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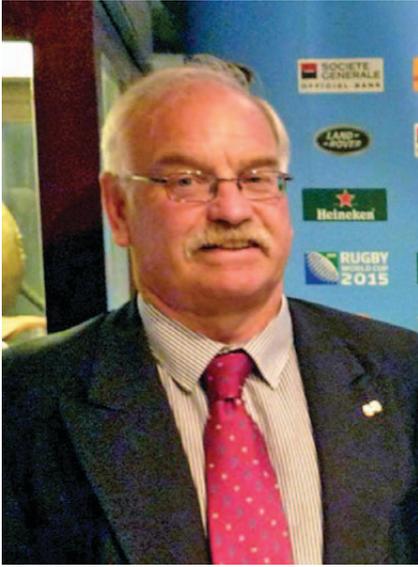
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From the editor



With Spring in the air and Summer definitely approaching, isn't it amazing how the spirits are lifted?

Of course, the spirits of any editor will go ballistic when they receive very favourable comments from the readership; when the highly respected but very busy folk they approach for articles deliver just what the doctor ordered; and when any one article produces both a response and a healthy debate in the next edition.

This particular editor certainly has a smile on his face. Thank you. However, he is not alone.

David Kendall, the new chair of SATIPS, has much to be pleased about

too. SATIPS courses are varied and very well attended, the Handwriting and Challenge competitions are attracting record numbers, schools are gearing up to enter this year's SATIPSKI downhill races and the broadsheet editors continue to keep subject teachers in prep schools enlightened and informed.

To cap it all, the work of 60 SATIPS schools will be on display at the art exhibition to be hosted, once again, at Cheltenham College Preparatory School. Over to you, Mr Chairman.

Paul Jackson

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Dear Prep School reader...

David Kendall, the new Chair of SATIPS, introduces himself to the readers of Prep School magazine

Firstly, may I welcome you to a new edition of Prep School magazine, which I know you will find informative, entertaining and thought provoking. As the new Chair of SATIPS, I would like to thank Liza Newbould for her leadership and guidance. Under the stewardship of Lisa and our steady team of hardworking colleagues, SATIPS is entering a bright new chapter with more CPD and courses tailored to those at the chalk face, and with the bonus of being very competitively priced.

Born and educated in Derbyshire, I attended St David's University College, Lampeter, reading Victorian Studies and Church History. I gained my PGCE at Roehampton Institute and, at present, I am studying for a Masters in Educational Leadership with the University of Buckingham. I began my career in the East End of London at a Christian Mission, helping with after school and evening clubs and, in the holidays, running Play Schemes. I decided to move into teaching and started my career at Stubbington House in Ascot as an RS teacher, before moving to Yardley Court and later to Highfield School in Liphook, where I was a Housemaster for several years. With a young family,

I then moved to Hoe Bridge School in Woking and then to Westminster Under School where I was Head of History and Director of Studies for several years. I became joint editor of the SATIPS history broadsheet, taking over from Bob Pace before joining council a few years later.

Presently, I am Deputy Head of the Upper School at Newton Prep in London, a busy day school of 670 pupils, of whom I have responsibility for those in Years 3 to 8. From September, I am due to take up post of Head of the Junior School at QEJH Bristol. My interests include British military and 19th-century social and economic history, outdoor pursuits; especially hill walking and Nordic walking, landscape photography, theatre and gardening.

I am really looking forward to meeting as many SATIPS members as possible over the course of the year, especially at one of our events such as the excellent Art Exhibition, which is kindly hosted by Cheltenham College's Junior School. As the educational world becomes ever more complex with greater safeguarding, policies by the score, data, pre-tests, 11+ exit and 13+ changes, I believe that SATIPS stands for the very best in teaching; helping those new to the



profession alongside those with experience to share. Teaching can be both exhilarating, yet lonely at times and with the great team of broadsheet editors, we have a way of discussing and presenting new ideas, sharing the very best practice, offering our views and having a voice with like-minded individuals. Please remember that SATIPS is run by teachers for teachers, it is designed to support all of us in education, so please do get in touch if you have anything to say

May I wish you the very best for the term, and, when it arrives, a well-deserved summer holiday!

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Paving your way to management

Tom Halliday, the Head of Juniors at Westbourne House in Chichester, writes about finding your route into management in a prep school environment



Upon entering the teaching profession, I was told initially by lecturers, mentors, and later by fellow teachers, that opportunities would be readily available to allow me to move from the classroom into management. Apparently being a male in my twenties, recently qualified as a primary school teacher ticked the boxes for success. However, when it became apparent that I worked in a prep school within the independent sector this option was dismissed. Granted, the majority of the suggestions came from those who did not work within the independent sector, but their sudden altering of opinion struck a chord that has resonated ever since.

Whilst not basing this on any quantifiable data, the promotion of more recently qualified teachers into management positions certainly is

more apparent in the state sector. Teach First states that it aims to fast-track its brightest graduates into leadership, and in recent years there have been examples of teachers in their twenties being appointed to headship in the state sector. The reasons behind a reduced percentage of young professionals in management positions within the independent sector are varied and deserve a brighter spotlight than this article to investigate. However, any recently qualified teacher who has aspirations to further their career has many tools at their disposal to assist the achievement of their goals. Recognition of these tools is the starting point, and I would encourage all to identify these, not just NQTs, whether you have been working in education for three months or 30 years.

Excellence: *'Be a yardstick of quality, some people aren't used to an environment where excellence is expected.'*
– Steve Jobs

This has to be at the core of any aspiring professional wanting to develop their career, no matter the industry. In terms of teaching, this means excellence in the classroom. I am not saying that if you are not excellent you should not be considered for management, but if you are not striving for excellence then you are not the right candidate for consideration. The term 'outstanding'

is the gold medal in education that means excellence. As a teacher, you should want your classroom to be an outstanding environment for learning and you should be doing everything you can to improve your teaching. Teachers in the early years of their careers are more likely to have the drive, determination and dynamism to want to achieve this. They should still be receptive to learning new ideas, and open to change. I do not make this statement to suggest that those who have been teaching for 20 years, and more, are not driven in the same way, but exuberance tends to favour youth, therefore use your youthful exuberance to strive for excellence.

Read, Listen, Absorb: *'When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen.'* – Ernest Hemingway

Read books and articles, listen to podcasts and reports, and talk to your colleagues; this will help develop your own opinion. You will not agree with everything you encounter, you may think a lot of it is rubbish – that is a good thing. The ability to recognise a valid opinion is an important trait, the world is full of people with differing viewpoints, and as a manager you have to evaluate a range of opinions every day. It is very difficult to do this if your own opinion or perspective is not developed and nurtured, therefore keep absorbing new ideas. I make it a point to regularly ask colleagues

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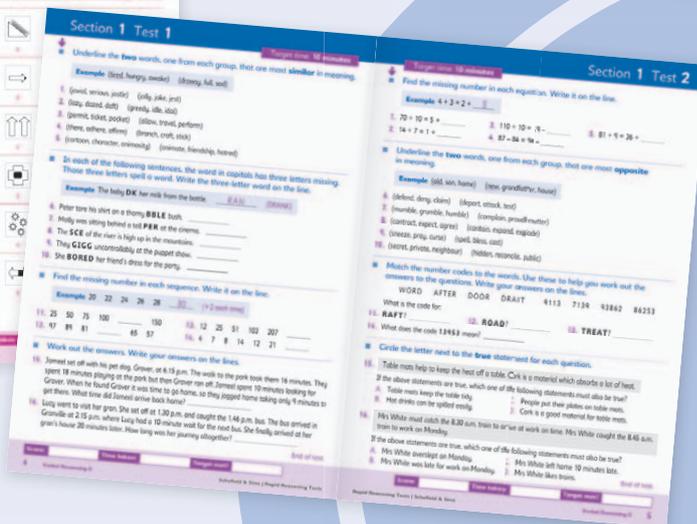
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A prep school is an environment where you are interacting with a variety of people in a plethora of settings.

thoughts on various ideas, and over a cup of coffee is usually a much better time to do this than any formal department meeting.

Communication: *'Good, the more communicated, the more abundant grows.'* – John Milton

Do not shy away from communicating with others. A prep school is an environment where you are interacting with a variety of people in a plethora of settings. In an average day, I encounter pupils from reception to Year 8, in different environments including classrooms, the playground, the assembly hall and the boarding house, or on the sports field. The average day also consists of face-to-face contact with parents, who are usually well educated and work in a huge variety of industries. There are also your colleagues, both teaching and non-teaching staff. I do not know of many professions where the level of human interaction is so varied. Involve yourself completely in each aspect, indulge in it, and use each interaction as a learning curve. If you can calmly control a father who disagrees with your decision when refereeing a Colts rugby match then you will be able to communicate

effectively with colleagues when leading a department meeting.

Resilience: *'In football, as in politics, resilience pays off.'* – George Osborne

I would like to add 'teaching' to the quote above. This is key – in the same way you must take any parental comments about your rugby refereeing, you must also accept that no matter how passionate you are about an aspect of your management, there will be resistance to your ideas. Having the capacity to be able to think through, see past or around resistances, whilst explaining your reasoning will be of great benefit. Unfortunately, becoming an expert at this requires experience, experience of the negative. Do not dwell on these negatives. Identify other opinions and use your youthful exuberance to remain positive, keeping lines of communication open so that you remain solution driven.

