evolving beast, moving from the blackboards of yesteryear into a gleaming smart board-fuelled future. With today's generation raised on a diet of social media and instant messenger, the classroom has begun to change to reflect modern life. Embracing digital certainly, but also acknowledging that the constant sharing of ideas that we see online ought now to be replicated in the design of the teaching spaces themselves. Classrooms are shaking off the hierarchical teacher-lectures-and-students-listen structure, and are becoming places of play. They are becoming areas of collaborative, cross-disciplinary exchange: Immersive, heavily involved, learning is key. With the building work now completed on the innovative Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts at the University of Sussex, we're looking at inspiring learning spaces – be they old or new - as educators and architects ask themselves how they can help students get the very best out of their days.

Some schools, universities, and institutions come already blessed with the type of buildings that

make prospective students swoon. Gadget-free and traditional they may generally be, but there can't be many who haven't entered a good library and suddenly thought dedicating months on end to a dissertation doesn't sound all so bad. Dublin's Trinity College's Long Room is one of the very finest examples – a monument to quiet learning - while the architecture of a number of Oxford and Cambridge's colleges makes for picture-postcard places of study. The Bodleian Library, St. John's College, and Wren Library will each leave bookworms salivating on their hallowed floors, and The Charles Rennie Mackintosh Library should have you booking the first train to Glasgow. Wandering off-campus, many Londoners will have carted their texts and energy drinks to The Reading Room at The British Museum, hoping the collective spirit of past-occupants such as Gandhi, Lenin, and Oscar Wilde will help conjure up a blockbuster conclusion to their essays. Meanwhile over the pond, we're seeing the community library brought into the 21st century with the catch a coffee, do your research, and admire some startling modern architecture.

The lucrative nature of the American University system has institutions falling over themselves to offer prospective students anything their young minds can dream of. While

The University of Chicago and The University of Pennsylvania, among others, have world-class old libraries of their own, we've seen university's offer everything from zip lines (Missouri State University) to lazy rivers (Texas Tech) in recent years. Yet Claude Moore, The University of Virginia's School of Medicine, is an example of money well spent on both design and purpose. They've established a rotund glass structure five stories tall, complete with purpose-built learning studios and clinical skills centre. But its piece de resistance is undoubtedly the medical simulation centre that dominates the ground floor. Complete with procedure rooms, a mock ER, ICU, and labour and delivery unit. Students can don their scrubs and imagine they are on the set of *Holby City*, all whilst picking up vital skills as they do so.

The University of Sussex's Attenborough Centre is set to attract an altogether different crowd. But it is another example of an institution committed to designing an inspiring, aesthetically-pleasing space, and equipping it for the most modern teaching methods, and the realities of today's collaborative experiential leaning. Redeveloping a unique Grade II*-listed building that had previously welcomed performances from the likes of Jack Dee and Lee Evans, and turning it into a vast, cross-



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disciplinary study and performance space – enthused with the creative spirit of its former occupants, and of course, the man after whom it is named: Lord Attenborough. The space will include a 350-seat auditorium, display areas for art and moving installations, and break-out creative zones in which students can explore new ways of learning. An open door policy means it's expected to form a creative hub for the wider community – as local artists offer inspiration to the next generation at study.

Indeed, the arts world – as can be expected – is pushing the boat out in all approaches to teaching spaces, with many rejecting traditional classroom structures in favour of something more inclusive. The esteemed Central Saint Martins moved into fresh quarters in King's Cross a couple of years back, and the new building is every bit as vibrant as you'd expect from the base of our country's future Hirsts, McQueens and Emms. Taking on an old granary, the open spaces within the heart of the cavernous brick building have been transformed to resemble a ramshackle, thriving, market-place within the day, as students exhibit their wares, with paintings hanging from the walls and installations round every corner. Open School East, one of a rising new breed of art schools, is also making intelligent use of its space. A run-down former East London library has been transformed into a pioneering shared workspace, as its organizers encourage collaboration between projects, and positive interactions within the wider community. Like The Attenborough Centre, it makes the arts space a leading player within the community – hosting workshops, lessons, and 'dance parties' for older citizens. You'll struggle to find a better muse than a jiving octogenarian.

The benefits of a shared space have long been recognized by enterprising businesses and renegade CEOs. The days of the grey corner cubicle are over, as more and more companies convert to open plan workspaces, hot-desking, and shared desks. But Google has taken the idea one step further

by offering up a free co-working space for small businesses, start-ups, and entrepreneurs. Borrowing from the arts' cooperative aesthetic, The Google campus, situated in the heart of Shoreditch's Silicon Roundabout allows people to register to work alongside one another on long benches and outdoor courtyard. Enabling different companies to sit side-by-side, bouncing ideas of one another, inspiring, encouraging, and sharing skillsets, it's just the latest example of how collaborative learning is taking hold. And as today's students enter the work-field, looking to replicate the experience of their days in education – we can expect to see more and more industries embrace the model.

But forget the grown-ups for a second. If anyone appreciates the concept of work as play it's surely kids and their inspirational teachers. Junior and secondary schools across the world are taking innovative approaches to emphasizing the joys of learning, transforming their buildings to places where education occurs through entertainment. Story time always used to mean stifling a yawn listening to a weary teacher read us a chapter with one eye on clocking off time. Not so at Stephen Perse Foundation Junior School, which has fabricated an intelligently-designed, vibrantly-coloured story-time space, complete with performance space for the youngsters to act out the narrative and do their best Harry Potter impressions. Meanwhile, Langley Academy has broken the mould and followed the example of the pioneering New York Museum School. Bringing a slice of the Big Apple to glamorous Slough, the school is introducing the idea of museum learning to the UK – welcoming collections into its halls, transforming dull space into colourful hubs of culture – so students can get up close and personal with history, and changing attitudes towards what was once the dreaded trip to the museum. Its atrium even became the stage for The Globe Players for Shakespeare's birthday celebrations. Each initiative effectively transforming school space into a playground of learning.

Finally, there are the schools who have decided to go the whole hog and dispense completely with normality and expectation. Windemere School, situated deep in the heart of the Lake District has built its new classrooms up in the trees - offering tree-top learning perfectly suited to its National Park setting. Connected by a central platform made using recycled materials, the kids can learn a thing or two about keeping the local habitat beautiful too. And ditching four walls entirely, the Engage In Their Future network of school's Extreme Classrooms programme has set about proving a lack of desks, chairs, and even ceiling is no impediment to study. This summer the academy will be taking a handful of students to the Biscay Triangle to take on, what they're calling the Wettest Classroom on Earth (clearly they've never sat in the front row in front of a teacher unable to control their spittle), having previously conquered the likes of The Fastest Classroom on Earth (Mount Blanc on mountain bikes) and The Highest Classroom on Earth (Everest, naturally). The course stresses the cultivation of resilience, cultural discovery, and physical activity. It's certainly a world away from the way the majority learn, but nature is an inspiring teacher, and those memories will probably stick in the head longer than the average session of double geography.

It's clear that both educators and architects alike are pushing the boundaries – recognizing the importance and great potential of strong spatial design. So whether taking the traditional route and enjoying the glorious serenity of an ancient library, or engaging with dynamic, modern spaces and techniques, the options for students, and the possibilities for their education, have never been greater.

Ten trends, factors and shifts affecting education

The last in an exclusive series of summaries from RSAcademics' Ten Trends 2015 report

This is the last in the series of summaries from the RSAcademics major new report Ten Trends 2015. In this edition we focus on trends in boarding, the 11+/13+ debate and finally on the crucial topic of affordability.

Boarding: A world of opportunities

From 1987 until 2000 there was a year-on-year decline in boarding. From 2000 the number of boarders remained almost static. In the last few years the ISC censuses have reported small increases in the numbers of boarders at ISC schools.

Many of the heads we interviewed had undertaken reviews of their boarding offers in recent years and the changes that have been implemented can be categorised under three main headings:

- creating more flexible boarding arrangements
- adapting more creative pricing strategies
- developing and upgrading boarding facilities

It seems that those schools that have experienced growth in the numbers of boarding pupils have clearly identified the role that boarding plays within the school's offer. This means that the school has clarified to current and prospective parents whether it is, for

example, truly a full boarding school or whether it is a school which offers a more flexible approach to boarding, enabling pupils to board for one night per week or more.

The definition of full boarding sounds straightforward but it certainly is not any more. For some schools it still means that the boarders are in school except when there are exeats (which, we found, may be as frequent as alternate weekends or as occasional as once or twice a term). In other full boarding schools, boarders may go home only on a certain number of Saturday nights per term. Other full boarding schools may allow their boarders to go home during the day at weekends but only occasionally overnight. Some will allow their pupils to go home every Saturday night, even if it is not encouraged. The more research we did, the more varied definitions of full boarding we found.

Geography plays a greater role in school choice than a decade ago and parents are now far more likely than they were to choose a boarding school close enough to home to allow regular visits either of the child home, or the parents to the school, or both. From our research, we know that many of the schools that reported a decline in overall pupil numbers in recent years have now introduced, or are about to launch, flexi-boarding as a means of driving up boarding numbers. 40% of the boarding school heads

we interviewed and whose overall numbers had grown in recent years had launched flexi-boarding.

We close the chapter by introducing a categorisation of boarding schools and suggest that schools need to be cautious if they find that they are offering a wide range of boarding options, dependent upon large numbers of overseas boarders, but are unable to grow their day numbers - either because of their pricing model and/or because there are insufficient affluent families in their



catchment – and without a strong market proposition. To coin a phrase, boarding schools which try and act as all things to all people can very easily end up pleasing no one.

Getting complicated: The 11+/13+ debate

This chapter considers how:

- the growth in co-ed schools and the concomitant reduction in the number of single-sex schools, particularly boys-only schools
- the reduction in the number of boarders in both senior and prep schools and an increasing reliance on day pupils, particularly amongst prep schools
- economic pressures

have resulted in more pupils moving at age 11 rather than at 13, which was typically the case ten to 20 years ago.

We conducted an analysis of over 200 prep schools to discover how prep schools have responded to this and found that 75 of these schools had changed their structure or status, *eg* either by establishing a nursery or pre-prep department or merging with other schools to become part of an all-through school.

Our researchers then considered the response of senior schools and found that there have been three very significant steps taken by senior schools:

1. For 13 to 18 schools to reduce their entry age to 11.
2. For 11 to 18 schools to reduce or even eliminate their 13+ entry and rely instead on their 11+ entry.
3. For schools with a 13+ entry to introduce pre-testing whereby a child is offered a conditional or deferred place between 12 and 30 months prior to entry at age 13.

The report reviews the introduction of pre-testing and why it has become so common and considers the implications for pupils, parents and schools.

The chapter then explores the current position in relation to Common Entrance as well as reviewing the alternatives that many prep schools have adopted or are considering.

We conclude that it was clear from our interviews that prep school heads feel that the future of 11+/13+ is largely in the hands of the senior schools. For example as more and more stand-alone senior schools become all-through schools, the pressure to sustain a cohort in years 7 and 8 in a prep school becomes even greater.

Affordability: Are independent schools pricing themselves out of the market?

You will be acutely aware of the commentary on independent school fee increases and the relationship with the consumer price inflation (since 1990 average private school fees are reported to have quadrupled – equating to an inflation of 6.2%, whilst the CPI inflation over the same period averaged 2.5%). Fee increases have slowed in recent years, but they continue to increase ahead of other measures of inflation.

In consultation with financial advisors, the Ten Trends report summarises the financial context from a parent perspective and highlights the levels of investment required to fund a child through 13 years of independent schooling. We explore the factors that parents consider when making decisions regarding school choice/fees and

review the trends around the so-called 'pick-and-mix' approach to state and independent schooling. Indeed, we saw an increase in the number of parents choosing state education at the start of the school journey and then considering state provision again as their children reach sixth form age.

For three quarters of those schools that participated in our research, affordability was a critical strategic issue. Many heads and bursars identified the pressure on school funds and fundraising to generate increasing levels of bursary funding as a particular challenge. Fundraising was a focus for the majority of schools in our research. Indeed 60% of those schools who did not currently have a fundraising office or development function were planning to introduce one. 82% of heads we spoke to said that the main focus of their development activity was to fundraise amongst alumni.

Our researchers discussed the pressures that heads and bursars face when trying to set fees amid ever increasing costs – particularly teaching staff costs. Whilst the drive to increase income continues, so too does the imperative to drive down costs wherever possible. Strategic decision-making in schools is now often focused on plans, which in more prosperous times would probably never have been considered, and include changes to size and shape of school, changes to class size or even perhaps expansion through merger, acquisition or franchise (in the UK or overseas). The report reviews initiatives for both cost control and increasing fee income, which schools might consider to ensure they are not pricing themselves out of the market.

The report is available from RS Academics at a price of £65. For further information or to order a report please contact Jane Follows on 01858 467449 or jane@rsacademics.co.uk



Boarding: from full to flexi

Katie Gedye, Head of Lower school and Houseparent at Moor Park School shares how her school is leading the way to the 'flexi frontier'

Some brave Prep Schools are trying to meet the needs of all ages, at all stages. A tough challenge? Having spent many years falling, boarding numbers, for the last two years in succession, have finally begun to climb. Interestingly, this does not seem attributable to parents buying

into the traditional full boarding model, but to the increasing number of schools offering a much more flexible approach. The needs of the modern family have changed and schools are learning they need to go with the flow a little more.

Moor Park is a school on the outskirts of Ludlow in Shropshire. Over the last few years, the boarding team led by Deputy Head, Simon Gedye, have overhauled the offering, with quite surprising results. 90% of the children in the middle and upper school board at least one night a week,

with most boarding three or four and the school's 120 beds are full at least twice a week. As a relatively small school, with no 'full-boarding' pedigree, this is quite some feat.

Building firm foundations is always a good idea and this is certainly true at Moor Park. In 2010, they built a unique junior boarding house, called the tree house. Ticking all the eco boxes (it is one of the first Category 4, on the Code for Sustainable Homes, houses in Shropshire), it is a 20 bed den for the seven and eight year olds. Cosy, secure and undaunting, the youngest boarders can dip their toes in to the boarding life of the school. They love joining activities with the older children and boarding activities and games are often designed to allow groups of different aged children to work together. Whether it be Minions night, trash fashion, towel origami or the gingerbread house challenge, you will often find clusters of children from seven to 13 years of age, laughing and working together.

From the age of seven, children will build the number of nights they board as they go through the school. The children plead to be allowed to board more, such is the fun they have, and for the parents it seems to work too. The majority are working hard and travelling quite some distance to reach their school of choice. They understand the benefits of boarding; less commuting time, the broad offering of extra-curricular activities, the growing development of independence and self-assurance. They want to be able to sit at a dinner party and say "yes, my child goes to boarding school... but they have been home twice this week already".