The attributes that I have listed above are fundamental for anyone who desires to progress their career, no matter what sector they work in. The tides are changing; opportunities for younger teachers in the independent sector are available. Heads and senior managers are recognising the benefits

of younger members of staff being given positions of responsibility. However, be proactive. If you see an area that needs change, ensure you address this in the correct manner. Communicate with colleagues, write proposals, entice support, but most importantly strive for excellence in all that you do. The final quote I will leave you with may be the most useful for aspiring managers, albeit from an unexpected source.

'If I don't like something that's going on in my life, I change it. And I don't sit and complain about it for a year.' – Kim Kardashian

Tom, a Royal Holloway graduate, joined Westbourne House in 2016 from Salisbury Cathedral School where he was the Head of Lower Key Stage 2. Tom also teaches Year 4 pupils in the classroom and other year groups on the sports field.

Superhero scientist students

Alex Alves, a teacher at Fairfield Preparatory School, talks of her fervour for outdoor learning and the importance of its place within every school's curriculum



The bright white capes hiding in the trees fluttered in a rush of wind as the children arrived, rosy cheeks full of smiles and anticipation. The children gathered round as I explained today's adventures: "Today we are going to be Super Hero Scientists and your

first mission is to find a Super Hero Scientist Cape hiding amongst the trees."

The children scurried off to find their capes before pretending to fly over to the fire-pit for some 'super hero experiments.' The children were

amazed to see wood change to water in my 'magic kettle' and enjoyed sampling the mystical contents mixed with scientist's brain fuel (chocolate powder).

The children then freely explored various pre-staged experiments and

investigations, whilst also having the opportunity to follow interests of their own. An enthusiastic group of budding archaeologists excavated soil to discover dinosaur bones. “Last time we dug, Mrs Alves wondered how we found everything,” a child enthused, “let’s make a map to show her where we discover things”.

“Dig slowly so you don’t crack the bones, they’re very old and need to go to the museum,” his friend called. Another enthusiastic group decided to plant: “When the weather gets warmer in the spring, my seed will pop its head out and start to grow up to the sun,” a girl enthused. Her friend added, “When it’s had enough rain to drink it will be ready for us to cook on the fire pit.”

“Last year, the birds pecked the shoots,” one girl recalled, “let’s make a scarecrow!”

“We’ll go and dig up some worms so the birds eat them instead of our seeds,” said one of the pupils. “Let’s go and see if we can spot any birds coming”, and off another group went, binoculars pressed to their eagerly searching eyes. I could continue to tell you about the children’s learning and progress during Outdoor Learning sessions at Fairfield Preparatory School for days on end. The children turn up every week with their Wellingtons full of motivation and leave with their heads full of knowledge. Since Forest School and Outdoor Learning was first introduced at Fairfield, the overwhelming success and positive feedback from children, parents and staff has meant it has been rolled out through the whole of the pre-prep.

Each week the children enjoy the freedom to experiment with their own ideas and interests; testing, self-checking and self-improving. I find that learning outside helps to lift the lid on a child’s creativity and imagination; they are motivated and stimulated by the environment

around them and engage all of their senses when thinking and learning. After a few months of weekly outdoor sessions, I see a huge increase in their confidence, and emotional intelligence.

The children develop and use more scientific and descriptive language because it is relevant and understood. By the end of the academic year, many children have also made vast developments in physical literacy and core strength. Children not only respect and have a connection with their outdoor environment, but also with each other. Outdoor learning creates a holistic bubble of benefits, which feed in to improved academic performance.

During my 15 years teaching in the classroom, I was becoming aware of an increasing trend of children relying on being spoon-fed information; a generation relying on searching for answers on the internet and regurgitating them with their ready-made supper. Poems about the seasons lacked any imagination and deep description. Any newly planted trees on the school field would soon be trampled upon within a few weeks. And then I started to ponder...

How can we expect children to eat healthily if they haven’t experienced planting and harvesting their own fresh produce? How can we expect them to write an imaginative poem about seasons if they seldom go outside? How can we expect children to respect nature and care about their local environment if they haven’t had the time to connect with it? How can you fit outdoor learning into your already jam-packed timetable? How can you balance the need to cover the curriculum whilst allowing child-led experiential learning outdoors? During my wide background in teaching and whilst talking to other professionals, I realised that a manageable resource base was needed.

I have built a brand new website of resources which proves that outdoor

learning isn’t an additional subject; it’s an alternative way of teaching the same objectives, just in a more interactive learning space. My website, ‘Outdoor Learning Made Easy’ is just that. You will find useful guidance and advice documents suitable for all levels from ‘start up’ to ‘excellence,’ and creative ideas for developing outdoor areas into meaningful learning spaces regardless of your setting constraints. Thousands of activities and plans include: introductory games and challenges; differentiated and cross-curricular topic or subject linked sessions; skill based experiential learning ideas; and plenary activities which enable both the leader and the children to reflect on and extend their learning.

The content and structure of the website is thorough but flexible, to enable users to piece together their own outdoor learning sessions in a way that meets their own unique aims and fits within their own setting constraints. Coming from both a teaching and outdoor background has enabled me to build a website that empowers the teachers and leaders rather than impedes them. Help with parental partnerships has also been taken care of through the ‘parents’ section’ of the website.

Together with Fairfield Prep, we are also running a wide array of professional development courses in Outdoor Learning and Forest School, so not only do you have access to a whole website full of resources, but you can develop the confidence and competence to facilitate them effectively.

Alex Alves teaches full time at Fairfield Preparatory School and has her own business where thousands of EYFS, KS1 and KS2 plans and resources are available at www.outdoorlearningmadeeasy.co.uk

What was the last book you read?

Kieran McLaughlin, the Headmaster of Durham School, considers the impact reading has on children

A common question that I might ask a pupil, and a standard interview question for prep school children moving to a senior school. The response can be a bashful one: “*Harry Potter*, sir”. Even more shockingly, *Billionaire boy*, *Timmy Failure* or *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Sometimes I will get the more calculated answer: “*Oliver Twist*. I do love Dickens, sir, such memorable characters”.

Of course there is no right answer. Or is there? Debate raged recently on social media (where else?) between those who believed that easy books, such as those I mentioned above, aren’t a route to lifelong reading. Children, it was argued, need to be challenged; they need their horizons broadened and should be exposed to authors like Tolstoy and Chaucer early on. Others argued that, it is more important that young children read at all; what books they choose matters less, and if that meant they read and reread simple stories so be it. The time would come later on for the greats of the western canon.

My own route to the delights of Dostoyevsky and Joyce was a fairly straightforward one. I enjoyed the childhood staples of anyone who grew

up in the ‘70s/‘80s: Ladybird books and Enid Blyton, through to Narnia and Middle Earth, via Supergran and the Turbulent Term of Tyke Tyler. As a teenager and, again, in common with many at the time I worked my way through the horror novels of Stephen King, the sci-fi comedy of *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* as well as books that we studied at school: *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *My Family and Other Animals*.

I read a lot during my childhood but of course the difference between then and now was the lack of distractions. There were just four channels in the television, the internet didn’t exist and mobile phones were for the mega rich. As a father, I often compare the books of my childhood to those of my sons. The books my sons choose to read seem to use simpler, coarser language. The pages contain many more drawings than I remember from my own reading, and the text is less dense. Back in those days, once you graduated from Peter and Jane, a page of a children’s book much resembled that of adult literature. Nowadays, the print is bigger and written in a font resembling a child’s handwriting

rather than the Baskerville of the ‘60s. It’s hard to resist the conclusion that books are written or published with a focus on engagement rather than challenge.

The situation is less bleak than that. Revisiting some of the titles I mentioned above, there’s a simplicity that sits at odds to the world which children grow up in today. They also possess rather Anglo Saxon attitudes in their depiction of the society in which they were written. The vocabulary may be more demanding, but the characters and plot are not, and the best of the novels written for children today render their stories in a way which can be sophisticated.

Is it bad for youngsters to read *The Hunger Games* or the *Twilight* series? I would argue not at all; they may not be the kind of books that professors will write papers on, but it would be very grim if all children read were weighty tomes designed to improve. The educationalist Horace Mann is credited with the quote: *A house without books is like a room without a window*. Books we read provide a window through which we look out to see the world and understand the lives



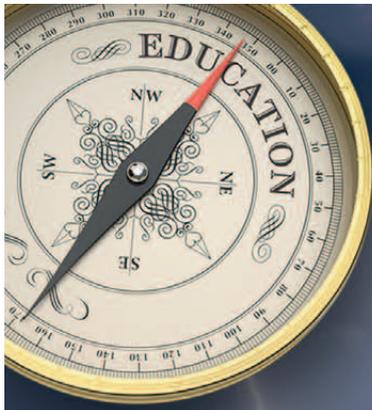
of others. They offer us something no other medium can: the ability to see the world from another point of view. We can get inside the head of a narrator in a way that is impossible in film or TV.

That makes for a richer experience; we can all remember times when we have seen a screen adaptation of a book we have read and found it wanting. That's because our ability to take an author's words and build a world in which

those words become pictures, sounds and realities is infinitely powerful. Rather than having the direct access to the author's words, we are seeing somebody else's interpretation of them, closing down narrative options rather than widening them.

The best novels for children do the same as they do for adults. They make us laugh or cry; they enhance our understanding of the world and of the people in it; they open us up to a

diversity of experience which helps us to understand our own. Children are as curious as they have ever been, and we have a responsibility to encourage them to read widely. Put down the screen and pick up a book, because whether it be Williams or Wordsworth, Rowling or Ronald Dahl, Tolstoy or Tolkien, the best books are those that speak to us in a language we understand and give us an experience we never forget.



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No learner left behind

Kate Doehren, Director of Learning Support (LS) at Hurstpierpoint College, explores the importance of helping children take control of their learning to reach their full potential

Teachers know that effective teaching involves engaging each and every student and so their individual learning styles need to be catered for. It's vital to combine teaching methods so that we are encompassing effective learning strategies for all learners.

Due to restrictions on time and resource, combined with large class sizes, traditional methods of learning, such as reading textbooks or note taking, are often relied upon without being augmented by more visual or hands-on activities. Even for 'read-write learners', who process information best when extracting information from text and formulating their own notes, these techniques soon become repetitive. Teachers need to be able to incorporate techniques that appeal to all learners into everyday lessons.

There are a variety of types of learners in a single classroom so an array of teaching methods need to be employed so that one type of learner is not, even unwittingly, favoured over the others. This will ensure that all types of learners are on a level playing field; it will also expose students to the countless ways there are to learn and engage with information, helping them to discover which modes of learning suit their interests and personalities best. Here are just a few learning techniques that can be easily incorporated into everyday lessons...

Let's get visual: Visual aids are a really effective route to engage with visual learners, and also students

who have dyslexia or those who struggle to process large amounts of text. Presenting information through images, colours, video clips, animated drawings, as well as graphs and mind-maps or flow charts, will be a lot more appealing and easier to absorb. There are numerous resources available for students to use, in the classroom and at home with support. Investing in those that specifically follow the curriculum will be beneficial, allowing students to learn effectively through imagery with simple sentences.

Exploration: Just as some children will love to read or listen to music, some students learn best when they move about and explore. A more kinaesthetic, hands-on environment will offer students the opportunity to grasp concepts, explore and understand subjects. This gives them the independence to take control of their learning and discover their potential. Getting students involved in practical activities will encourage them to engage all of their senses and therefore absorb a greater level of information. Using trial and error, repeating tasks to try and improve the results, can work effectively for students who like to see the effects of their actions and concepts at play in the real world, which leads me on to...

Real-life learning: It's no secret that when children are enthusiastic about learning, they learn well; therefore helping them to understand the purpose of what they're being taught will help them retain the

information. It's no good just teaching something without demonstrating how it relates to the wider world. For example, get students to organise an imaginary event; they will need to budget expenses and work out how much things cost – utilising key maths skills. Linking learning to real-life examples allows students to understand the purpose of an activity, and how it can be applied in practice.

The power of writing: While moving around, getting active and creative will work wonders for many students – there will still be a number of children who are more comfortable with traditional methods. Taking a logical and systematic approach, 'read-write learners' prefer ideas to be displayed in writing and are adept at extracting information from text and surmising it in their own words in the form of notes or lists. Allow these children to interpret the data in graphs, diagrams and graphics by describing it in their own words, perhaps in the form of a story or essay. Encourage their love of reading and writing by broadening the horizons of what they read – if they are skilled at reading novels, try introducing them to non-fiction texts or written reports on the subject you are teaching.

Active learning involves being engaged with information on a number of levels – through what you see, hear, personally experience, discuss, teach to others and so on. Therefore, be sure to present information to children in ways that tickle their senses, pique their interests, and play to their strengths.

Bringing English to life

Pippa Sutcliffe, the Head of English at Westbourne House, discusses the changes that have been made and the responsibility she feels for making language come alive in her classroom

I have had a range of experiences in my teaching career: being Head of English in both state and independent schools (prep and senior). I have taught a range of age groups and a variety of pupils, preparing them for English SATs exams, the 11+, 13+ and CASE papers, GCSEs and A-levels. Since September, I have been Head of English at Westbourne House School. I felt that the lessons that we were teaching would benefit from a more structured approach to the teaching of punctuation and grammar

Before coming to Westbourne, I was teaching at a secondary state school and was therefore preparing the Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 pupils for the new English GCSEs which require a very firm understanding of the effects of grammar and punctuation choices made by a writer. Since September, I have augmented the teaching of English at Westbourne House by focusing on the punctuation, grammar and comprehension teaching. I have also cemented a lot of the excellent practice that was already taking place in the department.

11+ and 13+ CE English papers require pupils to be able to access texts who have reading ages significantly above their chronological age. The texts used for these exams are often taken from challenging novels above a reading age

of an 11, 12 and 13 year old. On these papers, pupils are required to answer questions, analysing the effects that are created by a specific form of punctuation, imagery and certain words/phrases.

I feel that there is an assumption that pupils are already aware of the rules of grammar and punctuation. However, it seems to me that a lot of prep school children are reaching Year 6 having not been exposed to any formal teaching of grammar or punctuation. The freedom of the curriculum in prep schools encourages creativity however we are still required to prepare our pupils for the 11+ and 13+ exams. Also, we do need to provide them with the foundations to be able to tackle the new style of GCSE English questions.

At Westbourne, we are introducing regular comprehension practice into the curriculum for Years 3 and 4 pupils, highlighting the key areas of grammar and punctuation within the text.

In the past, it was thought that because we speak English we were able to easily access texts of any level. Whilst I was growing up, we were meant to absorb the formalities of grammar subconsciously. English was a 'creative subject' that encouraged the freedom of thought. At school, I remember sitting outside on the

field writing poems and analysing texts with discussions that went off on imaginative tangents. We were exposed to challenging texts and expected to identify and discuss the themes, relating them to the social, cultural and political period. It was a time when grammar and punctuation were no longer taught formally in English, only in Latin, French or German.

The speaking of a language means that we are able to communicate and be understood at a certain level. However, what it does not mean is that we are formally aware of the grammar, punctuation, range of vocabulary and variety of sentences (simple, compound and complex) to technically analyse our language. English is the most important subject that we can teach a pupil at school. Without a grasp of punctuation and grammar, a child's understanding of what he or she reads can seriously jeopardise his or her progress in every other subject, including mathematics.

Instead of thinking that everyone can access English, should we think the opposite? Should everyone be taught English almost like we teach Latin or French? After all, it is the foundation to our pupils' learning right across the curriculum. The understanding of the way grammar and punctuation



are selected to create a specific effect should be secured before any further analysis of a text or writing for effect is pursued. For example, at GCSE (especially the new English GCSE) the analysis of syntax and diction is expected to consider how writers develop tone, mood and atmosphere in a text and how they evoke the interest of the readers. These complex skills cannot be developed unless the basic skills have been understood.

Should we be introducing intensive grammar and punctuation lessons in order to aid both comprehension and writing skills in English for the 11+ and 13+ CE papers? The SATs papers for Year 6 at the end of Key Stage 2 in primary schools require a rigorous teaching of SPAG. Areas of the subjunctive, active and passive voice and determiners are taught. In addition to this, pupils are expected to understand how colons, semi-colons and dashes are used. Year 6 pupils are not only required to identify these

areas but also to illustrate them in their writing.

At Westbourne House, we are gradually introducing our own unique grammar and punctuation experience, starting in Year 3 and 4 through the 'teaching' of comprehensions. This does not mean that we just read a passage and expect pupils to answer a set of questions on it. We have taken the primary school idea of teaching grammar and punctuation and adapted it for our needs. We must remember that not only do our pupils have to succeed at 11+, 13+ and CASE, but they also need to be prepared with the appropriate skills for the new English GCSE.

How do we make the teaching of grammar, punctuation in comprehensions creative and exciting? We do this by using the following methods:

- Talking about words and what they mean in a specific extract from a

text; highlighting their role and meaning in a sentence

- Drama – we bring a text to life – children can be used physically to represent punctuation marks also naming their grammatical role in a sentence
- Drama around the definition/ meaning of words – acting out the meaning or different meanings depending on the context
- Asking pupils to say a specific word to make it sound like its meaning, adding to the atmosphere of the piece.

Being taught English dynamically is essential and I do have a passion for all areas of my subject. However, I believe that every child should leave prep school loving their mother tongue because they understand the foundations of the language and they love its subtleties as well.

All the world's a stage...

Stefan Anderson, the Principal of Tring Park, reflects on the importance of the performing arts within a school curriculum



Open day was coming to an end and the father of a prospective pupil approached me and said: “Mr Anderson, your school is nothing like I expected.” Well, I thought, no school suits every one, child or parent. To my surprise, he then went on to say: “My daughter was the one who insisted that we come to your open day. My wife and I didn’t want to. We were convinced that your school would be full of children who are arrogant, brash, pushy and in-your-face. However I couldn’t have been more

wrong. Your pupils are a credit to the school. They are so confident, self-assured, polite and welcoming. My daughter will definitely be auditioning for entry.” The way he emphasised ‘confident’ struck me in particular.

Confidence has been described as the belief in one’s ability to succeed. Every child deserves the chance to flourish and thrive. Building confidence in children is crucial and acquiring this confidence provides the foundation of so much of what our children will achieve in their career and their lives.

There are many ways to build confidence in our young people, sport springs to mind, but I believe that training in the performing arts is one of the very best. Most children have an interest in one or more of the disciplines of acting, music and dance, which can be nurtured. What are the benefits and skills that children learn from an education in the performing arts? The most obvious benefit is confidence. Piano teachers are famous for using the phrase ‘practice makes perfect’: mine certainly did and she

was absolutely right. The best way to build confidence is to work hard at the task in hand. This can mean hours of training on his or her instrument, in a drama rehearsal, in a dance studio, in an orchestra or singing in a musical theatre ensemble or choir. The culmination of this hard work is the performance on stage where you have the confidence to appear before an audience and demonstrate what you have achieved. These experiences give young people excellent self-presentation skills, which are valuable far beyond the world of the performing arts. They are articulate and can converse with adults in a mature way. They are unafraid of public speaking and have a bearing and poise which projects their self-esteem and belief in what they are saying and doing.