And that is the crux of it really. Boarding as required and the flexibility to opt in and out as required is a system that is really working. If parents are stuck in London, then a quick phone call is all that is needed. Many children switch to weekly boarding when parents are away, and there is great reassurance and stability provided by care that is reliable and known. Equally the opposite is true too. When children

are tired, missing home or a big brother is home for exeat, they can opt out without question or quibble. The school has developed a system where children grow a natural love for boarding and so no hard sell is required.

Moor Park sends children to a wide variety of schools, from Eton, Malborough, Millfield, Radley and Harrow to much more local day schools such as Hereford Cathedral School. Prep schools need to prepare all of these children for the very different requirements of their future schools. For some, boarding won't ever be a necessity and so is just a bit of fun. But for many children going off to full boarding senior schools, this can be a huge shock if they are not properly prepared.

One of the hardest challenges for prep schools is the tricky question of weekends. More often than not, the body of local children depart to their homes for the weekend, leaving a motley crew of overseas children behind. Not only does this leave the numbers rather depleted but it also doesn't give a true impression of what

full boarding life might be like for those seeking it in later years. Moor Park began to challenge the 'empty weekend' syndrome a few years ago with the introduction of the 'Big Weekend'; the team are now planning BW12 and they are bigger than ever.

Big Weekends are termly themed 'amusement park' style events, which bring in over 70 additional weekend boarders. Events have ranged from nerf wars, to masterchef, to SAS survival, to Bollywood, to Wild West weekends. The children generally dress up and spend Saturday night engaged in activities (some of which have to be seen to be believed!) before staying over in the boarding house. They wake on Sunday, to an early morning swim and a full cooked breakfast before heading home. For the parents, a chance for a night out and a lie in. For the children, a really positive experience of a weekend boarding.

Running a flexible system can be a bit of a juggling act for the hard working matrons and laundry teams, but Moor Park's bulging beds suggest it is a system that is here to stay.



SATIPS

Support and training in Prep Schools

1

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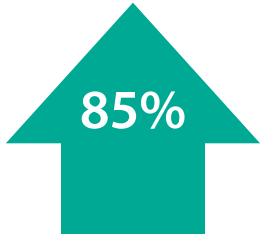
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Preparing your child for pre-test and 11+ exams

Galore Park provide an insight in to how you can begin to prepare your child for exams



Pre-test and 11+ preparation is something many parents and children dread. When the school day is already full and evenings are taken up with activities and homework, it is tempting to wait until the last few months to concentrate fully on the tests – but this can be a mistake.

Building familiarity takes time

Whether we like it or not, the truth is that the 11+ tests are an important stage in your child's school career and the results matter. It is also true that these are likely to be very different

to other tests they will take both in content and approach.

Despite all the stories about new tests that cannot be revised for, we are all aware that familiarity with a new subject or situation is the key to facing the challenge with confidence. Unsurprisingly, the 11+ is no different.

Crossword puzzles are a good analogy for these assessments because they are looking at our ability to think through a situation or problem. You can't be taught how to solve crosswords, although practise quickly increases your ability

and confidence. Over time you find familiar patterns emerging and begin to observe the style of different compilers. Completing crosswords can also be a relaxing pastime although this would quickly change if you were asked to solve 20 a day!

Practice for the 11+ works in a similar, gradual way and the process of learning how these problems and puzzles work can be a lot of fun. The 11+ is a challenge for the whole family, not just your child, so building the learning process into family life well in advance of the tests can not

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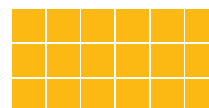
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Whether we like it or not, the truth is that the 11+ exams are an important stage in your child's school career and the results matter

only significantly reduce stress but can also build their confidence and a greater chance of success.

The challenges in choosing the correct resources

Of the many choices you will face in the 11+ preparation process, two of the most important are...

- How much practise should you give your child?
- Which resources will best suit the entrance exams they are taking?

Any time spent on practice is precious time away from school and leisure activities so it is essential that the resources you choose support their learning effectively.

Nearly all products target specific 11+ tests, such as GL or CEM, although many independent schools set their own entrance exams. *These bespoke exams are often more challenging* than the specific tests targeted by the published resources, so the likelihood is that most market products could be pitched too low.

Added to this, the testing companies are adding an *increased variety of questions* each year to make the 11+ more difficult to revise for, so even their published tests may not cover the questions in the actual test.

A final factor to consider, especially if your child is taking a pre-test, is whether they will face an *online* assessment. These are often adaptive, which means that if a question is answered correctly, *a more challenging question* is then set. Speed is an important factor since the faster a child answers the questions, the more marks they can potentially gain. This means that the children who excel work *quickly and accurately* and can

consistently answer the most challenging questions.

Resources that cater for these modern 11+ tests

So, what are the choices?

Independent schools often provide *sample tests* from previous years, so these are always worth looking at. However, using 11+ resources that *explain what the examiners are looking for* and contain *the variety of questions* they may encounter are essential preparation as well.

Begin by finding out which subjects your child will be tested on and any background information about the tests they will face and then look for a resource that fits in with these criteria. A well-constructed resource will work as a series giving a clear path from *explanation* through *guided practice* and *test papers* to provide understanding, build familiarity, speed and accuracy.

Galore Park's new flagship 11+ series

Produced in conjunction with *11+tutors, Independent School teachers, test writers and specialist authors* represents *the new wave of publishing* specifically designed to support children and their parents through entrance exams for Independent schools and adaptive testing.

The books uniquely cover the wide range of questions typically occurring in the new tests and, as your child works through the series, they are challenged with different formats to develop familiarity in dealing with different questions presented in a variety of ways.

The *Revision Guides* work in separate topics designed for short bursts of

study that can easily be fitted around homework. Each topic explains how to work through problems followed by questions to test understanding. There are further tests throughout the book mimicking questions set in 11+ papers in preparation for the focused training in the Workbooks and Practice papers.

Each *workbook* contains between 160 and 260 questions to provide further guided practice in the different question types with more techniques to improve accuracy and develop fast response times.

Final preparation is given in the *practice papers*, based on previous 11+ tests and are designed to be taken in test conditions. Short and long-format tests build in speed and difficulty towards the most challenging tests set by Independent schools.

Working through this and other series at a pace that is comfortable will generally take around 12 to 18 months and so careful planning can clearly make the difference between your child sitting their tests in a state of confidence or anxiety.

Most publishers will have a sales team who are happy to guide you through the best materials to suit you, so consider contacting your chosen publishers for more information and guidance before you embark on this adventure with your family.

Galore Park specialises in preparation for 11+ and 13+ Common Entrance exams and leads the market in textbooks for pupils studying at independent schools. If you would like to find out more, visit www.galorepark.co.uk or call 01235 400 555.

Education

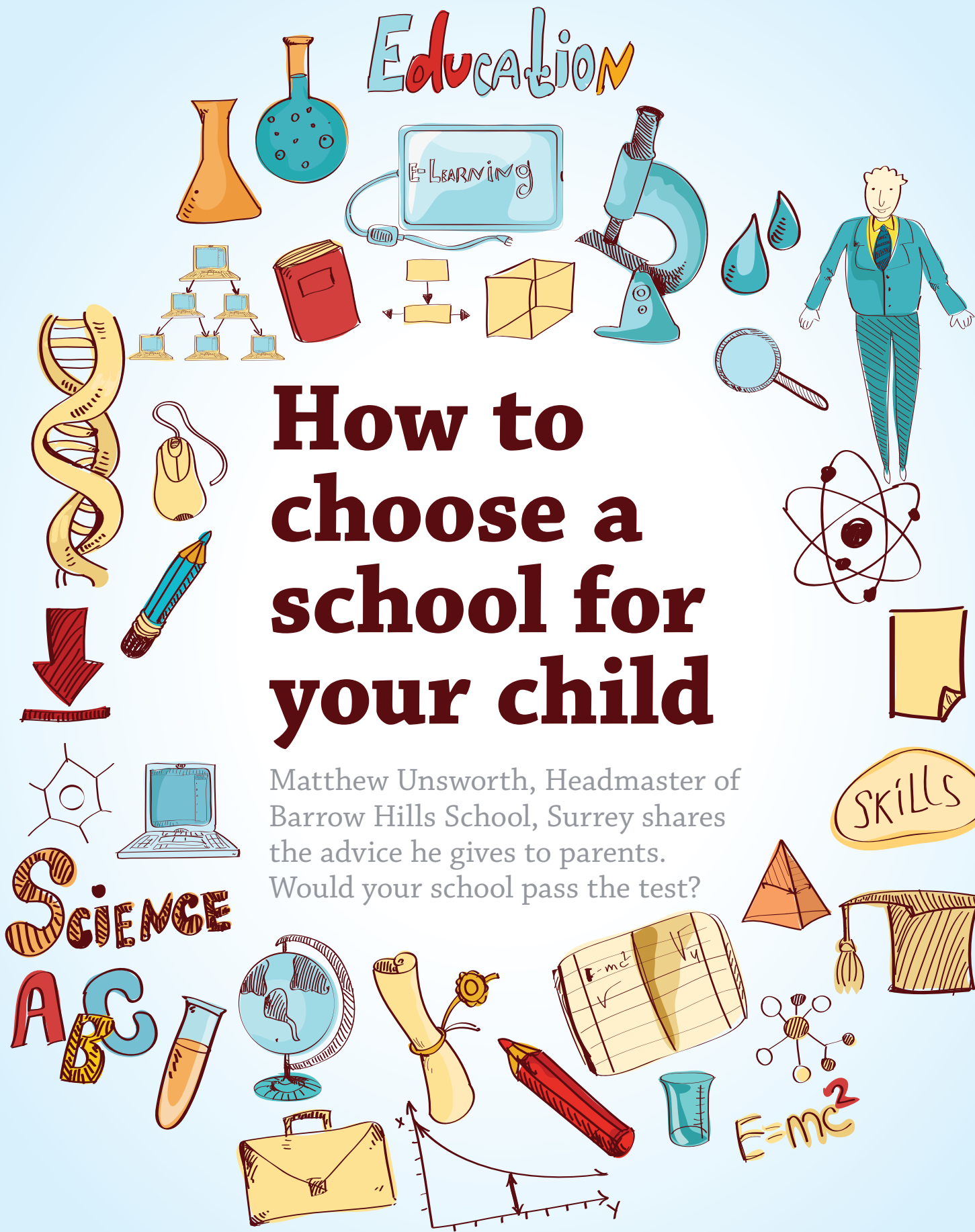
How to choose a school for your child

Matthew Unsworth, Headmaster of Barrow Hills School, Surrey shares the advice he gives to parents. Would your school pass the test?

SCIENCE

A&C

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So your child is on their feet and the end of nappies may be in sight (believe me, as a father of three, that day does finally come...hang in there!) Thoughts turn to schools.

In my tenth year of headship of a primary aged school and as a father of two boys of seven and a girl of four forgive me for offering some words of advice and wisdom.

Firstly - what sort of parent are you?

There are various ways of answering this question, so here's a guide.

At one end of the spectrum there are the parents who above all else want their child to be educated in the most intellectually challenging environment as possible, in a system hard wired to passing exams. If they have friends, well that comes second because they are off to Oxbridge and this journey towards academic success starts on day one. At the opposite end are the parents who want their child to be happy. To enjoy the years of childhood. They want them to be loved and to have friends. Doing well academically comes second.

Most parents lie in between these two extremes and the commensurate schools available. But before I go on to schools, it is worth pausing and asking yourself, honestly, what matters most about your child's primary school years?

Now, on to schools

Just as you tell an estate agent you want a certain house with the requisite number of bedrooms in a particular type of location, he or she will show you several houses that on the face of it fit the bill or near enough. Yet when you see them how different they all are!

Are you someone who likes facts and figures? Do you want to know the precise details to understand the

school or are you empathetic, do you go by feel and atmosphere and just 'know' when it is right? Not every Head will be in tune with your way of evaluating so do be brave and if you are a details person and the Head is expounding in broad, sweeping gestures about the heart and soul of the school whilst you really want to know the drop off and pick up times and if it does ballet and after school club – well then just ask!

I propose three lenses to look through when considering schools. These are academic, values and happiness.

Academic

Academic covers everything on the timetable. The times they are with a teacher learning specific things such as maths, music, art and sport. Is there a hierarchy? Do maths and English matter more than music and art? Do you want them to? If you choose a school that places excellence on the core subjects first and all else second - and you really want a school that values, the broadest education possible - you will not be happy as a parent and vice versa.

Values

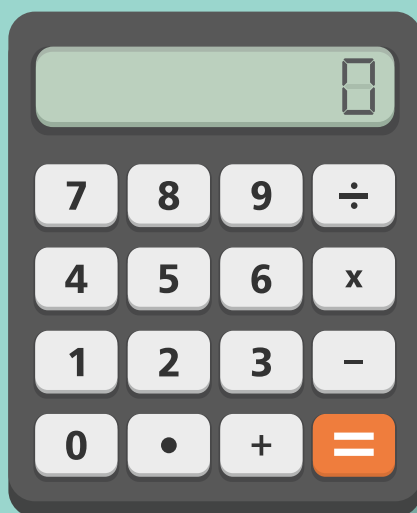
Secondly, values. Weaving in and through the school, what does it stand for? Does the leadership represent a valid role model? Thinking back, what values did your own school experience give you? Can you think of someone who stands out in your memories as being honest, kind, fair, merciful or perhaps the opposite? What values do you have at home and how important are they to you? Often the gentle Christian atmosphere most of us who went to school in England 'in our day' experienced is now largely absent. Outside of a faith school these wider and deeper values are rarely articulated. Do you care? If you do and are unsure what the school stands for, again ask.

Happiness

Thirdly, happiness. Here I am not talking about mindfulness or well-being, just a plain old fashioned childhood. Do they have space and time to run around, dig holes, climb trees? Are they allowed outside if it snows? Does the school permit conkers? Or goggles for swimming (sadly, you can't make it up these days...). Does the school give them time to be bored? I am going to come off the fence at this point and give my opinion: whether or not you are willing to trade away your son or daughter's childhood to the anvil of passing exams, and relentlessly push them whilst they are young and pliant enough not to push back, you should not. They will not thank you for never spending the time with them on your hands and knees making castles out of boxes. They won't have happy memories of mindlessly watching as you fill out some sheet at a museum - supposedly designed for them but instead completed by their competitive parent. We all only have one childhood and our recollections of it define our approach to life. Trade it away at your peril. The race to have your child read 'War and Peace' by the age of four is destructive and we should all instead learn to spend time with our children and choose a school that values this too.