Creativity is developed through training in the performing arts; no two rehearsals or performances will ever be identical. The rehearsal process by definition involves experimentation to find out what will or won't work: a monologue might be recited in 10 different ways before settling on the best version; the choreography of a dance is constantly being refined; the tempo of an orchestral movement may be altered and so on. Children learn to approach work from different perspectives. It develops their imagination and powers of self-expression.

Performers often refer to 'the company', which means the cast of the show. Teamwork, learning how to work and get along with others, is another one of life's most useful skills. The play, the dance number, the concert will not succeed, either in rehearsal or in performance, unless all the participants work together. The need to collaborate is essential. In a 'company' there is less emphasis on winning or losing and more importance on the team succeeding as a whole. Children also learn how to compromise, if necessary, for the greater good. Linked to this is the emotional development of the child.

Working closely with others helps to promote inter-personal skills. Artistic creativity fosters emotional creativity. It helps children to make sense of their own emotions as well as those of their peers. They learn how to empathise with others and respect their feelings. Some roles in shows will be bigger than others and not everyone can be a 'star' in every show. This will lead to disappointment for individuals at times but, in my experience, once the show has been cast young people are incredibly supportive of each other, whether in a lead role or in the chorus. We are back to the 'company ethos'.

Perseverance, the ability to continue in spite of difficulty, is another key skill. This is linked to 'practice makes perfect'. No performer can succeed without this. Perseverance allows us to acknowledge our failures but to learn from them and improve in conjunction with determination and focus. There has always been a debate about the relationship between talent and hard work. Of course a dancer has to have the right sort of physique to succeed professionally but the best physique in the world is worth nothing without rigorous training. On a related theme the Canadian novelist and humorist, Stephen Leacock, said: "I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the luckier I get."

Just as there are a number of ways to build confidence in children there are a number of ways to train in the performing arts. Tring Park School for the Performing Arts offers one model. We pride ourselves on the fact that Tring Park is unique in the balance it gives between performing arts training and academic education. Pupils spend half the day singing, acting and dancing and the other half of the day studying the full range of academic subjects. Pupils take the standard 10 GCSE subjects in Years 10 and 11 including English, mathematics and science and at sixth form there are a choice of 24 A Level subjects. If you want to do double maths, physics and chemistry you can!

Not what one would normally expect of a performing arts school.

Of course the principal motivation for a child coming to Tring Park is their love of one or more of the performing arts. At the junior level, children choose either the junior dance course or the theatre arts course, which combines the disciplines of acting, singing and dancing. At sixth form there are four courses: acting, musical theatre, dancing and commercial music.

We are proud of our alumni. Lily James appeared in the title role in the recent Disney film *Cinderella* and played Juliet in Kenneth Branagh's recent production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Daisy Ridley is Rey in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Jessica Brown Findlay was Lady Sybil in *Downton Abbey* and is currently playing Ophelia in Robert Icke's production of *Hamlet*. Drew McConie is the Olivier Award-winning choreographer. Max Westwell has danced with English National Ballet for the past twelve years and will soon be appearing in the West End production of *American in Paris*. There cannot be many teenagers who haven't heard Ella Henderson's single *Ghost*.

We are equally proud of those alumni who have gone on to pursue non-performing careers. Last year's Head Boy, a superb dancer, is now studying medicine. Former pupils have gone on to Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial, UCL, Durham, Edinburgh, New York University and the University of Southern California to read subjects such as physics, mechanical engineering, history, French, architecture and theology.

Our pupils are our best ambassadors and the best advertisement for a rigorous training in the performing arts combined with a thorough academic education.

What they learn, during their time at the school, will give them the skills and knowledge they need to face the future with confidence. There is something I forgot to mention. They also have a lot of fun!

True Grit

Zareena Huber, the Head of English at Lochinver House, writes on how she has implemented the concept of GRIT into her classroom

I'm an English teacher by trade so I am somewhat nerdy about the various meanings that seem to be available to us with this glorious language of ours, often open to misinterpretation, but nonetheless wonderful, and grit is no exception.

Those of us of a certain age can probably still distinctly remember the untold pain of slamming hands

and knees down into asphalt on a school playground, decades before the advent of that spongy stuff, that still looks like asphalt, but to fall onto is like landing in a pillow. The searing heat and pain of tiny pieces of grit embedded in the soft fleshy part of your palms and knees was a pain that just kept on giving long after playtime was over. What about that grit that

flies off the back and sides of those lorries, that always seem to be going a little too fast for my liking, as the temperatures plummet and the council services try to make the morning commute just a little less 'skiddy'?

Before you flip to another section in the magazine, stay with me, I'm obviously not talking about that kind of grit.



I am midway through an exciting venture focused on developing G.R.I.T (Guts, Resilience, Initiative, Tenacity) in my students. The scheme has been running since September, just in my department, but the hope is that it might be rolled out to other departments in the school, perhaps next year. The reason for implementing this scheme, which I know isn't new, is to encourage the students to be more learning-orientated, rather than goal-orientated. This is not to say that the results we're aiming towards are not significant, I'm not that naïve, but I've done a tonne of reading (nerdy English teacher strike two) that strongly suggests that a focus on developing learning habits actually increases attainment rather than the opposite. I could now launch into the theory of all of this because it is actually really interesting, but I know myself that when I read 'stuff' about education I mainly want to know what I can actually do in my classroom today, so below is an outline of some of the things I have tried that have proved successful. Some you may like to try and others you probably won't, but I'd encourage you to start where I did with the video clips detailed below, sent to me by a colleague.

I began by showing the students two short video clips, showing the G.R.I.T of two athletes, Andy Murray (www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CGbzOTI5KA) and Shantol Ince (creativity-online.com/work/bp-shanntol-ince-deeper-than-blue/48707). The ensuing discussions with students in Years 5 to 8 were incredibly stimulating and served as a great platform for what was to follow.

Activities have included:

- A display of images of children and young people showing G.R.I.T
- 'Learning Tree' reflective journals. Each element of G.R.I.T is outlined in the journals and the students

note down occasions when they have displayed G.R.I.T during the week.

- Letters written to people they admire (family members and the famous) for the G.R.I.T characteristics. We are beginning to receive replies into school, which is tremendously inspiring for all the students, not only those who initially wrote.
- Each student has selected a picture of someone they admire to go on the front of their exercise books so that they can feel inspired and 'gritty' every time they start their English sessions. (Lots of great opportunities for both teachers and students to refer to this person to motivate them not to give up). Choices have ranged from Barack Obama to John Cena to Ellen Degeneres.
- G.R.I.T badges. In my experience all students, irrespective of age, love a badge, so I've had these specially designed. They are extremely hard to get and we awarded our first four only a few weeks ago, complete with information read out by their teachers as to why they were awarded, in terms of the students showing each of the four G.R.I.T characteristics. These students now have a dual role of G.R.I.T champions and A4L (Ambassadors for Learning) when they are called upon in other subjects to encourage their peers to show G.R.I.T.
- 'Deliberate Practice'- this is a 10-minute session once a week (in form time) when each student deliberately practices something very specific they want to improve. The point is showing their commitment (G.R.I.T) to improvement. DP choices have ranged from improving 100m-sprint timing to accuracy with weaker foot in football to sketching hair in self-portraits.
- Listening to specific Desert Island Disc podcasts (from the

quite breathtaking Radio 4) and discussing how those being interviewed have displayed G.R.I.T. (Some great ones include Nicola Adams, David Nott and Robert Langer).

- Changing the language that colleagues use from 'group' to 'team'. It's fascinating the difference this has made as the students talk about what they can contribute to the 'team' for the specific task and also speak about not wanting to let the team down, wanting to show G.R.I.T.
- 'Epic Fail Board'. We have an interactive EFB where all are invited to write about what they've royally messed up that week; lots of fantastic discussion and laughter to address the idea that failure is embarrassing and should be hidden at all costs and how accepting failure is part of showing G.R.I.T.

This is just a taster of some of the things we have tried so far that have actually worked, and we have many more things coming up, including a G.R.I.T guide for other users.

The crucial element that all of these ideas have in common is that we are trying to encourage the students to see a tangible link between the development of their G.R.I.T and their 'real' lives outside of school. Added to this is that I have an incredibly supportive group of colleagues, students and parents (one of whom is introducing DP into her workplace!).

I've been teaching for nearly thirty years and I can say without a moment's hesitation that I am enjoying my teaching now more than ever. I know that a huge part of this is that I am truly excited about educating my twenty-first century learners in a way that I know will increase their ability to be more effective and compassionate citizens who are full of guts, resilience, initiative and tenacity.

I gotta have faith

Eileen Fisher, the Junior Head of Ipswich High School for Girls, ponders the question of whether girls lose faith in their talents

A study of 400 children in the *Journal Science* has reported that although at age five girls believe their own gender is 'brilliant', just one year later, at age six, girls start to lose confidence in themselves.

So what actually happens in this year to make such a difference? Well, for many children, this is the stage of education when we change from a 3-5 play-based and child-led curriculum to a more formal National Curriculum. The learning is therefore dictated and not led through the child's own imagination and interests. In my view, one of the suspected influences are teachers and what is being taught in the classroom. This linked with exposure to media stereotypes, parent views and messages from other children can all make an impact on boys' and girls' perception of gender.

Ideas such as thinking boys are smarter, boys are in charge and boys go into STEM subjects more than girls can really make a difference; and especially when making decisions about careers.

At Ipswich High School for Girls, our girls-only environment allows to break down these stereotypes. We find here, in our junior school (for girls aged 3-11) they don't even exist. Our girls have no boundaries; they are encouraged to take risks, grab opportunities and have a go at everything.

Our curriculum is unique in that we cover all areas with no gender bias,

researching the Titanic, finding out about the football World Cup, and exploring the Roman era. Our girls get involved in lessons and extra-curricular activities such as golf, football and survival skills; things which, in other schools, may be seen as predominantly male activities. These opportunities sit next to classroom topics about fairy tales, our extra-curricular knitting club and netball where everyone is encouraged to take part in everything and learn about their own passions with no gender bias whatsoever. One of the researchers from the *Journal Science* discusses the idea of 'hard work' and how pupils believe this is the key to success, particularly in girls.

Obviously we promote hard work and it is even one of our golden rules in the junior school, '*We work hard-we don't waste our own or other's time*', however we also promote risk-taking, resilience, learning from our mistakes and believing in our ourselves. At every opportunity we engage and challenge the girls to develop themselves in whatever activity they take part in. Our PSHE programme provides strategies for our girls to grow and develop; a toolkit they can delve into when in a tricky situation or a decision needs to be made. Our Forest Schools sessions are based around the ethos of assessing risks, building independence, co-operation and building self-esteem all in an outdoor environment where we build dens, make fires and learn tool use.



The foundations we lay in the junior school and the confidence we instil in our pupils continues with them as they move through the senior school and into our sixth form. This is evident from national statistics which show that girls are 2.5x more likely to take A Level physics at a girl's school rather than a co-ed environment. Our girls strive to achieve fantastic things throughout their school careers and beyond with a large proportion going on to study at Russell Group universities.

When I asked some of our girls in Year 1 (age six) what they think about their gender, they informed me they would much rather be a girl; 'girls are much more sensible' and 'definitely then I can boss my brothers around' were among their reasons why!

So, in an all-girl environment are we remotely bothered by boys, gender or stereotypes? With two women running the country it surprises me that in this day and age researchers are still finding that gender stereotypes are a massive issue and particularly for holding back girls. Particularly as I work in an environment where this is not the case. I think it would be an incredibly interesting study to look at 400 girls from girls' schools and compare these to co-educational pupils. Personally, I think we would see extremely different results.

Out of order?

Grant Murray, Head of Risk & Compliance at Redwood Collections, explores both the moral and business cases for applying for an Order for Sale



According to the Independent Schools Financial Benchmarking Survey 2015, 38% of surveyed schools have an unpaid debt that is secured via a charging order on a property. However, very few charge holders realise that they may apply for an order for sale that can result in the property being sold and the debt cleared. Charging orders have long been a common way of enforcing a County Court Judgment (CCJ). It is believed that around 100,000 charging orders are granted to claimants each year for anything from an unpaid credit card, a water bill, or unpaid school fees.

There are many reasons why a creditor may choose to secure their CCJ with a charging order. In the case of schools, it is often because there is a tacit agreement with the debtor to secure the debt against the property until such time as the pupils finish their examinations or otherwise leave at the end of the current year or key stage. This is sometimes accompanied by an agreement for the parents to make token payments to clear the debt.

So you have a charge on the property and the debt is "secured" against an asset. But when the child has left, the payments have stopped and the debtor is no longer responding to letters – what happens next? The debtor will often be content to simply let the charge remain on their property. This can almost seem to be a guaranteed long-term investment (charging orders generally accrue 8% statutory interest pa) but the charge

may not be secure. Depending on how the charge was registered with HM Land Registry, the debtor may still be able to sell the property without the consent of the school, leaving the charging order redundant and the debt unpaid. This is something that needs to be clarified.

There will always be those who are simply taking advantage of the system. Often such debtors know that the debt to the school will not immediately affect their credit worthiness in the same way that, for example, missing mortgage payments would. Priority may therefore be given to their other outgoings rather than their obligation to pay the school. An application for an Order for Sale has been shown to reverse this standpoint and often produces favourable repayment offers or settlements in full.

Net worth, where possible to determine to a fair degree of certainty, can reasonably be taken into consideration when assessing the appropriateness of an order for sale against a recalcitrant debtor. Some may be experiencing genuine financial hardship in terms of their income/ expenditure, but also have a very high net worth. For these 'cash poor, asset rich' debtors, does it really constitute fair treatment of them to perpetuate their financial difficulty by accepting a low value instalment arrangement, keeping them indebted for an extended period of time, incurring even more interest? Perhaps it would suit all parties if the court granted the school's Order for Sale and the debtor's assets

were liquidated. Depending on the value of their assets this could result in their debts being cleared, their monthly outgoings greatly reduced and substantial net funds given to them at the end of the process.

Any reputable solicitor or debt collection agency should have measures in place to spot sensitive circumstances and take them into consideration when weighing up whether to issue an order for sale, then advise the school accordingly. This helps to reassure the school that legal action is not issued inappropriately.

Further protection for the vulnerable is provided by Section 15 of the Trusts for Land and Appointment of Trustees Act 1996, which requires courts to consider the interests and the welfare of the debtor, other members of the debtor's household (and dependent children in particular) when considering a creditor's application for an order for sale. Therefore if a judge ultimately approves a school's application for an Order for Sale, that school can be sure that the decision has given appropriate consideration to the debtor's circumstances.

Finally, schools seeking assurance of the fair treatment of their debtors should consider instructing a debt collection agency that is authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), the new regulator for the financial services industry. Such agencies are bound by the principles of the FCA's Treating Customers Fairly initiative.

Engaging with English



Tobias Bown, Assistant Head (Academic) and Head of Drama at The Perse Prep School in Cambridge, discusses using drama and media techniques to engage children with literature

There's an old adage that drama teachers are all failed actors, English teachers failed writers and teachers who run media clubs failed radio presenters. As Head of Drama, a former Head of English and the founding member of our school's media club, this joke begins to wear a little thin. In reality, these experiences have proven to me the power of using drama and media strategies in the classroom to engage pupils with literature and bring texts to life.

Drama and media techniques can make a big difference to a child's experience of a text, helping them to 'enter the story' and develop a more rounded understanding of the world in which the narrative inhabits, which in turn enhances the quality of their learning and enjoyment of literature.

Technology plays a growing role in our lives in the 21st century. Children are surrounded by new ways of accessing content and can often teach their teachers when it comes to the latest app or device. As a school where we study one set text per term and link all of our English objectives to the book, we have looked for ways to enhance our schemes of work with a merging of drama and media activities to capitalise on the children's interests and experiences.

The aim is to develop literacy skills in a fun, dynamic and challenging way and to place an equal emphasis on analytical as well as creative English. This is really the next step from initiatives such as 'Talk for Writing' and 'Drama for Writing' which for the last twenty years have recognised that it is much easier to describe stepping out onto a snowy scene if you have actually had a go at it, or failing that (given how unreliable British weather is), used the power of your imagination to try it and then discuss the experience before putting pen to paper. You can spot the difference yourself in any lesson if you compare the quality of the children's work before and after they have had an opportunity to 'live' the experience you are trying to get them to think about. I remember hearing another teacher tell me about a school she had worked in where the caretaker had been asked to dress up in shabby clothes and sit in the school's old air-raid shelter that was now used as a store cupboard for PE equipment. The teacher's class had been studying *Skellig* by David Almond. If you know the novel, you may be able to guess what happened next when the class entered the pitch-dark room. The total silence was disrupted by the

caretaker's gruff voice, in role as the angel-like figure who is discovered by a boy in his garage in the book, asking "What do you want?"

After screams of shock had subsided, the children were encouraged to go into role and film themselves approaching this mysterious character with questions about his life, his motivations and his feelings which would become part of the trailer they were making for the film. I chuckle at the idea that at the end, the teacher beckoned the slightly shell-shocked children back into the classroom with a cry of "Now go in and plan the rest of your trailer!"

A less terrifying version of this activity, and one which does not require you to cover yourself in cobwebs, is the classic 'hot seat'. This can be given a 21st century twist if a media element is added to the drama. Apps such as Tellagami allow you to animate a cartoon figure with your voice. Children can go into role and answer questions from others in character. Some work on *Thief* by Malorie Blackman for example, involved children dreaming up journalistic questions to ask witnesses of a car accident that features in the novel. It was clear the children



understood the need to ask the right questions in order to achieve an eye-catching quote for the front page of their article! Combining drama and media does not need to be complicated. It can be as simple as learning about story sequencing by taking photographs of the key events and writing captions alongside each one to explain the action.

We tried this with frozen images of the plot of *The Knight's Tale* when studying Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and I was in no doubt that the experience had improved the children's understanding of the story. Another of my favourite projects involves filming and editing using iMovie to produce talking-head interviews with evacuees when studying *Goodnight Mister Tom*. The children's ability to empathise was poignant and increased their understanding of the plight of the main character.

A useful tip I picked up a while ago was 'more of the children, more of the time'. This mantra encourages teachers to think about how the highest number of children can be involved in a learning activity for as much of the lesson as possible. Drama and media activities increase

participation and can also be used to promote collaboration, problem solving and perseverance. If we can get children switched on to the delights of a text whilst we're at it, then that's even better. At my school, the culmination of English for Year 6 is an in-depth study of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in the summer term. We bring the children out on to the grass and use drama and media tools to wander the streets of Verona, witness Mercutio's epic death, quiz the Friar on whether he is to blame and debate if the protagonists' fate could have been avoided. I am in no doubt that the children's experience of the play is far richer as a result and this pays dividends in their analysis, understanding and creative responses. Although the play was written over 400 years ago, a combination of drama and media brings it right up to date and offers a range of new ways to explore the story. This helps us achieve one part of our ultimate mission as English teachers: to enable children to find their own ways to explore and engage with literature in the 21st century.