So, good luck! Just as no book prepared you to be a mum and dad, you just had to step up to the responsibility and found the way forward, equally there is no one 'perfect school'. Good people and good things are the norm and as long as you talk about what you want, what you value, and build a relationship with the school you choose, it should all work out.

And what happens when it doesn't? Well, that's another story...



Parliamentary discussions on numeracy

Adrian Brindley, Head of Pre-Prep at Bilton Grange School and Advisor to Pre-School Learning Alliance writes about the importance of ensuring early years teachers are qualified to provide young children with a solid foundation in maths

On behalf of the Pre-School Learning Alliance, I have recently had the privilege of involvement in the All Party Parliamentary Group and the National Numeracy Forums, and these discussions have been a fascinating insight into what is a pivotal point in the national approach to maths education. With a 'new' government in place, it is vital that the momentum that we see, with new initiatives across the country and all party political support, continues, driving our country's ability in this subject at all levels of education – from early years to adult.

An overarching aspect with which I'm sure all are familiar, is an overwhelming lack of confidence in this subject – notably with young and older adults, but also with

parents helping their offspring and projecting their lack of confidence with maths on to their children, which is a significant issue hindering the progress of maths education. This conundrum has been at the heart of the All Party Parliamentary Group and National Numeracy Forums discussions, and I think that there is a way forward!

Maths & Numeracy in the Early Years

How children learn about numbers and develop mathematical understanding during the pre-school years is vitally important and sets them on a path towards numeracy skills and confidence in later life. In 2013/14, 23% of children in England failed to achieve the expected level in

mathematics at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (Department for Education, 2014), and research suggests that once children fall behind, they continue to do so throughout school.

With this in mind, the All-Party Parliamentary Group brought together a number of early years and maths education specialists to discuss how maths and numeracy is learnt in pre-school settings and how a positive attitude can be instilled during this vital stage of learning.

Improving the pivotal Early Years of maths education

Despite maths being included in the English Early Years Foundation Stage framework and equivalent

curricula for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, more still needs to be done to raise the profile of maths and encourage the development of mathematical thinking in young children.

There are many innovative approaches and resources which incorporate maths into play and help to make the abstract, concrete, but these are often not properly understood or used in early learning settings by practitioners. There remains a concern that there is much emphasis on 'counting on' and rote learning, at the expense of developing early number sense and beginning to understand the abstract language of maths.

The quality of maths learning varies substantially in early years settings and this often depends on the qualifications and attitudes of the practitioners. Many working with under five year olds are mathematically under-qualified and unconfident, with no qualification higher than Level 2 (roughly equivalent to a GCSE A*-C pass). Many also have a negative outlook on maths as a result of their own school experiences. As one of the experts put it, one of the best ways to produce children who have maths difficulties is "to employ adults who know little and preferably hate mathematics".

In our discussions, most of the experts agreed that providing better training in early years' maths development is essential to start improving children's understanding of maths at a young age. Simply making maths GCSE a requirement for new entrants to the profession will not improve the skills and knowledge of the existing workforce.

So how can this be improved?

The government should increase the focus of maths and numeracy in the early years' curriculum, by including number sense as a prime area of development (alongside communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development).

There should be more research into

the ways young children learn maths to inform teaching methods. Adults may well be imposing their view of how children learn both at home and in their early years of organised learning. This is no doubt affected by the experience of those adults when they were being educated at that age and later.

An investigation into the long term effects of adult influenced experience within a mathematical environment, the use of language, the acquisition of specific mathematical language and its understanding at an early age is required. Allowing children to discover their own methods rather than plummet into adult driven vocabulary and mark making has much merit. The concern to achieve adult driven criteria may be reducing the strength of children's foundations in the subject.

Enhancing confidence and engaging parents

Like many of those in the early years workforce, parents may be reluctant to engage in the subject because of their own lack of confidence, and thus pass on to their children the perception that it is ok to be "no good at maths".

Accordingly, we need to support parents to enable them to engage their children in maths and to pass on the understanding of how important (and indeed relevant) maths is in their children's lives. A national drive to highlight the importance of early maths learning, similar to those for healthy eating and exercise, and language and reading, would be a good place to start.

In conclusion

Too many early years settings fail to provide young children with a good start to their maths education. Although there are some concerns about the Early Years maths curriculum, the main problems are the attitudes, mathematical confidence and understanding of those who work with young children (both teachers and parents).

An outcome of these discussions in Westminster are several key steps that

I would commend to the Secretary of State for Education, as a way of affecting change in the long term;

- All early years practitioners, both new entrants and the existing workforce, should be trained in children's mathematical development
- The Maths Hubs programme should be extended to include pre-schools
- Greater guidance should be provided for practitioners on the use of effective approaches and resources
- Parents should directly receive information on how to develop their children's maths skills, and they should feel confident and supported in working in partnership with their child's teachers when dealing with maths education
- All of these steps should be underpinned by a national 'positive about maths' drive to draw in parents as well as early years staff

I hope, in sharing these views to another field of educators, that this does not move into the long grass, as the Conservative Party develop their strategy as government. If there is one figure that should stick in parliamentarians' minds, apart from the growing acknowledgement of the tangible link between poor mathematics skills and poor mental health, it is that £20 billion pounds per year are lost to the British economy due to poor adult numeracy. Higher Numeracy skills correlate with higher wages, good health and being employed, and it is our responsibility as Prep School teachers to ensure that we are doing our utmost to support and further this learning.

If you would like more information, visit www.appgmathsnumeracy.org.uk or email info@appgmathsnumeracy.org.uk

Play and explore

Mrs Jenny Pritchard, Deputy Head for Pre-Prep at Town Close School, Norwich, shares an early years tale

The first day of term in September and a new child is starting his academic journey in Reception. He stands aloof, not wanting to make any eye contact with anyone and not moving. He barely answers to his own name and seems totally overwhelmed by the whole experience. With regard to 'Development Matters' he is operating at the lower end of the 30 to 50 months bands in the prime areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Fast forward to June and this child is comfortable within his own skin, like a 'fish in water' (Prof Ferre Laevers). He has achieved a good level of development and is an 'exceeding' reader, writer and mathematician. He talks and plays with the other children. What a journey this child has been on, and it forms the foundations for his whole academic experience.

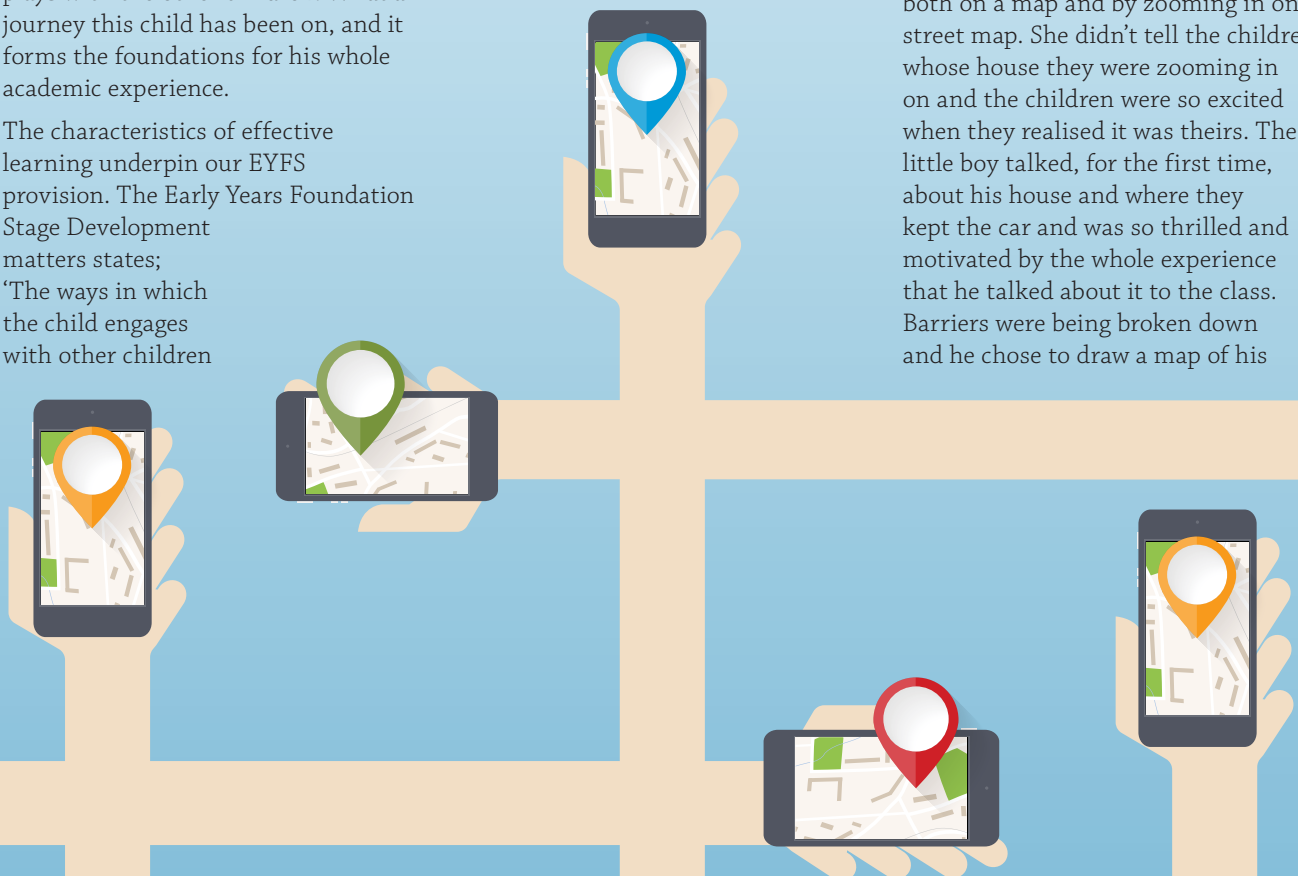
The characteristics of effective learning underpin our EYFS provision. The Early Years Foundation Stage Development matters states; 'The ways in which the child engages with other children

and their environment – playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically – underpin learning and development across all areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner' (Early Education 2012).

Several years ago we set up an area in our provision specifically so that the children can play and explore. They have time to find out and 'have a go' at their self-chosen challenges. This is a dedicated area where the children are in charge of their own learning. They can follow their interests and explore and refine their own projects. They can concentrate on achieving what they set out to do and show resilience when things don't go quite

to plan. They are given opportunities for engagement, they are self-motivated and they are able to create and to think critically. They have access to different resources and are able to take their creations home.

Going back to our child at the start of Reception, he was like a rabbit in the headlights. By providing him with a playful environment, setting various challenges and empathising with him he started to engage with his teacher. By observing him and tuning in to his interests she made specific resources that appealed to him. He had not accessed a computer before starting with us and was fascinated by maps. His teacher used Google maps to show the whole class their homes, both on a map and by zooming in on street map. She didn't tell the children whose house they were zooming in on and the children were so excited when they realised it was theirs. The little boy talked, for the first time, about his house and where they kept the car and was so thrilled and motivated by the whole experience that he talked about it to the class. Barriers were being broken down and he chose to draw a map of his





home and the surrounding area. This interest continued for a while and started him on the road to becoming a writer. He asked for various words and as his phonic skills developed he started making phonetically plausible attempts at writing the words on his various maps. They became more and more detailed with various features being added with lots of descriptive narrative. The other children became fascinated by them and started asking him questions and ultimately copying his ideas. His self-esteem visibly grew and friendships started to develop.

Following this success and bearing in mind the reluctance of many boys to hold a pencil and write for any purpose, the teacher set up an 'office' area with a range of different resources that she refreshed regularly. The area was accessible to children to use when they had finished a teacher led 'job'. During the term the boys started to go and explore this resource to the extent that the area had to be increased to cope with the demand. All the boys in the class, bar two summer born boys, achieved the early learning goal for writing. The Year One teachers have been amazed at the starting point this year in boys' literacy.

Ofsted have recently produced a report called 'Teaching and play in the early years – a balancing act? A good practice survey to explore perception of teaching and play in the early years' (July 2015). The purpose was 'to address the recurring myth that teaching and play are separate, disconnected endeavours in the early years'. Ofsted have defined the elements of early years practice that make up teaching as follows; 'Teaching should not be taken to imply a 'top down' or formal way of working. It is a broad term which covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated

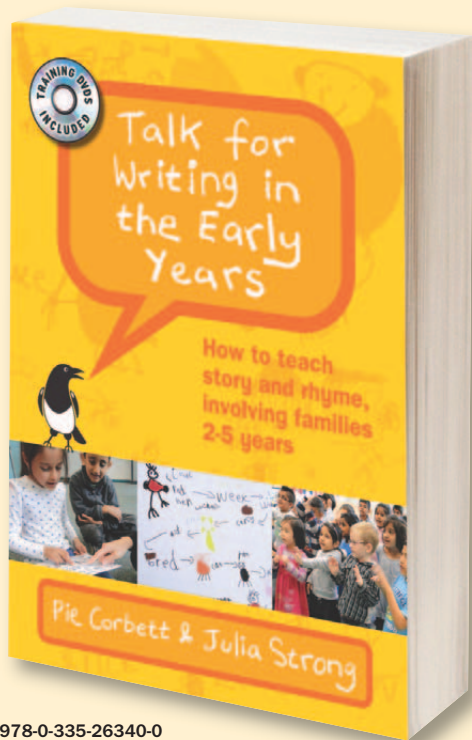
play and activities: communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment they provide and the attention to the physical environment as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do as well as take account of their interests and dispositions to learning (characteristics of effective learning), and use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and monitoring their progress'. It highlights the importance of play. 'Play provides the natural, imaginative and motivating contexts for children to learn about themselves, one another and the world around them. A single moment of sustained play can afford children many developmental experiences at once, covering multiple areas of learning and reinforcing the characteristics of effective learning.'

One key way in which we try to encourage and enthuse our pupils is the way in which we introduce new topics. For example, the children started on a Polar Regions topic by answering a loud knock on the school door and finding four visitors on the doorstep. There were two polar bears and two emperor penguins. Albert, the largest polar bear, was carrying a letter explaining that they had run away from the zoo and were trying to discover where in the world polar bears and emperor penguins came from. Then the children were asked what they would like to learn about the Polar Regions. Their questions were written on a large piece of paper as a mind map and it was put on the wall for the duration of the topic. Questions ranged from 'How do you build an igloo?', 'how do penguins

drink?' to 'why do people have sledges?'.