QUICK TIPS:

Trying to find a fun way into poetry? Ask the children to write a rap and edit the class' efforts into a music video. We tried this with characters from Eva Ibbotson's *The Secret of Platform Thirteen*.

Struggling to make Shakespeare relevant? Take photographs of dramatic moments in the play and use them as part of a gossip magazine article. We tried this with the Capulet Ball in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Looking to improve the quality of descriptive writing? Explain to the children that you will film them as they imagine stepping into a magical world on the other side of a door. Offer them one or two props to get them started once they enter and play some atmospheric music or sound effects to make the experience even more realistic. Stop them after a minute or so and ask them what they have sensed (sight, sound, taste, smell, touch). We tried this with C S Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*.

The perfect foil for deadly Daleks

Robin Fletcher, the Chief Executive of the Boarding Schools' Association (BSA), talks of boarding fun and the experience many students are fortunate enough to have



Disraeli was right of course. There are indeed lies, damned lies and statistics - and today they are as dangerous and persistent an enemy to prep schools as the Daleks are to Dr Who. When it comes to the very notion of young children spending time away from home in boarding schools, there are times when it can seem that life is divided between the majority who oppose it and the minority who recognise a hidden gem when they see one. In the prep world, Daleks determined to exterminate younger-age boarding flash their falsehoods and half-truths to a susceptible and credulous audience.

Children who board at prep school, they claim, can only be harmed in the process, their relationships with parents, wider family and friends at home forever ruined. They also say boarding staff, however well-intentioned or trained, can never be full and proper substitutes for real

parents. But just as Daleks, however formidable and deadly, struggle when they come to a flight of stairs, the arguments against prep boarding can be just as fragile. Here are two good reasons why:

1. It is common sense that boarding will never be the right solution for all children, whatever their age, and no one today argues the point. That's why any decision to board is today a three-way process involving parents, schools, and most importantly, children themselves.
2. If boarding for young people is so obviously harmful, why are thousands of children at prep schools across the UK thoroughly enjoying themselves?

I spend hours of my working week reading this or that report setting out the wisdom and experience of eminent educators. I consider the speeches and thoughts of the great and good, counsellors, psychologists and consultants. Enough material crosses my desk and invades my inbox to fill a PhD thesis every year, but guess what? The collected wisdom of a thousand expert adults counts for nothing when weighed against the direct testimony of the only ones who really matter: children. In my job I have the enormous privilege of visiting boarding schools in the UK and different parts of the world. I have entered the hallowed portals of over 140 schools, an experience at

times akin to inspecting the education wing of the National Trust. About a quarter of my visits have been to prep schools, urban and rural, large and small, co-ed and single sex. Each school has been different in location, name, style, size, uniform ethos and character (not to mention food!). Each one has been more individual than the last. But for all their differences there has been a golden thread stitching them together - the common sound of young, busy, bustling children having fun. At a school in Wales prep boarders proclaimed with giggles and not a second's hesitation that they loved boarding because it got them away from 'nagging parents'. They then marched in their wellies across a field and bridge to help me plant a tree in the shadow of the snow-topped Brecon Beacons.

In the north-west, a seven-year-old girl excitedly told me all about her first night taster boarding, and of course she had brought her favourite soft toy from home to join her. In Oxford, two boarder prep boys (one loud, one more reflective) gave me an expert tour, including a potted biography of Harold Macmillan whose portrait hung magisterially in the one of the rooms. At a Home Counties' school, two boys rushed in to the Head's study to add a few more pieces to the latest Lego creation - demonstrating their confidence and enthusiasm as boarders and the welcoming openness of their environment. And at another school,



Westbourne House School boarders

a pair of ebullient 12-year-old girls explained just how much they enjoyed boarding on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday night each week, allowing them time to do evening prep, music practice and drama rehearsals without wasted hours spent in the car on the school run.

For these girls junior boarding wasn't about being away from home, but rather combining the best of long weekends at home with sensible time spent at school doing all the myriad things busy young girls do. Five examples from five very different schools in different parts of the country. Every child different but every one of them relishing the experience. There will those children of course who not would enjoy what I have described or parents who simply like to have their children with them at home. That's natural and fine. But it does not change the fact that at prep schools up and down the land there

are young boarders having the time of their lives - the sort of kids who probably know by now how to build a Dalek, and exterminate one too.

I am fortunate enough to be dad to four daughters and step daughters aged six to ten. Naturally one of the questions I am frequently asked, because of my job, is whether my girls board. The honest answer is no, principally because like many UK parents cost is a genuine issue and offering the boarding experience to just one daughter and not all four would be unforgiveable! The deeper answer however is while I am certain each girl in their own way would gain a great deal from the experience, it would not suit all of them. One of the quartet for instance, while extrovert, full of energy and bounce (perfect prep school material?), is very much a home bird. Her quieter sister however has read every Mallory Towers book Enid Blyton ever wrote and would

pack her trunk tomorrow given half the chance (although I have tried to explain that now many schools on remote Cornish clifftops actually exist in real life!).

So as I wrote at the start, boarding is not for everyone, and for some it might be the perfect solution at the age of eight, or 11, or 13, or 16 – or perhaps never; it all depends on the child. What I do know, however, is that for those lucky children who get the chance to enjoy the very best a boarding prep school can offer, deadly Daleks will hold no fear.

Robin Fletcher is Chief Executive of the BSA, the largest association of boarding schools in the world with over 500 members in 23 countries. Robin was a boarder at Rugby School and spent 30 years working as a journalist, newspaper editor and communications director before joining the BSA in 2014.



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this year – the first of its kind in Europe. With an average of 300 days and 3,000 hours of sunshine a year and situated in an area three times the size of Monaco, the unique resort has a staggering array of sports and leisure options to choose from.

Wannabe Andy Murrays, Johanna Kontas, Lionel Messi and Joe Roots can take part in one of a comprehensive range of junior academies including golf, tennis, football and rugby, as well as La Manga Club's popular junior club.

As well as more traditional sports, the nearby Mar Menor is perfect for canoeing, sailing, kayaking and rowing, and after a day of exercise, guests can unwind and ease any aches and pains away in La Manga Club's luxury spa. 13 different treatment rooms and deluxe spa suites offer a variety of soothing treatments and, with the facility also featuring Jacuzzis, saunas, steam rooms, fun showers and a relaxation area, as well as a large gym and fitness studio and 25-metre indoor swimming pool, there is something for everyone to pamper and indulge themselves. A choice of accommodation is available in either the resort's well-appointed five-star hotel or fully-serviced four-star self-catering apartments.

A range of 20-plus restaurants and bars means guests have a wide array of venues to rest and relax in after a busy day, while getting there couldn't be easier with frequent flights operating from the UK into the Murcia region, including a new British Airways summer route from Heathrow to Murcia San Javier airport – just 20 minutes away.

Books in Translation

Charlotte Weatherley, the Deputy Head and Head of English at Knighton House School in Blandford, explores the benefits of the use of translated texts and international writing within the academic classroom



My six-month-old spaniel puppy, currently very much at the chewing stage, recently helped himself to a favourite book of mine, as it lay on the settee. Although small pieces of the text were still dangling from the corner of his mouth, the front cover and the lovely introduction by the book's translator, Giovanni Pontiero, were already beyond rescuing and there was nothing I could do to salvage the rest. *The History of the Siege of Lisbon* by Jose Saramago had come to a spectacularly violent end. In a bid to find something constructive in the doings of those little shark teeth, I spent an enjoyable

evening reacquainting myself with all the books on my shelves, which were written by Europeans or were translations of books from countries further afield. Many of these books were children's books and I was reminded how much books in translation have increasingly become part of my repertoire in the classroom.

In the last few years, books by Cornelia Funke (*Igraine the Brave*) and Henning Mankell (*The Cat Who Liked Rain*) have become favourite class readers with my pupils, and on the shelves in my school library are books by international authors from near (Holland: *Against the Odds* by Marjolijn Hoff) and really very

far away (South America: *Letters to My Mother* by Teresa Cardenas). Something seems to unite these titles and offers brilliant and unexpected dimensions to children's reading and writing. I believe there is a sort of literary triumvirate in international writing for children: firstly, the openness with which complex and sensitive issues are broached; secondly, a downright quirkiness of subject matter and finally, books in translation encourage young readers to think unashamedly about the complicated business of life, in the true spirit of philosophical enquiry, which Europe in particular has never lost.

I have seen meaningful discussion of complex themes, even for very young children, brought about through a simple question-answer format (*Ask Me* by Antje Damm). Furthermore, books about being different, (*Bambert's Book of Missing Stories* by Reinhardt Jung), domestic abuse (*The Book of Everything* by Guus Kuijer), cross-generational friendships (*The Duel* by David Grossman), freedom and justice (*From Another World* by Anna Maria Machado), and even terrible parenting (*The World's Worst Mothers* by Sabine Ludwig), are a platform for imaginative and worthwhile dialogue with children and often bring about exceptionally honest writing in the classroom.

Books in translation encourage young readers to think unashamedly about the complicated business of life, in the true spirit of philosophical enquiry, which Europe in particular has never lost.

War is written about by foreign writers with a ferocity which surprises the English reader (*And Picasso Painted Guernica* by Alain Serres), although we have an eye-watering openness about teen relationships in Young Adult fiction which makes that seem contradictory.

War through the eyes of the occupied (*The Boys from St. Petri* by Bjarne Reuter), the displaced (*In the Sea There are Crocodiles* by Fabio Geda) and the tortured (*Traitor* by Gudrun Pausewang) shock and grab at the same time, particularly so adolescent readers, who strongly need to have the 24-hour news culture of which they are a product, put into a wider, more balanced narrative. Importantly, little known struggles in other parts of the globe are brought to life in books in translation, which give a welcome new perspective in the classroom on more well-worn points of view (*From Another World* by Ana Maria Machado).

Art is seen as fundamental in the development of the whole child to the European sensibility, so with the removal of the History of Art A Level in the news, it comes as a relief to know that fantastic art books for children thrive in translation. Experiential learning is taken to heart by a number of children's authors, with both the *Draw with ...* series

by Ana Salvador and *Pictures That Tell Stories: Art for Children* series by Prestel. Even with Year 7 and 8 pupils, art picture books provoke the imagination; perhaps their very simplicity inviting discussion, unencumbered as they are by the weight of too much back-story; such is, *A Bird in Winter* and *The Little Ballerina*, both by Helene Krellis, which take famous paintings and build stories around them. *In The Forest* by Sophie Strady is simply a beautiful piece of art in itself, but as a discussion prompt about sustainability and environmental activism, it is a new way in.

Changing course, if you haven't read *When I Was a Boy, Neruda Called Me Policarpo* by Poli DeLano, can I thoroughly recommend you get a copy. What a way to introduce children to Pablo Neruda's poems and a super starting point for modelling really challenging writing. My class read Neruda's *Ode to My Socks* and finished up writing odes to every favourite article of clothing they owned. For the badger alone, if not for the aperitif snack story, it is a must read of eccentricity; who said the British had the monopoly on outrageous behaviour!

And finally, as I quietly pursue the line that reading for pleasure will save the known world, I specifically believe

that books in translation will save young readers from the awfulness of narrow horizons. The writer David Almond said, 'Our children need to be exposed to a world of voices so that the whole world becomes their home.' (David Almond, 'Moving Through Borders', Marsh Award for Children's Literature in Translation, School Librarian, Spring 2003) so it is the duty of teachers and librarians to bring those voices into the mainstream so that this can happen.

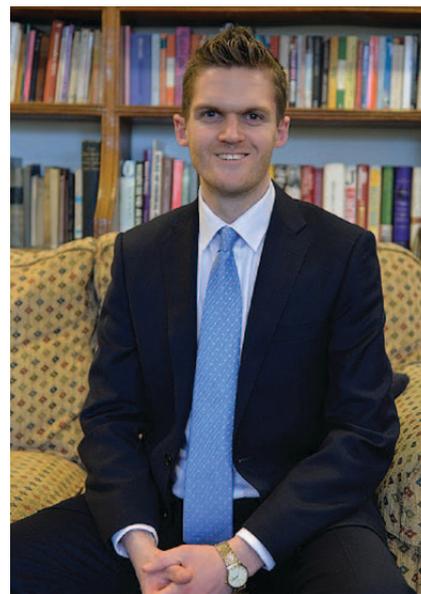
A current class of mine has just finished reading Jean Giono's classic, *The Man Who Planted Trees*. The book has been a peg on which to hang grammar points (compound conjunctions) and features of personal writing (Writing Task: A Place I Know Well) but it has been a fantastic opportunity to discuss the power of the individual to bring about change, the difficulties of translation and where, if we could plant trees, we would want to plant them.

Charlotte Weatherley initially wrote *Books in Translation* for the School Library Association and will feature in the next issue of their journal *The School Librarian*

Charlotte is the new SATIPS English broadsheet editor

A real sense of belonging

James Rainer, Housemaster of St Cuthbert's House at Ampleforth College, considers the value of communication between parents and Houseparents during and after the transition from prep to senior school



Visiting a post-13 school for the first time is often an overwhelming experience for parents and children alike. When a family arrive in my study, they are generally on a visit of two or three boarding houses before an appointment with the Headmaster and the Senior Admissions Registrar. On paper, three-quarters of an hour seems an awfully hasty period of time in which to decide whether one of my colleagues or I is going to be the best fit for both the child and the family through some of the most important years of their lives. And yet, brief as these visits are, the choice regularly feels organic and exciting. It is really the choice of House which begins the transition between prep school and senior school; key to this succeeding is the relationship between the Housemaster or Housemistress, parents and child.

When I am showing parents and children around St Cuthbert's, they will notice the photographs of current students on the walls – more often than not wearing the green and white House shirt. This is important, of course; the House must become akin to a home for the child to flourish and so a sense of identity and comradeship are critical things to develop. I mention this to parents as

it is often their biggest worry upon leaving a prep school which they feel a close and familial bond to. Our first aim at Ampleforth is to generate a sense of belonging to the House, with inter-house tug o' war over the first weekend and fiercely competitive raft races on one of our lakes over the second and third weekends. These are fun events, giving the boys and girls many tales to tell when they return home for their first exeat weekend – which House won? Which Housemistress got soaking wet on her raft? Who has the best House song? We put photographs up of all these events on our House Facebook pages, which in turn feed through to the Ampleforth app – a fantastic platform to keep parents informed of the day to day life in the House and the school as a whole.

As a Housemaster, I make a particular effort to get to know the families of new starters before they arrive. A taster stay can be so important to calm any nerves, particularly for boys and girls who are going to be new to boarding. Likewise, the new starters' day in late June gets all of our new boys and girls together; I love the juxtaposition of chatting through practicalities with parents and guardians in my study whilst we can

hear from outside the new first-year boys playing football on the astro-turf with the older boys. The value of this sense of home cannot be overstated; the child feels that their House choice is validated and the parents breathe a sigh of relief.

These visits provide a further opportunity for communication between parents and the House team. For example, Matron is on hand to reassure everyone that she has seen it all before and answer one-hundred-and-one questions about name-taping clothes! I encourage the parents to be as open and honest with me as they feel they can be; the only problems which we cannot arrange some degree of pastoral care for are the problems which we do not know about. As such, whilst the new boys are being looked after by the older boys, I make time for a five minute private conversation with each set of parents. I find it tremendously useful when a prep school have discussed the transition with parents as this helps them to identify key points to draw to my attention.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is visiting prep schools. Not only do I get to see another world and enjoy the energy which seems to be an innate part of every prep school,



but I can also cultivate relationships with pastoral staff. The sense of relief from parents is palpable when I can talk about my connections with colleagues in their prep school. A good Housemaster will use these relationships to ensure that we can provide the right level of care for new starters. After all, prep school teachers will have lived with these children and know intimately what arrangements they need to succeed. Where there is an acute case of psychological or medical need, I find it useful to visit a prep school and learn from the pastoral systems which are already in place. If it can be made to work in our context, I have no desire to reinvent the wheel when it is plain to see that a child is happy and comfortable with the support they are receiving at prep school.

I tell each new boy to my House that, at Ampleforth, the Housemaster will be both their biggest fan and their harshest critic. The Housemaster or Housemistress has the 'wide angle lens', we learn what makes our charges tick and we communicate this back home to parents. Key to

the development of this knowledge is the first year tutor. At Ampleforth these tend to be either the resident Assistant Housemaster or Assistant Housemistress, or an experienced teacher who has often been a Year 9 tutor for a number of years. The tutor is the first person at the College to develop an overall view of the new students and is critical in helping them to navigate their new school and complicated timetable whilst being fully engaged with the extra-curricular programme. Underpinning this is an outstanding level of communication home; the good is reinforced and the worries are contextualised. The first year tutor, then, is often the bridge between the need for greater independence in GCSE years and the expectations fostered at prep school of close pastoral and academic support.

As we stop towards the end of the House tour to look at the House honours board - with the names of each previous Head of House and my predecessors (including two former Housemasters who chalked up an intimidating sixty-two years

of service between them!) marked on there - we have the chance to reflect on a proud history and look forward with some ambition. Will this eleven year-old prep school boy be added to that very board in six years? Perhaps, or perhaps not. No matter, really, as each boy and girl who passes through Ampleforth is valued for what they contribute to our special community. When Francis Dobson, our beloved and recently retired House Chaplain, prayed not long after I took over as Housemaster, for the 229 St Cuthbert's boys who had died since the House was founded in 1926, he was not doing so to be mournful or macabre. Instead, he was praying for a family which grows by one every time a new, nervous face walks through the door on an early September afternoon. Their parents have a right to be nervous and will always find a listening ear at the end of a telephone line or a cup of coffee waiting when they come to visit their children. In this sense, the senior school boarding house is the logical next-step after a happy and fulfilling experience at prep school.

Read, read, read!

Fiona Booth, the Librarian at Dulwich Preparatory School in Cranbrook, discusses the importance of children reading for pleasure



According to UNESCO, the biggest single indicator of whether a child is going to thrive at school and in work is whether or not that child reads for pleasure. Reading fiction enables children to imagine and identify with lives and situations beyond the boundaries of their own experience. It opens minds and hearts. It is both a relaxing escape from a demanding

world and a means by which the growing child can help determine what sort of person they are and want to be. Stories nourish emotional intelligence.

The ethos at Dulwich Prep School, Cranbrook is to assume that reading is both essential and enjoyable, rather than to make the common assumption that 'children no longer

choose to read'. This is not only demonstrably untrue (it's about the only growth area in a struggling publishing industry) but is in danger of becoming a self-fulfilling prophesy if schools in particular are too quick to assume that books are obsolete.