The role play area was made into an ice grotto with a variety of polar animals and resourced with texts, both fiction and non-fiction, about the Polar Regions. At school the children were able to make a full sized igloo using empty milk containers. To round the topic off the children went to a local zoo and had a dedicated session on Polar animals. The questions on the mind map were revisited and the answers written alongside them. Each child was then able to take a copy home and discuss their findings with their parents. Further mindmaps were made answering the question 'Should animals live in zoos?' with very revealing and thoughtful comments noted. The learning had taken place in a playful way that had engaged all the children.

The children have had access to a variety of resources and challenging activities that they have been able to address at their own level and taken on in their own way. They have become resilient and independent. They have also achieved during the year, with most making at least four levels of progress from their starting point at the beginning of Reception. The children have also had to work together, sharing resources, explaining their intentions and negotiating space. They have developed a positive, 'have a go' attitude and are keen to share their thoughts and ideas with their peers and other adults. They have independently taken photos on iPads of anything that they are proud of and want to keep as a record. They have started in year one with a positive attitude to learning and seem to want to embrace every new challenge. They are able to articulate questions and to provide their own theories as a result of having had the time and space to make their own discoveries.



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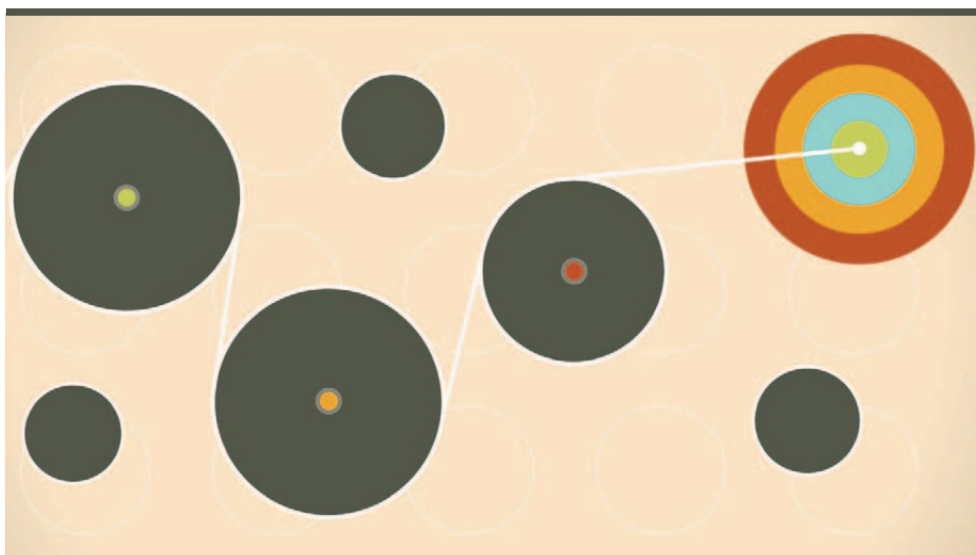
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A niche for the Raspberry Pi

Graham Hastings, Head of Computing at St John's College School, Cambridge shares this exciting resource

Commonly asked of the Raspberry Pi is what can the device do that cannot already be done using our existing school computers? When I obtained a Pi three years ago this thought occurred to me. Since then I have discovered a role for the Pi that has made it a valuable resource for delivering our computing curriculum.

Many Prep schools, mine included, are embracing the tablet as a flexible solution to the children's digital learning needs. As a teacher of computing, the replacement of desktop computers and laptops with tablets is a concern when it comes to delivering the physical computing elements of the new programmes of study. In the past we have used resources such as the FlowGo interface and Flowol software but these are not compatible with most

chromebooks and android tablets, let alone iPads.

The rationale for teaching physical computing has never been clearer. The 'internet of things' is now a major focus for internet based developments and it is vital that this generation of school children clearly understand the potential of physical systems to improve the lives of everyone on Earth.

As a control workstation for the teaching of physical computing there is a niche for the Raspberry Pi. An important additional benefit is that it raises the children's awareness of computing outside the closed iOS and Microsoft systems that they otherwise use. There are a number of other reasons why I decided that a Pi based control workstation was the

direction to take, the most salient of which are listed below.

Affordability

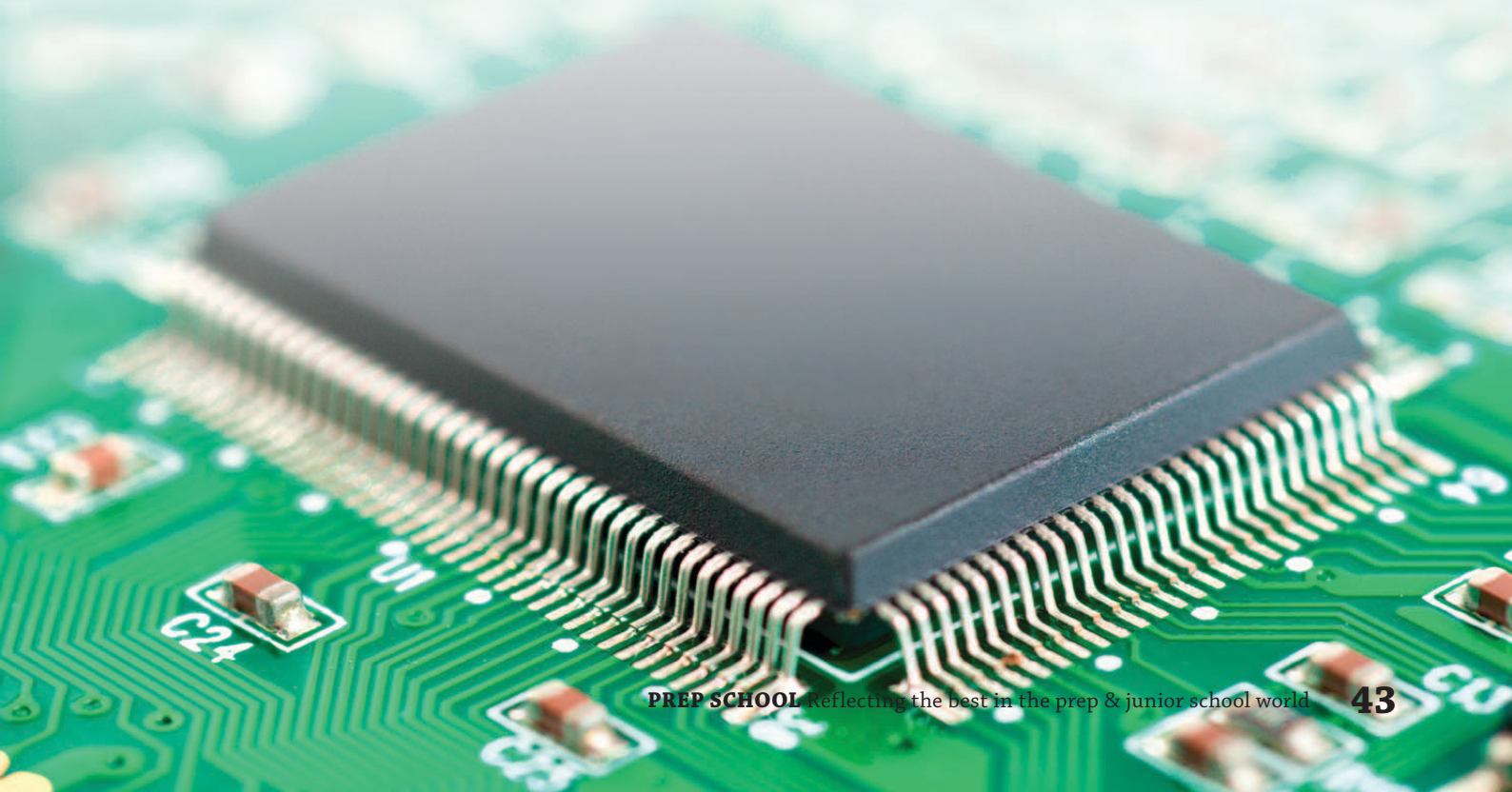
If old screens, keyboards and mice, are recycled a control workstation can be set up for under £150 and there are no software costs.

Usability

The addition of a gPiO control interface makes it simple for even very young children to connect components to the Pi and they can use their existing Scratch skills to write their control programs.

Compact

The hardware has a relatively small footprint so will fit easily on the desk alongside the keyboard and mouse.



Sustainability

With over three million sold already the Pi is here to stay and the Raspberry Pi Foundation, with the backing of an active global community, will continue to support teachers well into the future.

Open source

Both the hardware and software are open source. This protects the workstation from the tyranny of the endless upgrade cycle that has been imposed on schools for decades by for-profit companies.

Remote applications

The workstation will work on a six volt battery, so once a system is running it can be located anywhere or be used to control a vehicle.

Component price, range and availability

The gPiO interface is compatible with the vast array of cheap, generic, off-the-shelf electrical components via standard 4mm plugs.

Output voltage range

The output voltage of the interface depends on the input voltage so it can be anything from 3 to 24 volts.

Interoperability

As an open system, the workstations integrate with the plethora of affordable, Raspberry Pi compatible, expansion products (such as the camera module).

Python

Physical computing provides a superb context to introduce children to the textural programming language, Python.

Linux

The Pi also introduces the children to an open source operating system and the important understanding that computers need not run on Windows or iOS.

At St John's we are developing a STEM curriculum to more closely integrate science, computing and D&T. A typical example is the Fairground topic. Having carried out some research, the children design and make a ride that includes electrical components. Once complete the children program a computer to control the actions of their rides to bring them to life.

Getting started

If this has wetted your appetite and you are new to the Raspberry Pi my advice is to purchase a starter kit, Adventures in Raspberry Pi edition, from the Raspberry Pi Foundation at www.raspberrypi.org and a gPiO interface from their website at www.gpio.co.uk.

Spend some time playing with the Pi and the interface until you can use it with confidence. Let some of your pupils experiment with it. Set them some simple physical computing tasks. The next stage is to purchase sufficient equipment and set it up for whole classes to use in pairs or groups of three.

Visit the gPiO website for some project ideas and follow the links listed below for further ideas and background information on physical computing.

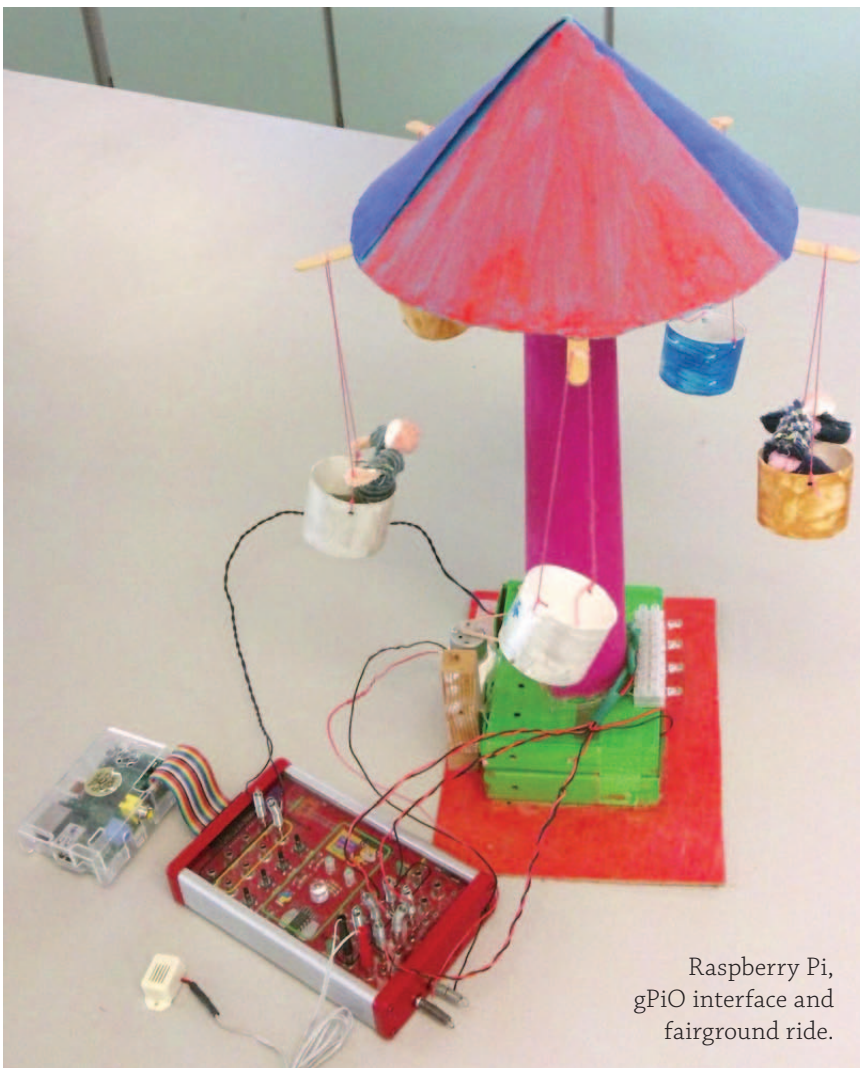
www.prezi.com/fd8fal2sjosp/physical-computing/

www.sites.google.com/site/primaryictitt/home/key-stage-2/control

www.raspberrypi.org/resources/teach/

www.prezi.com/pwffhmbunwc/e2bn/

For a more detailed outline of the Raspberry Pi, see the article on pages 6 - 7 of the CAS Summer 2015 newsletter, 'Lets Get Physical' at www.community.computingatschool.org.uk/resources/3397



Raspberry Pi, gPiO interface and fairground ride.

Baseball and education



Dr Matthew Jenkinson explores the physical, mental and moral benefits of playing baseball

As with a lot of teachers – as with most people with a job – during the vacation I try to go somewhere physically and mentally detached from my workplace. Don't get me wrong: I love my job, and the school where I work, but everyone needs to take some time away to be refreshed by a change of pace and scenery. In my case, one of the best places to go, thousands of miles away from term-time life, is Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles. The views, the weather, the sport, the people, are all alien to the place where I spend the majority of my life.

And, as with a lot of teachers, once I get to the place that is physically and mentally detached from my workplace, I last about ten minutes before my mind wanders back to the day-job. I found this happening last summer, as I watched the Dodgers play the Angels on a roasting hot Sunday afternoon. But I was not, for a change, worrying about the admin I was leaving until the weekend before term, how the exam syllabus had changed, or whether a bunch of 13-year-olds had learnt their lines for the school play. Rather, I was inspired by the game to think of how much UK schoolchildren – with the honourable exception of the work carried out by the British Baseball Federation – miss out by not being exposed to baseball.

I am talking about baseball in its purest form. Any sport that attracts billions of dollars will have its corrupt elements. From the Black Sox scandal of 1919 to the Biogenesis growth hormone disgrace of 2013, baseball has not been immune to controversy.

But if we pare back the game to its essence, it has inherent in it highly laudable principles and values that apply to education inside and outside the ballpark.

Physical and Mental Benefits

It is pretty easy to make a superficial case for baseball based on the physical benefits it brings. Despite its generally sedentary appearance, baseball provides calorie-burning cardiovascular exercise, and – through a combination of running, swinging, squatting and throwing – it works its participants' arms, thighs, chests, shoulders and legs. Baseball is also particularly good for the honing of hand-eye coordination and split-second thinking skills.

Again, as with most sports, baseball brings with it some clear benefits to the mental health of its players and spectators. Being able to invest mentally in a game for two or three hours distracts us from day-to-day preoccupations. It is a game with plenty of hiatuses, in which participants and spectators can pause and reflect. If you are lucky to be at a game while the sun is shining, there is the added bonus of extra vitamin D. The benefits of being engaged in a team and forming friendships within that team are also boons for mental health. Dr Alan Castel has pointed to the mental benefits of following a game, even if you are not participating in it, especially if it is on the radio. There is just so much information to juggle at any one moment: 'the number of balls and strikes ... whether

the runner on base should steal, who is warming up in the bullpen'. This is what former Commissioner of Baseball and President of the National League A. Bartlett Giamatti called 'the enclosed green field of the mind'.

Sacrifice and Redemption

As important as these benefits are, there are deeper principles inherent in baseball, which bestow on it a more profound educational value. These are the principles of sacrifice and redemption. In his article 'Taking One for the Team: Baseball and Sacrifice', Willie Young outlines the ethical and philosophical value of the manifold sacrifices players can make in the game: 'a sacrifice fly, advancing to draw a throw so a runner may score', 'pitching deep into a ballgame to let the bullpen rest', or 'a batter may let himself be hit by a pitch, to give his team a baserunner'. Young identifies the central sacrificial act, however, to be the 'sacrifice bunt'. This is the practice of the hitter 'bunting' or tapping the ball to allow a runner to advance to their next base, while almost certainly sacrificing their own chances of progressing to first base. The sacrificial hitter forgoes their own chance of home-run glory for the benefit of their teammate and their team as a whole.

Alongside sacrifice is the principle of redemption, based on an appreciation of the game's difficulty, and a healthy approach to failure and forgiveness. At its core, there is an understanding that there are certain elements of baseball that are very, very difficult. It may sound ridiculous to reiterate,



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Being able to invest mentally in a game for two or three hours distracts us from day-to-day preoccupations

but it is really rather hard to hit the ball in the first place. This is shown by the briefest look at players' batting averages – the number of hits a player makes divided by their number of 'at bats'. Ty Cobb holds the highest career batting average with .366; the all-time league average is between .260 and .275. Even the iconic Joe DiMaggio, according to Don M. Chance, only had a 1-in-3,394 chance of achieving his 56-game hitting streak in 1941.

In terms of runs, even the game's best players will score a run once in six or seven times that they are at the plate. Between 1990 and 2015, the total number of runs per game (including both teams) ranged from 8.13 to 10.28. As for home runs: the great Babe Ruth scored 714 home runs, but this was over 21 years and well over 8000 'at bats'. Players are not, for the most part, vilified for missing the ball (so long as they hit it a reasonable number of times), nor are they (generally) castigated for getting out, as they will return to the plate in a later inning to redeem themselves. As summarised in Ken Burns's epic Baseball documentary from 1994, 'the men who fail seven times out of ten are considered the game's greatest heroes'.

Belliotti's nine principles

In his classic article 'Nine Principles of Baseball and Life', Raymond Angelo Belliotti outlined some core values and lessons that baseball, in its purest form, promotes. They are values and lessons that we should all be instilling in our pupils:

1. *Make no excuses*: mistakes are denied through excuses, and we should all be learning from the mistakes that we all make

2. *Play with honour*: work hard, be positive, encourage teammates, treat opponents with respect

3. *Be relentless*: only you can give up, and you are not defeated until the game is over, so keep playing with positive passion, no matter what the score is

4. *Slay your own demons, then slay dragons*: accept that there are many things outside your control, do not be knocked sideways when those things go against you, but focus positively on what you can do in the future

5. *Take responsibility for those things under your control*: those things constitute your contribution to the game, how you take advice, how you play

6. *Play the game one pitch at a time*: focus on what is happening now, no matter what your contribution to the play is, not what has just happened or what you think might happen next

7. *Focus on behaviour, not outcomes*: you may have lost the game, but you are not a loser if you have played with total commitment for your team

8. *The best players are the best learners*: no matter how many home runs you have scored, if you stop listening and learning, you are not a winner

9. *Be a joyous warrior*: be humble in victory, dignified in defeat, and give your all in a relentless positive way

Ninth Inning

So, if we look at baseball in its uncorrupted state, it is hard to deny that the game has within it many principles that we should be cultivating in our students. I am not suggesting that many domestic UK sports do not have some of these

qualities, but they do seem to coincide perfectly in baseball.

We want to teach our pupils to be resilient, to return to the plate, even if the statistical chances of success and glory may seem against them. It is ok for them to miss, so long as they keep trying to hit; and if they keep trying to hit, they may very well eventually do so. We want them to have the wisdom to understand that they should focus on those things they are able to change for the better, rather than dwelling obsessively on those things that are out of their control. We want our pupils to keep learning, to work for the common good, and sometimes to sacrifice their own personal glory for the benefit of those around them. We want them to respect one another whether they are friend or foe, to take responsibility for their own behaviour, and to approach their lives with integrity and positive commitment.

Finally, a complex and precariously-poised game like baseball reflects, as Giamatti puts it, 'how slight and fragile are the circumstances that exalt one group of human beings over another'. We want our pupils to appreciate how it is the same outside the ballpark.

Dr Matthew Jenkinson is Deputy Head Academic of New College School, Oxford. He received his PhD from Merton College, Oxford, and he is the author of two books and several articles and reviews covering history, English and education. He is also the editor of the Hour-Long Shakespeare series, available to purchase at www.johncattbookshop.com

The power of rugby endures



The Rugby World Cup may be a distant memory, but the power of rugby endures. Kevin Rich from Westbourne House School reflects on his love of the powerful game

With the leaden skies of late October reflecting the national mood over England's early exit from the World Cup and yet another condemning article on the unacceptable dangers presented by the game of rugby I felt obliged to voice my support of rugby. I want to share my experiences and highlight the transformative effect that rugby has on children of Prep School age.

Given what I have just said I should caveat my position in that my views may contain a slight bias, influenced by a life long love of the game. I was inspired many years ago by regular trips to the 'Rec' to watch a Bath side on the cusp of greatness, of many years playing and subsequently a life in coaching. So I apologize in advance for this leaning and the rather rose tinted view.

I do, however, understand implicitly the health and safety euphoria and also support the greater emphasis on heightened awareness of concussion and other associated dangers inherent in playing the game. Everyone involved in delivering the game have a responsibility to protect players of all ages as much as humanly possible and I support this 100%. Nobody wants to be part of a game where risk and injury is all that anyone is talking about. Getting this right underpins any useful progress.

So, what has lead to this increased anxiety, especially from the parents of the children who are taking part? Well, concussion (more poignantly thought of as brain injury) is the hot topic now and rightfully should be a high priority for

everyone. Is there a greater occurrence of it nowadays? Has the game become more physical at all levels and at all age groups and thus represents a higher degree of risk than ever before? Evidence suggests at the highest levels we are seeing elite players becoming faster, more powerful and conditioned. The collision and tackle area is bound to leave bodies broken and wounded – what is right is that people in control of the game are doing all things possible to reduce the risk.

The new engagement at the scrum, the clear refereeing of the tip tackle and competing in the air are good signs that rugby is taking safety seriously in the modern age. We have all winced during this World Cup as we witness the bone-crunching tackles that have become the norm in international rugby with once again the injury fallout pre-occupying much of the media space. In context, at the time of writing, the injury count for this tournament is within normal range of any other World Cup and the medical supervision has never been stronger.

Bath University are currently involved with a 'Rugby Project' or CRISP (Community Rugby Injury Surveillance Project) and Saracens are making their players wear data recorders that measure impact of collisions. Both are further evidence that player safety is of prime importance.

The new protocol for head injury is now firmly established and the awareness is heightened to such an extent that it is almost impossible for players to continue to play with an obvious

head injury. The rise in incidence of concussion is in a big part due to the increased diagnosis and extra care for players in returning to the game but we would be naive to think that it is an area of the game that we can be fully content about just yet.

So what is the relevance of all of this to the Prep School and mini versions that thousands of children take part in each week? Surely a child's version of the game bears little resemblance? Try telling a new rugby mum that who happens to watch a televised game! Well let us not suggest that young players don't get badly injured – of course they do but against this backdrop of risk we have to weigh up what the game offers and presents in terms of educational opportunities and that oft forgotten part of school life - fun. Every week I see boys excited about their rugby, restless for the chance to challenge themselves against others in a team setting. Games sessions and matches provide a hugely enjoyable and essential outlet for a great number of school pupils whose time is micro-managed and bubble wrapped to within an inch of their lives. The dark cloud of academic pressure can weigh heavily on those whose natural passions lie elsewhere and can thrive in an environment where written tests and targets are irrelevant. The instinct for 'rough and tumble' is 'hard-wired' as any parent of small boys knows only too well. Boys don't really ever grow out of this and they do not want the grown ups constantly managing their physical limits. Rugby provides an incredibly well-structured and supervised

environment to use this physicality, to seek challenge and develop self-esteem. (The girls, not to be outdone, are desperate to play too and it is one of the fastest growing games in the country).

In a nutshell boys find out something about themselves in the heat of the battle on a rugby pitch that is difficult to replicate in a French or history lesson (I teach French too!). They never fail to surprise themselves or us adults. They learn to trust one another, they discover new mates, they compete for a cause bigger than themselves and sacrifice themselves for a short while to help the team overcome the odds. Crucially they learn about resilience – rugby hurts, how can it not! But if you have a smile on your face and you are enjoying it then it doesn't matter. I always say to the U13 boys pre-match – “we have to enjoy it or it's just too painful” (especially on a freezing January afternoon).

Yet before I get carried away espousing the values of a game and singing its praises, many may wish to critique how the traditional Prep and Public Schools have, until recently anyway, been overly focused on the elite few (the 1st XV!), banging on about unbeaten seasons and not developing the keen but less able. Surely rugby in schools is just for the Alpha mesomorphs, the chosen few. I hear the concern of parents whose children are not super talented but realize that they would like their children to benefit from the team environment, especially rugby. I could not agree more but the culture of sport in our schools is shifting/has shifted exponentially and the proliferation of fixtures all through age and ability ranges to include everyone who wants to play is now 'de rigueur' in any school that claims to care about each child. Who decided that ability is all that matters in sport anyway?

Thank goodness for such a move away from the elitist chest beating that valued only the outcome and towards a new, modern way with enjoyment and learning at the beginning and at the end. (Of course the emotions entwined with victory and defeat are never far away but remember we are the adults – we can entirely shape how young people

react to the outcomes of competition).

And herein is the nub and essence of ensuring rugby's rightful place in our schools and for us in our Prep School. The culture must be embedded to focus on the process of improvement, enjoyment and teamwork – consistent with the RFU's core values. The coaching must gradually build up confidence in the tackle and contact areas – the bits children may struggle with. The 'New Rules of Play' are good news for rugby in Prep Schools – they emphasise the enjoyable aspects of the game and minimize the bits that the children are too young to really do well like the scrum and lineout. The teams are smaller – the boys are more involved, they learn more and have more chance to breathe in those virtues already discussed.

We have a responsibility to ensure that results and outcomes are played down, that games are as even as possible against other schools, and parents must join us on this journey. It goes against instinct at times in a media saturated, results based world, but it's not our game and we are not playing. It is not surprising that one of the most famous Public Schools in the world is actively encouraging pupils, coaches and parents not to make the result the focal point of discussion post match. This is right and we should all be trying to do the same.

Our school, along with many others, is very much engaged in developing the growth mindset that Dweck et al have written about so forcefully in recent years.

We see sport and especially rugby as being at the heart of this in helping to get the best out of our pupils. Setting the scene for pupils to take responsibility for their success and failure is seen as important as anything else. A culture of sport that places development firmly at the centre, fosters a life long enjoyment and positions results and competition carefully to the side does

not undermine the credibility of any school, it strengthens it.

Without this clarity of vision, schools rugby will always be prone to scaremongering from the press, to feel scrutinized and shoved into the spotlight for the wrong reasons. Without a clear success criteria it will always be hard to justify what the benefits of rugby are in the light of another bad injury.

So, whilst I may have only scratched the surface of the debate, I will always be a vehement supporter of rugby in our schools. I see the transformative value of participation almost daily. Will some boys get injured playing rugby? Sadly yes, and the injury may sometimes be a concussion. But is this risk worth taking? Well, ask the boy whose sense of self-worth has been invigorated and shaped by being part of a rugby team and who waits patiently through morning lessons for the highlight of his day.



The importance of performing arts in education

Gratnells write about their latest product that provides positive, stimulating experiences for children

Late in 2014 the website of Stagecoach, the respected network of performing arts schools, carried the findings of a research study covering the views of 1,500 parents of children involved in performing arts activities.

The results were a clarion call to all those who feel that the growing emphasis on technology in education might be endangering children's social skills. In an overwhelmingly positive response to the way a performing arts based education has helped their offspring, parents identified empathy, imagination, general happiness and wellbeing as key improvements they had seen.

It is in this context that Gratnells, the well-known provider of storage systems to schools, has chosen to introduce Gratnells Stage, an advanced modular staging system, along with a drive to encourage schools to promote all manner of performance and presentation skills.

There is an abundance of expert opinion and published research which supports their campaign. For example, Professor Maggie Kinloch, author of *The importance of Theatre and Performance to the Development of the Child*, is among many arguing the case for creative expression with a long list of its benefits, including the development of language and communications skills, stimulation

of their creativity and developing their ability to understand.

Murray Hudson, MD of Gratnells, says the company's expansion into the world of performing arts is a natural extension of its existing business. "Our products facilitate children's access to a wealth of educational experience from the beginnings of tactile play and exploration of the natural world to organised and structured resources for science and the digital technologies. We are developing concepts such as Power trays' for storage and recharging of digital devices alongside industry partners and we are enthusiastic co-founders of Learning Rooms which challenges outmoded ideas about the learning environment to provide a more stimulating and positive experience for all children.

Taking this philosophy a step further into the public spaces of schools with Gratnells Stage is an exciting venture for us. We have a system which is well designed, versatile and affordable and we expect it to enable more children to produce, present and perform as part of a fully-rounded education."

He points to a fulsome 2010 report undertaken by the EPPi Centre (Institute of Education, University of London) on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Arts Council England, English Heritage, Sport England and the

Museum Libraries Archives Council.

The report, which carried out 'a systematic review of empirical research on engagement, impact and value in culture and sport published in English since 1997', concluded that participation in structured arts activities had measurable, positive outcomes for children in academic attainment, early literacy skills, cognitive abilities and transformable skills. All this, as well as the sheer joy children get from participation in the activities.

The report draws on a broad range of studies from across the globe, including both the American and Asian continents. The studies vary from the macro overview to very specific activities, for example one in Hong Kong which evaluated an extra-curriculum, multi-component creative drama project involving puppet making.

While the pressure is undoubtedly on schools to concentrate on what the DfE calls "a core of academic subjects; English, maths, history or geography, the sciences and a language" education specialists such as Darren Henley have made a continuing case for the role of Cultural Education within that context.

In his independent review for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Education entitled 'Cultural Education in England'



he says, "At its best a sound cultural education should allow children to gain knowledge through the learning of facts, understanding through the development of their critical faculties, whether as an active participant (creating a piece of art or craft, reading a book, making a short film) or actively experiencing an event or place. Visiting a heritage site, gallery or museum, seeing how a building works, watching a musical, dance or film performance can be habit forming for the rest of a young person's life.

Here the author is making an even broader case for a fully rounded education, going beyond the benefits to the performers to include the watchers of the event. Performing arts has value for the participants but also the audience.

Facilitating performing arts is part of the Gratnells mission and Murray Hudson says that too extends beyond the performers.

"Presenting any 'live' activity is a collaborative project. Staging is a fundamental part of the process which includes sound and lighting, scenery, costumes, direction and production. The stage itself offers that extra dimension of focus and attention which makes it all work."

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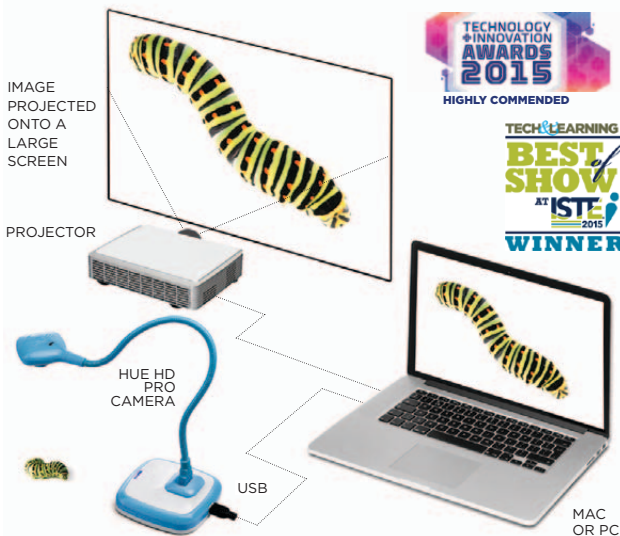
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The benefits of a classical music education

Synergy between classical music teaching and world music traditions means that now everyone can benefit from high quality ensemble playing

Many private preparatory, junior and pre-prep schools are justifiably proud of the quality of the music education that they provide and the large numbers of pupils who learn to play musical instruments. Schools tend to follow the classical model of providing specialist tuition on strings, woodwind, brass, piano/keyboard, vocal, percussion and guitar and most

will also offer a number of classical orchestral, band/wind ensembles and vocal/choral opportunities. This classical model produces competent performers with a good overview of classical traditions and repertoire and it also teaches important life skills – listening, empathy, patience, persistence, teamwork and self-discipline.

But what about those pupils who don't have an interest or aptitude for classical music and who don't currently participate – are they missing out on vital life skills training and if so, how can we include them?

Fortunately there is now an additional way to teach and deliver music and these all-important life skill benefits in tandem with the classical model.

The world music approach can work for all pupils, regardless of attitude, ability or socioeconomic background

World music genres - African Drumming, Brazilian Samba, Indonesian Gamelan, Caribbean Steel Pans and World Percussion - enable a school's music department to deliver a high speed, low cost alternative to the classical approach. It's a 'learning by playing' approach* which has been tried and tested in many schools, loved by children and it's an approach which can be accessed quickly by any classically trained music educator (or indeed by enthusiastic and skilled generalist class teachers).

But the real strength of the approach is that it engages and involves ALL pupils and allows a school to offer every pupil the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument and develop those vital life skills. See Table 1: The Benefits.

This needs further explanation:

- The world music approach can work for all pupils, regardless of attitude, ability or socio-economic background, because the instruments and the music are inherently accessible. The basic playing techniques of most instruments can be picked up in a relatively short period of teaching time and many simple ensemble pieces can be achieved by complete beginners. Therefore, the instrument is not a barrier to progress. Similarly, the music is easily approachable (even if it sounds unfamiliar to the ear initially) and whole classes of children can be playing simple pieces successfully from the first lesson.

- The accessibility of the instruments and the music also contributes to rapid progress. Children are immediately engaged and encouraged to focus, not only because the instruments are different, colourful and create a wonderfully different sound world, but because the class can quickly make a satisfying sound corporately. Nothing succeeds like success and under the guidance of a skilled and enthusiastic teacher it is entirely possible for a class to be performing together in front of the whole school after a few class music lessons.
- Rapid musical progress can of course reduce costs significantly. World music traditions can be picked up immediately by classically trained music teachers but they can also be taught by generalist teachers, enabling schools to make use of 'in-house' skills and extend current capability.
- Further budget considerations are the relatively low cost, durability and ease of maintenance of world music instruments as well as the additional benefit that one set of instruments can be utilized by the whole school. Once the school has procured a set of samba drums, or an Indonesian Gamelan, or a set of African drums then the instruments are there for future year groups to benefit from.

For all these reasons the cost of implementing a successful world music class ensemble-based approach

is astonishingly low and could literally cost your school as little £1 per pupil per year. See Table 2: The Costs

World music is a fabulously cost-effective way to involve all pupils in real music-making and to teach vitally important life skills to those who may currently be missing out. It makes a superb complement to established classical offerings and will give your music department an international string to its bow that is cost-effective and very quick to implement.

*NOTE: the *Drums for Schools* "learning by playing" approach and Class Packs have been developed, tested and refined over twenty years of actual class teaching, initially in primary schools in the Bristol region of the UK and later extended to Foundation Stage and Secondary levels in schools all over the UK and internationally. It is currently being applied successfully in hundreds of state-funded and independent schools in the UK, the Gulf, South East Asia and the USA.

Mary Edwards is a Music Education Consultant and former Director of Music at King Edward's Junior School, Bath. For more information about *Drums for Schools*, visit www.drumsforschools.com

Table 1: The Benefits

The following table scores Classical and World Music ensemble-based learning for the scope they give in developing each skill or area of knowledge.

Scope: 1= very limited, 2= limited, 3= fair, 4= good, 5= excellent

You may be surprised just how high world music-based learning scores, but the fact is that most of the major world music styles are ancient and sophisticated traditions with extensive repertoires and considerable scope for developing all the same skills that are needed for and developed by classical ensemble playing.

		Classical	World music
Life skills	Listening/empathy	5	5
	Initiative/leadership	5	5
	Teamwork/collaboration	5	5
	Patience/persistence	5	5
	Self-discipline	5	3
Musicianship	Instrumental skills	5	4
	Improvisation skills	3	5
	Performance skills	5	5
	Aural memory	5	5
Academic learning	In depth knowledge of the style/tradition	5	3
	Notation skills	5	4
	Compositional skills	5	4

Table 2: The Costs

The following table shows the approximate cost per pupil per year of teaching each world music tradition. There's a blank row for you to fill in and compare your school's classical music costs and coverage.

Assumptions: School of 300 pupils in 12 classes of 25 pupils each Cost of musical instruments written off over 1 year (percussion) or 3 years (other instruments) Based on Drums for Schools Class Packs

Style	Number of pupils	Instruments	Specialist teaching staff	Costs	
				Total costs per year	Total costs per pupil
World Percussion	300	£200		£200	£1
African Drumming	300	£300		£300	£1
Indonesian Gamelan	300	£400		£400	£1
Brazilian Samba	300	£400		£400	£1
Caribbean Steel Pans	300	£500		£500	£2
Classical					



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A spoonful of CPD

We take a look at the latest trends and approaches explored in the 2016 *Music Education Expo and Musical Theatre & Drama Education Show*



How do I successfully integrate technology in to my classroom? Can I unlock the potential of online learning? How can I enliven my music lessons at minimal expense? What can I do to maximise contact time with my students? And how can I ensure I cater more for kinaesthetic learners?

They're common conundrums, but the solutions might surprise you; particularly if we told you they involved spoons, hula hoops, Moogs, Japanese inflatable balls, and starting lessons with homework first!

Music and drama teachers often draw the short straw when it comes to a multi-staffed department support network and available resources. But that doesn't mean you have to go it alone and forego opportunities to develop and share ideas. Pick up a spoon and join your peers at the next *Music Education Expo and Musical Theatre & Drama Education Show* (Olympia London 25-26 February 2016) and you'll find plenty of ways to refresh your teaching. Here's our pick of the top sessions on offer:

Flipped Learning: A new approach

Flipped learning is a new approach which promises to maximise contact time with students and successfully utilises the internet as a tool for teaching. Keith Burt, Head of Drama at Haybridge High School advises on the practical application of starting music and drama lessons with homework first.



Spoons workshop

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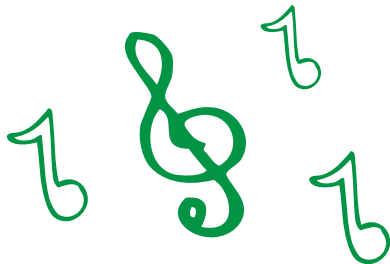
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Flipped learning is a new approach which promises to maximise contact time with students and successfully utilises the internet as a tool for teaching

for all ages, and helps to develop lots of skills (with minimum expense), including rhythm, co-ordination, fine motor skills, listening, mimicking, performance, teamwork, discipline and creativity. Develop performance technique, get creative, improvise and find out how the most humble of kitchen cutlery can be used with just about any age group and ability.

Reshaping the Musical Culture

In this inspiring session, Music Teacher Awards for Excellence nominee James Manwaring of Windsor Upper Schools shares his top tips for creating an exciting, sustainable and outstanding music department. He will draw on his own experiences, unlocking the strategies he's used in his career so far to ensure that as many students as possible have access to music, and looking

at how best to pack in the extra-curricular whilst maintaining the curricular.

Forbidden Fruit: Integrating Assessment for Learning

Practical workshop exploring the assessment for learning opportunities which inherently lie within a drama lesson and its existing dynamics.

Lively Listening: Active listening through movement

'In order to be able to listen to longer and more complex works, children should get to know one piece of music very well.'

2014 Music Teacher Award for Excellence winner Jane Cutler tests this thesis in her current research, and presents her ongoing work in this practical session focused on using movement to explore active listening.

Using a range of fun props and games including bean bags, Japanese inflatable balls and musical chairs, participants will explore a selection of repertoire chosen with specific age groups in

mind (one exercise per age range), leaving with a number of 'ready to go' exercises pertinent to each key stage.

The role of character education in the development of young people

Discover the role that performing arts teachers can play in developing the seven key 'performance' character traits: zest, grit, self-control, curiosity, optimism, social intelligence and gratitude.

Inclusive music: A fresh approach

A hands-on session using a variety of music tech gear to demonstrate a lesson where 'access for all' can be a reality.

The Music Education Expo and Musical Theatre & Drama Education Show takes place at London Olympia, 25-26 February 2016. Entry is free provided you register online. To find out more, visit www.musiceducationexpo.co.uk



Comic books in the classroom

Rae Hancock explains why there is more to using comic books in the RE classroom than you might think

Comic books that include religious characters and themes have moved on since stories of St. Paul were published in the back of *Eagle* in the 1950's and 60's. Across comics, authors are using religious characters and themes and artists are finding ways to represent religious figures, experiences and behaviours. It is material rich for use in the RE classroom!

Although we feel we would know an example if we saw it, and could easily distinguish it from a novel, animation or a film, comics are not easily defined. Eisner (2008:xi) called them "sequential art", McCloud (1993:9) went further emphasising the use of "deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" and Labio (2011:124) mediates this with a "hybrid genre that is both visual and literary but that does not privilege text over image".

'Comics' mean different things to different people; what is important to note is that comics are a medium, not a genre. The medium now spans multiple genres and forms; they can come as the brightly coloured single issues more associated with superheroes, the weighty single volume graphic novels that win literary awards and many different forms in between.

There are many interesting scholarly texts on the relationship between superheroes and deity but these, in my opinion, tell us much about how we understand and create superheroes but nothing about deity. Examining superheroes is too easy; the challenge for learners is to engage with deeper, subtler religious dimensions of comic

books (though Kamala Khan, the new Ms. Marvel and first Muslim character to have her own Marvel comic series, is worth checking out. *No Normal (Vol. 1)*, written by G. Willow Wilson, herself a Muslim, is a conscious effort to introduce positive female Muslim role models to the world of superheroes). But what is so special about comic books, why can't these ends be accomplished through other mediums, say film or television?

Comics as a medium have suffered from the perception that they are for children (or more specifically, young boys and misogynistic men living in their parent's basements), those who struggle with or are reluctant to read and those looking for a quick, shallow read. Yes, there are examples of each of these across comic history, but this is also a massive underestimation. Reading comics is not easy. It is a different kind of literacy that combines images and text and requires active participation.

Static images are arranged in sequential panels (usually drawn boxes) but separated by the blank space of the 'gutter'; the bit in between. In these spaces the reader is required to imagine in order to move the action on. They must also fill in space, time and sensory information using cues drawn by the artist such as diagonal lines to represent rain falling. Crucially for our purposes, the artist must use recognisable symbols and imagery. For example, in order for God to be a recognisable part of the narrative, the artist must depict them in a manner that can be recognised by the readership.

It is an immersive experience that demands involvement from the reader.

Unlike film or animation where the viewer is passive to the moving images, reading comics requires the reader to turn the page and to move themselves between panels. Sometimes pauses are needed to assimilate a change in the presentation; a single wordless panel, taking up the whole page as a contrast to the usual pace of narrative can cause the reader to stop, to consider the image differently, perhaps more deeply. However, the eye can also be allowed to wander as all the information it will soak up across the page contributes to the story-telling. It is this participatory element, I believe, that distinguishes comics as useful to RE. In employing a combination of imaginative and experiential knowledge with opportunities for re-examination and deeper reflection the reader is involved in an immersive experience.

There are two key ways in which I believe comics can be used in the RE classroom; reading them and making them. Each way is able to bring the student into contact with complex religious themes and give cause for reflection and will be discussed in the article from the view of an enthusiast. I will offer an overview of each of these aspects with the goal of introducing the possibility of using comics in the KS3, 4 and 5 RE classroom to educators who may previously have not known such a range exists or have shied away from what is [incorrectly] considered to be an insular, male-dominated, nerdy area of literature.

Religious characters

Firstly there are plenty of comics containing religious content and characters, a reason why they are now

included in, but shouldn't, I believe be limited to, the OCR GCSE specification. They are useful through out KS3, 4 and 5 either in their entirety or as selected pages and panels for analysis. Careful selection of material is vital though, for example whilst Garth Ennis' series *Preacher* covers many of the themes discussed below and may in name appear useful to us, it contains a level of graphic violence that most adults would find challenging.

There are comics that can tell us about specific religious beliefs and practices, frequently they are written by members of the particular faith communities. For example, Gene Luen Yang's *The Rosary Comic Book* was written as a Lent activity that allowed the author to weave his faith into his work as a comic writer. It includes instructions on how to pray the rosary, the reasons behind prayer and the Luminous Mysteries, all in comic book form. Yang even gives instructions on how to pray along with the narrative with different shape panels representing different beads of the rosary.

In Simone Lia's *Please God, find me a husband!* the author depicts not only her personal quest for a husband but her inner faith journey and relationship with God. Throughout the narrative the main character comes into contact with a community of Roman Catholic nuns, spends time engaged in worship and imagines herself into Bible stories. The story ends with Lia reconnecting with God and bicycling with him into the sunset.

A visual medium such as comics does raise issues of how authors and artists choose to represent deity or if not, why not and the discussion can go much wider than controversial Danish cartoons. Osamu Tenzuka (coming from a Zen Buddhist background but moving to agnosticism later in life) chose to depict Brahma as a small, bearded old man in his classic story of Siddhartha Gautama; *Buddha*. However, in keeping with Jewish tradition, Will Eisner does not show God in his groundbreaking work *A Contract With God*. Rather his main character Hersh's relationship with his creator is made all the more powerful by God's absence.

Through examining comics we can analyse how members of faith communities choose to represent their faith, such as in Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* or Steve Ross' *Marked* (a re-telling of the Gospel of Mark). Or how non-religious people wish to represent religion from the outside for example in Ron Marz' *The Magdalena* which has a dynasty of female warriors fighting for a Dan Brown-esque Vatican or Guy Delisle's *Jerusalem* illustrating the challenges of life in contemporary Israel.

Creating discussions

There are also possibilities for the textual analysis of sacred texts as there are a plethora of comic versions of the Bible; some better than others. Samples of these comics can open up discussions around the authority of sacred texts when retold or reinterpreted.

Does a comic Bible that chooses to present the story of Jesus as a single narrative with footnotes referring to the relevant passages have more or less authority as one without footnotes or a modern translation such as the NRSV? Comics also provide materials for the critical examination of literature created to promote religion and religious ideas. For example, the controversial fundamentalism Jack Chick publications are written as proselytising guides instructing a particular evangelical brand of 'appropriate' Christian behaviour. His works could be considered in contrast to the work of comic creator Suleiman Bakhit who produces comics using Arab characters and themes to combat the extremist ideology young Arabs find themselves subjected to.

Secondly, and more briefly, 'storyboarding' is a technique often used in KS2 and 3 classrooms, laying out a religious story panel by panel. When done well, this offers opportunities to develop the literacy skills of selection, summarising and sequencing and it is often however, in RE terms, a superficial exercise with no opportunities for challenge.

Following some of the techniques used by comic authors and artists can

stretch learners to consider the inner and outer lives of their characters as two interrelated but separated experiences and open up opportunities for reflection and 'learning from'. For example, guiding learners to use the words and pictures as interdependent (the combination communicates a deeper meaning than each part could separately) to create panels that show a character's inner thoughts and outer actions require learners to consider the difference between the two.

Just like art, film, animation, literature and so on, there is a huge variety in genre and quality when it comes to comics. However, there are many skilled examples that can offer immersive, participatory experiences of religious themes and practices and glimpses into lives of faith. These comics, depicting many different religions, are worthy of our time as readers and inclusion into our classrooms.

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If you would like to find out more, contact Rae at rae.hancock@wolfson.oxon.org

Jerusalem, Rome, Compostella...and Walsingham?

The village of Walsingham in Norfolk offers an interesting trip for students studying Christianity

The village of Walsingham in Norfolk has been a centre of Christian pilgrimage since 1061. The story begins with Richeldis, the widow of the Lord of the Manor of Walsingham. This lady had a series of three mystical experiences or visions in which she was transported in spirit to Nazareth, to the house where the Virgin Mary lived at the time when the archangel Gabriel invited her to become the mother of Jesus. As any self-respecting student working towards common entrance religious studies will know, the fact that the visions occurred three times indicates that it was definitely true, not made up – and not an hallucination brought about by eating too much cheese before bedtime!

Richeldis believed that Mary was asking her to build a replica of that little house she had ‘seen’ in Nazareth, here in Walsingham. Stories of difficulties and a miracle concerning the building of the wooden house sprang up in the Middle Ages but the important point is that it did get built.

Another vital component in the Walsingham phenomenon is that a spring of water bubbled up from the ground, similar to what would happen 800 years later in Lourdes. The ‘holy house’ containing a carved wooden image of Our Lady of Walsingham, together with the spring, assumed huge importance during the Middle Ages; the water was believed to have healing properties and pilgrims came

from far and wide to pray and to drink from the wells. Hard to credit now but this little village in North Norfolk was once one of the four ‘big’ pilgrimage destinations along with Jerusalem, Rome and Compostella.

Augustinian Canons built a monastery and priory church and became the guardians of the Shrine itself; later, a Franciscan house was also built in the village. Under the supervision of this band of monks and friars the whole medieval pilgrimage industry took off.

With the Reformation and the dissolution of the religious houses under Henry VIII all this came to an abrupt end; the priory and Shrine were destroyed in 1538 and all that had been special in Walsingham gradually became little more than a memory.

The centuries passed. In 1921, the Revd Alfred Hope Patten became the Vicar of Walsingham; he was a product of the Oxford Movement which was dedicated to bringing back long abandoned catholic beliefs and practices. Fr Patten believed it was his mission to restore the Shrine and to reintroduce pilgrimage in the Church of England. He bought land close to the site of the original shrine and created a new Holy House in 1931 which is contained within a church built to accommodate the increasing number of pilgrims. When the foundations were being dug, an ancient well was discovered; archaeologists date it to the 11th

century and, since it had been deliberately blocked with debris from the Tudor period, it is believed to have been one of a series of Holy Wells which had served the medieval pilgrims.

Just a mile outside Walsingham is the Slipper Chapel, site of the modern Roman Catholic National Shrine of Our Lady. In 1897 a building which for centuries had been part cottage, part cowshed was discovered to have been the last wayside chapel on the pilgrimage route to Walsingham; pilgrims – including virtually every monarch from Henry III to Henry VIII – stopped there to pray, take off their shoes (slippers) and then walk what is known as the Holy Mile into the village barefoot, as a sign of penance for their sins. The site was given to the Catholic Church and the first post-Reformation Catholic pilgrimage took place in 1934.

The village also boasts a fine 18th century Methodist Church, a 21st century Catholic church (about as eco-friendly as you can get) and two Orthodox churches, one of which is situated within the Anglican Shrine building. Thousands of pilgrims of all denominations visit Walsingham each year.

Coupled with the fact that what remains of the original medieval Shrine can still be visited, you can perhaps see why a visit to Walsingham ‘ticks boxes’ as far as schools are concerned.



Not only can pupils learn about pilgrimage in the past but they also have a chance to see how Christians in the 21st century still value the pilgrimage experience and how, for many, it is a vital part of their spiritual lives. It is also the perfect place to study the reasons why Christians are a divided bunch and to explore the buildings of various denominations, discovering the differences in style of both architecture and worship. In addition, school groups can have the opportunity to meet priests, monks, nuns and 'ordinary' pilgrims and, through informal conversation, find out how Christianity is lived today.

The Anglican Shrine Schools' Department runs educational programmes suitable for pupils aged eight to 18. All the teachers are qualified, experienced and enthusiastic; the department gained the Sandford Award for heritage education in 2013. If a day trip is out of the question bear in mind that many schools choose to make a residential visit; there is excellent – pupil friendly – accommodation available on site and a modern Refectory providing full board. Prices for school groups are quite reasonable. A visit can be planned to include a number of the following elements: a visit to the Slipper Chapel and RC

Shrine, the Holy Mile walk, visits to the Orthodox, Methodist and Catholic churches, the Abbey grounds (site of the original Shrine) and a discussion session on Christian attitudes to ethical issues. All groups visit the Anglican Shrine and are also given the opportunity to explore the Holy House and take water from the well.

So how about arranging a trip for Year 7 or Year 8? Alternatively, you could go on watching that tired DVD – the one you've used so often that you know the entire script by heart .. believe me, I've been there!

If you would like further information, email schools@olw-shrine.org.uk

Laying secure foundations in maths

Sally makes a case for teaching place value earlier



Reading Margaret White's excellent article 'Teaching Maths' (Summer Term 2015) I found myself almost instinctively uttering out loud 'absolutely' and 'totally agree' and even underlining great chunks of it with a pen! (Terminal teacheritus?)

One word that Margaret kept

repeating was 'confidence' – "If children's knowledge and understanding is secure from the outset and continues to be so as each new element is introduced, it follows that they can be confident, an essential element of learning." By 'outset' I am assuming she means the very earliest years (EYFS/Year 1) during which, "the laying of secure foundations of knowledge" in maths must be achieved if children are to attain this 'confidence'.

I hope Margaret White does not mind my 'adding my two pennies worth' here to point out that 'place value' is a vital 'foundational concept' and one that needs putting solidly into 'place' in those early years – Reception and Year 1 - and one that, I believe, is often taught rather too late for many children. This, I believe, is to the detriment of their 'confidence' in their own ability in maths and shapes their later attitude towards the subject. I came to this conclusion over several years of teaching in KS1, both in Years 1 and 2, and then later teaching remedial maths throughout KS2.

From my first degree in sociology, taken in my distant youth, I remembered being made aware of the enormous - even total - role that language plays in our construction of meaning and 'world view', with different cultures having different amounts of words for things that are important to them (think of Inuits and snow and, apparently, according to a recent study, the Scottish too). Words exist to convey meaning. They have evolved within cultures over a long period of time and children brought up or coming into our culture just have to take them on board, whether they 'make sense' to them or not, in order to succeed academically.

But what if the word chosen to convey something either gives no clue as to its meaning or conveys the meaning in an illogical and hence confusing way? Say the words 11 to 19 out loud and put yourself in the shoes of a four or five year old. No wonder teachers regularly see 41, 51, 61, 71, 81 and 91 because each word itself is the 'wrong way round'.

The words 1 to 10 are 'given meaning' to young children through a myriad of embedded play encounters with real objects but it is a lot to expect them to remember the 'meaning' of the numbers 11 to 19 when they have been given such confusing 'names' by our English language.

This, I believe, can lay a subconscious message that maths is hard and not to be trusted. But if you can teach them



how the number system 'works' right from the start, then they won't need to worry about what the numbers are called because they will understand what they 'mean'.

I was repeatedly encountering a few children each year in Year 2 with blank expressions when confronted with 'place value' questions, (orally and written), particularly in the 'teens' decade, that the seeds of my 'bee in my bonnet' began to grow. These questions (of course) had been deliberately differentiated - my thinking they were 'easy' for them - knowing that 'place value' had previously been covered, both in embedded and disembedded form, in Year 1.

My 'project', as it later became, started with a little chant that my pupils and I in Year 2 developed - 'Numbers are what they say they are unlike naughty words' - later written in large letters on the classroom wall. Next, we developed another little ditty, 'Oh no, we've run out of digits Bridget!', when using an abacus as a visual resource. The traditional abacus is not particularly fit for purpose having 10 cubes on each stick so I made my own with 9. Anyway, fun was the vital ingredient in order to get all the children on board.

Roll forwards several years of both private and state school teaching. During this time I was able to test and edit my prototype fun rhyming method on real pupils. In this way I was able to develop its characters and make sure it really did engage them, (including very large primary school classes), while delivering a place value approach to counting for very young children (EYFS and KS1).

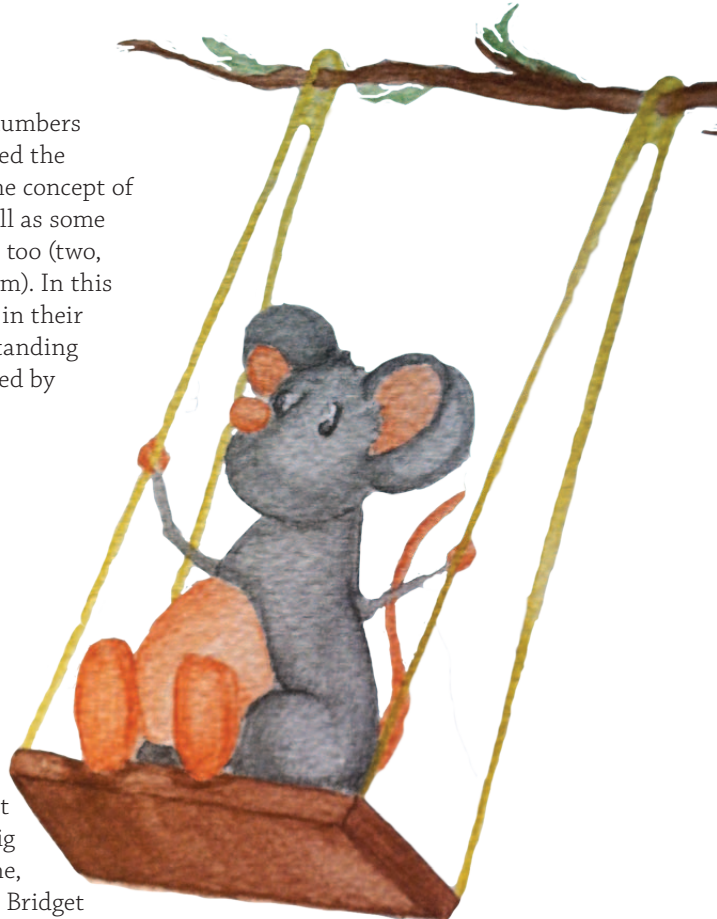
Using 'Counting is Easy Peasy' on the classroom IWB, (as I later decided to call it after a friend said 'Numbers are what they say they are' wasn't catchy enough!), the children were introduced to, and understood how our number system works right from the outset. This was verified by their lesson outcomes, written and oral, which encouraged me to keep going with the project. Importantly, they were 'allowed' to laugh at the 'silly'

names we give to those numbers between 11 and 19, offered the opportunity to discuss the concept of language generally, as well as some of our very silly spellings too (two, eight, one, won, some, sum). In this way, they became 'active' in their learning through understanding rather than being confused by our ridiculous words and spellings that often sap children's confidence in their own amazing capabilities.

Currently in PDF format only, Counting is Easy Peasy is written entirely in humorous rhyme and illustrated in lovely bright colours by Gillian McCusker. It boasts a cast of friendly characters - Big Mouse narrates the rhyme, Little Mouse is the pupil, Bridget looks after the digits in her basket, Hero Zero (well, what else rhymes with zero?!) and Hedgicus, the abacus (with nine cubes). It begins,

'I'll tell you a secret just between you and me
Counting is easy peasy
It's only the silly names you see
That people have given them
Makes you think
Surely there must be more to 'em?!
(apologies but allows you to talk about poetic licence!)
But numbers don't trick
You'll understand them very quick
So stick around and soon you'll be a star
Because numbers truly are
Just what they say they are!

It requires the teacher/adult to read it in an 'entertaining' way and the children to join in each time you run out of digits. So, each time the adult gets to a nine the children chant, 'Oh no, we've run out of digits Bridget!'. It can be used 'all in one go' up to 100 or broken up over several sessions. At the end of the PDF are eight differentiated worksheets from very



easy to gifted and talented. These are for written practice and consolidation if you feel your pupils are ready.

If you would like a copy of Counting is Easy Peasy for your class go to www.purdiepublishing.co.uk £1 from each sale will be donated to the British Dyslexia Association under whose umbrella comes support for dyscalculia.

If you would like to provide feedback, email Sally at sally@purdiepublishing.co.uk or visit, www.purdiepublishing.co.uk

Now retired, Sally was editor of the SATIPS Nursery and Pre-Prep Broadsheet (2010 - 2011) where she wrote at length about teaching maths in the Pre-Prep department. She was also an IAPS Head of Pre-Prep Area Coordinator for several years whilst Head of Pre-Prep at Walthamstow Hall, Sevenoaks in Kent.

Unravelling handwriting

Shelley Birkett-Eyles, Director of Hemispheres Think Write discusses the important factors to consider in the teaching of handwriting

The teaching of handwriting is a primary skill, with the greatest focus being in the early years of a child's education. Due to an ever-increasing demand on the school curriculum, time spent on specific handwriting instruction has diminished, to an average of approximately one hour per week. With this limited time available, it is recommended that the teaching of handwriting follows a structured, developmental protocol, that is directed towards all children achieving the following goal:

'The ability to write, with a fully automatic cursive script, by the end of Year 2, so handwriting does not impede a child's academic ability.'

There is a percentage of children who struggle to meet this expectation and when the pace of the curriculum changes in Year 3, the difference in performance begins to become more

apparent. Government statistics show that handwriting, compared to spelling, reading, maths and science is subject to the worst performance, and that boys more than girls are having the most difficulty with handwriting, throughout all levels of their education.

Poor handwriting is not necessarily an indicator of academic ability, as we know that many able children are failing to meet their academic expectations due to poor legibility and speed of writing, factors which impede their performance in examinations. Older children show more difficulty in the integration of the thinking, cognitive and motor control together, however this level of processing is dependent on having learnt how to integrate the size, height, formation and spatial placement of letters when learning to write.

It is therefore important that children are taught effectively in the early ears,

to prevent problems emerging as they get older. However, guidance on the best practice for handwriting instruction is currently limited, schools are left to develop their own handwriting protocol, often leaving teachers with more questions than answers. Some of the common questions I am asked relate to:

- Whether to start cursive from reception.
- What order should the letters be taught in.
- Will a structured programme interfere with phonic teaching?

When you are developing a protocol for handwriting this requires a high level of consideration. The skills that underpin successful handwriting follow a continuum, dictated by developmental and neurological milestones, which in turn enable a child to develop the functional skills that necessitate effective handwriting.

Whilst it takes time and effort, building a structured protocol, that reflects the development of the visual, motor and cognitive processes that underpin the development of efficient handwriting, means that the school can benefit from:

- A defined framework and process for teaching letter formation.
- Clear objectives and targets per year group.
- Flexibility to enable differentiation depending on a child's ability.

As with any continuum, there is a beginning, a middle and an end. Learning to master fine motor skills is



often identified as the 'beginning' of the handwriting process associated with Nursery, with automatic cursive writing being the 'end destination' in Year 2 and beyond. Whilst these two points are universally accepted, there is ambiguity in the middle stages, with limited guidance and support available, either from the government or in the form of structured programmes, to advice schools in terms of 'best practice'.

In my experience of supporting children overcome their difficulties in handwriting, it is evident to me the main area impeding development is not motor skills per se, but in the cognitive understanding regarding the concept and rules that govern all aspects of handwriting. Here are some key features to consider when evaluating your handwriting programme:

1. Select cursive from the beginning, Cut out the middle man

For some years, scientists have been reporting that learning cursive writing, more than print, is an important tool for cognitive development. Not only does cursive stimulate brain synapses between the right and left sides of the brain, building both the physiological and the psychological links within the brain, it also trains the brain to learn specialist skills. This leads to increased efficiency for reading, comprehension, understanding and language. Choosing a font that is cursive, from the beginning, detailing the lead-in and lead-out stroke of each letter means children only have to learn one style of formation. This simplifies the motor learning, creating only one motor template, and lends itself more easily to the transition into joining as the lead-in line forms the natural bridge. Children then are able to transition into full cursive when they are ready.

2. Building the concept and teaching the rules

In handwriting there are many rules that govern size, height, spatial position and letter formation. To help children understand all of the implicit rules required a programme where the cognitive strategies of learning



are considered. Young children build knowledge using strategies, such as linking and associative learning, to help them understand new concepts, categorise their learning and information. Building cognitive processing skills in young children, through play and games, helps a child form an 'internal' structure to store information, so they can build up a concept and understanding of the rules. Using strong visual images such as characters, linking them to specific movement patterns, which in turn reflect key concepts such as tall, short and round, as well as the defining starting shape, helps children learn the rules that govern letter formation, without even picking up a pencil.

3. Teaching in letter categories.

Children need to transition from seeing letters as a shape, into appreciating the detailed characteristics of each letter, in relation to the size, height, starting line and spatial position, if they are to write the letters correctly. To help children fully understand the concept of the 26 letters, structuring the teaching of letters into family groups or categories, dictated by grouping the letters by their starting shape, helps to improve and structure a child's internal memory systems so they are more efficient at recalling and applying their knowledge when they write. Regular practice of forming letters in their categories, naturally builds in repetition and rehearsal whilst also reinforcing the child's knowledge. Being able to recall and apply learning improves legibility, reversals, spatial placement and eventually automaticity and speed.

4. Integrated learning.

This is the final stage of handwriting development. It is an important stage when children are transitioning from learning to write to being a writer. To enhance the brain's ability to process different information faster, whilst simultaneously applying their understanding to inform and direct their motor movements for letter formation, it is essential that children have learnt to write with automatic control. Being able to write and communicate their ideas on paper, whilst thinking creatively and adding correct punctuation, relies on handwriting being automatically controlled, without conscious thought. The speed is then developed from the full cursive script, leaving children to focus and master full spatial placement.

We are living in an age where technology is constantly changing and challenging our perception within education. The increased use of keyboards raises a question about the future usefulness of handwriting skills. However, before you trade in the pencils and paper for a keyboard, consider the unique relationship learning to write has in the development of the neurological, cognitive and learning processes, that could be lost if children are not taught this ancient skill.

Shelley Birkett-Eyles is the director and creator of the Hemispheres Think Write Handwriting programme and a clinical specialist occupational therapist.

For more information, visit www.thinkwrite-learning.co.uk or email enquiries@thinkwrite-learning.co.uk

Headspinner

Carr's first weeks as Headmaster of Fabhurst Preparatory School had, so he considered, progressed reasonably well. Thus far, although he had worked 12 hour days, before slogging through the remainder of his e-mails and reviewing policy documentation, his self-imposed deadline of 9pm had enabled him to spend some quality time with his wife over supper, followed by a dose of television. After five minutes of blank gazing at the box, he would doze. He claimed to feel "in fine fettle": the promise of his two week half-term lay just ten days away.

This Monday, though, was different: for, after his daily briefing to staff and an assembly that he'd spent far too long putting together on the theme of 'Loving your Neighbour', he had an appointment in his diary for 9.30 with Mrs. Welch, the mother of Zak in Year 5. Despite clear instructions to his secretary never to make a meeting for him without finding out its subject, she had, on this occasion, been unable to do so as Mrs. Welch had refused to tell her. Apparently all she had said was something along the lines of "he'll find out soon enough." Carr couldn't recall ever having met the woman.

The Headmaster liked to inform people that "he didn't do nerves", an assertion, given the queasy feeling which he'd had since waking, that now seemed inaccurate. Chats to the year-head and Zak's form teacher had garnered little. All that he had gathered was that Mrs. Welch had caused some tension last year with her tart comments about the quality of catering. Carr sucked hard on an extra-strong mint and told himself to be calm. His secretary knocked.

"Mrs. Welch is in the waiting area. Would you like me to offer her some coffee?"

Carr wondered: coffee might mean that she would stay too long. Not offering it might seem unfriendly. He chose to be generous.

"Yes, I suppose so and one for me too, please – black."

Hurriedly he put some piles of paper together on his desk so that it looked reasonably organised and plumped up the rather tired patterned sofa which he'd inherited from his predecessor, Smithie. He strode down the corridor.

Mrs. Welch was not seated in the waiting area but was standing, positioned with her back to Carr, inspecting a Fabhurst photograph from some years ago. Blue jacket, grey trousers, flat shoes, plumpish. She hadn't seemed to hear his footsteps. Carr coughed. No reaction.

"Ah, Mrs. Welch," he tried. "Good Morning to you." Carr stretched out his hand in greeting. Mrs. Welch ignored it and marched past him towards the study. A trifle more encouragingly she stopped at the door.

"Please go in," Carr said. "Do sit down."

Surprisingly – indeed no parent or colleague had done this before – Mrs. Welch flumped herself down in Carr's armchair. He had no choice but to sink into the sofa.

"Now what can I do for you Mrs. Welch?" he opened optimistically. "I imagine it's about Zak?"

"Yes and it's Zachary; as I made clear on my registration form. He was christened Zachary. If we'd have wanted to call him Zak we'd have christened him Zak. As you know Zachary derives from Zacharias the father of John the Baptist.

Carr didn't know but nodded, pretending that he did.

"Now, continued Mrs. Welch, "I want you to understand that I am very disappointed and that Zachary is devastated." She paused for effect. "Disappointed and devastated."

"What about?" responded Carr, trying to remember whether situations like this his had been covered in his Aspiring Heads course.

"What about? Well it's obvious isn't it?"

Carr felt his heart begin to pump. What was obvious? He had to say something.

“Well Zak’s – my apologies - Zachary’s teachers seem to be quite pleased with his academic progress,” he said blandly, trying to develop a cheery tone.

“What’s that got to do with it?” Mrs. Welch snapped, going a little redder. “Headmaster,” she added with an exasperated snarl, “Are you really pretending to me that you don’t know why I’ve had to drop everything this morning to come here?”

Mercifully, saving Carr from blundering onwards, a rap on the door announced the arrival of coffee.

Carr took a determined gulp that even though it burnt his mouth, still gave him a second in which to think. Best to tell the truth.

“Well no Mrs. Welch. I’m afraid that I do not.” His voice sounded quavery. “So you must tell me.” That sounded better, more authoritative.

“Well I will, although it shows that you do not know what is really happening in your school. It is about the C team football match tomorrow.”

Carr faintly remembered something else scheduled for tomorrow afternoon – could be a Governor’s sub-committee meeting. Thus far the Under 10 C team fixture hadn’t featured much in his future-planning.

“Tell me is it school policy to make boys cry?”

Carr wondered what on earth that had got to do with it. He stayed silent, noticing a vein starting to pulse on Mrs. Welch’s neck.

“Because that is what happened yesterday evening. Zachary was beside himself. I could not get him to sleep until past midnight. I am a working mother you know.”

Carr ignored this statement and brought the conversation back to Zak.

“So what seems to be the trouble?”

“The trouble. You don’t have to tell me it’s trouble. Ever since Zachary joined the school he has played in The B team. That alone is ridiculous. As I presume you are aware he’s far better than that, but I haven’t once complained even though lots of mothers have told me to do so. Last year he was made captain. And now... And now.” (Her face had assumed a deeper red) “Now he’s been selected as goalkeeper for the C team. He’s never even played in goal. I want him back in the Bs and back as captain.”

Carr took another major slug of coffee and felt worse. Solutions were elusive. He thought that Mrs. Welch might have a daughter at the top of the Pre-Prep. At worst, if things escalated, she could become frazzled enough to threaten withdrawal. With a big leave coming up next summer, there had been a certain degree of governor-pressure already to ‘turn numbers up’. Somehow he had to placate her. He filled his lungs.

“Well, Mrs. Welch. As soon as possible I will have a word with our Head of Sport, Mr. Coombes, and see what we can do about it.”

“What does that mean? Do not talk to me in riddles Mr. Carr. I want the poor boy back in The Bs and as captain. As headmaster you represent the company. I am the customer: and you know what they say... I am always right.” With that Mrs. Welch relaxed back into Carr’s armchair. She seemed to think that the matter was settled: her dominance had been established.

Carr had had enough. He could either fight back over the next few days or attack now. De-clenching his fingers, he told himself to go slowly, and started.

Guy Canning

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Courses and events

11 January	Maths and the New Curriculum KS1 and KS2	London
18 January	Lesson Observation and Performance Management	London
29 January	Mindfulness and Wellbeing Conference	Port Regis
1 February	ISI "Excellent" Teaching	London
4 February	ISI "Excellent" Marking	London
26 February	Imaginative, creative and Effective Religious Education Teaching and Learning	London
7 March	Leading Teaching and Learning	London
14 March	EYFS to KS2 reading, shared and guided	London
21 March	SATIPS Maths Conference	London
20 April	Returning to teaching or new qualified, excellence in the classroom	London
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