At Dulwich Prep School, Cranbrook we have a daily 'reading period' for twenty minutes after lunch for both

pupils and staff and we regularly incorporate library activities and the promotion of reading for enjoyment into English lessons. Our theme for this term, in fact, is 'READ, READ, READ!' The libraries in all three areas of our school are purpose-built, light, comfortable and peaceful spaces, filled with exciting displays. We run competitions, book fairs and host regular author visits, keeping the library at the bustling heart of school life. Most importantly, however, we have dedicated librarians in our Little Stream (Years 1 -4) and Upper School libraries to advise and enthuse:

"School libraries with enthusiastic, experienced staff change lives. They provide a means and a physical space for children, regardless of their homes and families, to have free access to books, information and often technology, as well as crucially, the expertise to help children and young people find and use it. They open children's eyes to the magic of fiction, help with homework and give space, advice and joy to any child that wants it." - The Bookseller, 2016

The Upper School Library, which I run, is always open to the children as a place of quiet refuge, as well as for the borrowing of books. Many children really need an opportunity for quiet contemplation away from the demanding social activity of a school day. If we lose traditional libraries and librarians in favour of purely technological options we will lose not just the peaceful atmosphere of the library, but also the guidance of the specialist librarian. Amazon, via Kindle, will recommend titles based on previous choices; they are all likely to be within the same genre and they will all be new titles, or titles that Amazon have a commercial interest in promoting. A good librarian, on the other hand, will think about what that individual child might enjoy that is not an obvious choice and may be completely unlike what the child has previously read.

The librarians at Dulwich Prep School, Cranbrook consider their main role to

be that of enthusing children about reading for pleasure; and the greatest pleasure of the job is matching the child to the books that they will enjoy. It is great to discuss books with the keen readers but equally satisfying finally to find the book that gets a reluctant reader hooked! There are so many now to choose from - fiction for boys has, particularly, blossomed since my early days of bookselling - and there really is something in our library for everyone. We also have a huge selection of audio books, and books suitable for children with reading difficulties, all of which may be borrowed.

As well as our official school book lists of recommended titles, I publish a monthly blog discussing books by genre - which I think is more useful, particularly to parents, than a simple list of titles.

I have an enthusiastic team of Year 8 helpers who are essential to me and who are also very good at recommending books to younger children. They have their own notice board in the library on which they publicise their favourite books - and are rewarded for their efforts, occasionally with chocolate! The older children may use our digital 'thumb-print' recognition system to borrow books when they come into the library for prep or before school, and tend to recommend books to each-other (which we encourage with the aid of various games and activities in English lessons) while Year 5 children have a Library Lesson every week. This gives me an opportunity to discuss with them the importance of books and reading, to teach them how a library works and why (a process which begins in Nursery) and, especially, to help them to choose their reading material.

Over the years I have constructed a scheme of work which makes the most of these Year 5 lessons. When the children first come to Upper School in September, they fill in a 'Reader Profile', and I get to know the children with the help of their

English and form teachers. We play games - for example, using a version of Caryl Chessman's Reading Game, where a selection of titles is displayed in different areas, by genre. The children have to travel from 'island' to 'island' when I blow a whistle (an enjoyable and very un-librarian-like experience!) choosing from each table by looking at covers, blurb and then - vitally - reading the first paragraph or so of the book. They have to think about how they choose a book and why. These activities result in the children making regular 'wish-lists' across several genres, which they can then refer to when they want something new to read.

Finally if, after all this, a child is still reluctant to read for pleasure - which, of course, does happen - then the one thing that, in my very long experience, makes all the difference, is for parents to read stories aloud and continue to do so long after the child is able to read alone. Audio books can be a good substitute. Children can always listen to something more challenging than they are able to read - even older, keen readers will enjoy listening to, say, Dickens - and it does remove, for reluctant readers, the nagging and the sense that it's all just more hard work! Instead, they can just relax and listen, possibly while drawing or playing with Lego... All the benefits of reading fiction, painlessly absorbed.

Fiona has been the Librarian at Dulwich Prep School, Cranbrook since 2003 and prior to this worked in children's book publishing, and as manager of the Puffin Bookshop in Covent Garden.

WoT! is your story?

Ian Morris, the Chaplain at Bishop's Stortford College, follows on from the previous issue of *Prep School* to present an assembly about beginnings and the end

As this assembly has a literature theme, I began with these jokes:

If a tree whose leaves never turn is called an 'ever green' what do you call a book whose leave never turn? A 'never read'!

Why are avid readers the most positive people? Because they love turning over new leaves!

D'you hear about the library that's wanting to get young men reading by opening after pub hours and has a Turkish takeaway inside? It's situated in the hummus section and will be serving "Shhh! Kebabs!!"

Show some random lines from a story – you can either have them on a loop as the school gathers or stick individual lines under chairs so the 'volunteer' has to read it out when asked to go so. Once words have been shown/read out, ask the questions – what does it mean? Whose story is it from?

Make the point: out of sync and out of context these words make little if any sense. These words are from what some may say, is the greatest love

story ever told – the story of Romeo and Juliet. To understand these words and appreciate their meaning, we have to read the whole story, we need to understand the bigger picture in order for these snippets to make sense.

When we meet people for the first time, it's like picking up an unknown book and starting to read it from the latter part of the story.

The main character will act in ways you have no or little idea why behave that way. Consequently, if we don't take the time to read and understand their earlier chapters, we may well end up becoming prejudice, judging people by what we read in front of us without knowing the whole story. There's a wonderful poem called Cranky old Man/Woman that illustrates this point. It's about a fragile old person who asks the nurses to see beyond the façade to the person who he was and is inside. Some say the poem was originally penned by an old lady in Dundee, Scotland whilst others claim that it was an old man in Melbourne, Australia.

Whichever is true, after the elderly

person passed away it apparently caught the attention of the nurses in the care home who then made copies of it and circulated it around before it was picked up by a newspaper and published.

You can find a video of it here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTHiVT5TPsY or get a copy of the words here: www.agingcare.com/Articles/cranky-old-man-legend-157110.htm I did a mixture of both – showing video when it was focused on the old man then read it when it was talking about the younger man (and showed appropriate photos from my own timeline to make it more personal).

The poem reveals that the nurses were only able to read the final chapter of this person's story; they only comprehended the feeble, old fogey and were unable to see the person behind the frail façade. And it's not just the elderly we can fail to read. What about the homeless person, the refugee, or one with disabilities. The truth of the matter is that as soon as we think we have sussed someone we become deluded and are in danger of discriminating against them.

Secondly, just as we can rush to judge someone without knowing their back story so it's easy to forget that the future of each one of us is not yet finished. Every life is an unwritten story that is yet to be completed. Your manuscript is still being worked on, there are still plenty more blank pages to fill and none of us knows how our own individual story will end. What is and what has been doesn't have to be in the future. Your story can change.

Don't waste your love on somebody, who doesn't value it
Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast
Did ever a dragon keep so fair a cave?
Women may fall when there's no strength in men.
Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.
Do not swear by the moon

What does it mean?
Whose story is it from?



If you had met Saul around 33AD you would have thought you would know how his story would end. Compared to him, Donald Trump was a moderate! Saul was a Pharisee who thought his race was superior and even within his own race he was the most superior! Zealously he persecuted those who believed differently from him, yet his story had a dramatic plot twist.

His encounter with Christ radically changed his life. Those he'd persecuted he now protected, those he'd argued against he argued for, those he'd excluded he included. Saul's life shows that what is and has been does not mean that it will be. Our story is not yet complete, the ending is up to us.

The same is true of others. We might be reading a chapter of someone's life that we don't like and so we metaphorically ditch the book and stop reading. We've made our judgement and convicted the character as guilty, unworthy, and simply not worth the effort of continuing on with their story. We then spend the rest of our lives living in the land of the deluded thinking we knew what is and was and will be for said character and thus we end up being just as prejudice as the disdainful character with which we disagreed.



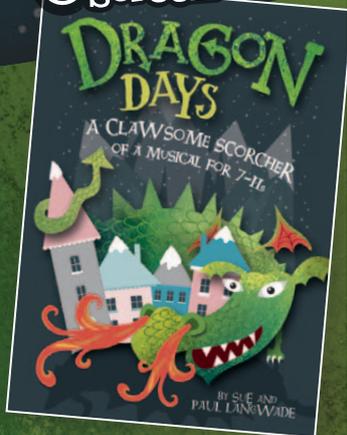
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To win or not to win?

Jonathan Slot, the Deputy Head of Eagle House in Berkshire, discusses sporting success

Why is it that sport departments receive far more strongly-worded emails than any other department? Unhappy with results? Ping – in comes an email. Dropped from the team? Ping – in comes another. The list of complaints doesn't end there. Matches too short, drive times to away matches too long, kids not tough enough, kids not skilled enough. Ask any sports department for a peek into their email archive. You'll be amazed at the quantity and tone of them.

Interestingly, the music department rarely hears from parents unhappy with the standard of the school choir, choral society or strong quartet. School drama productions are always praised to the hilt, regardless of the quality of acting or the number of missed or forgotten lines. If Little Jonny misses out on the main part in the school play, it is put down to a learning experience. Being dropped from the football A team? Armageddon. Sport for some reason brings out a different side to most parents - just listen to the commentary on most touch lines. As educators, we have become guilty of teaching to these demands. The result has become more important than the experience; the performance more important than the progress. Most teachers would shake at the very thoughts of being accused of teaching to the test. As sport coaches, if our main focus is on results, what's the difference? If getting one over a rival school is all that drives the sport sessions – are we forgetting our role as educators?

In the classroom, we want our kids to be engaged; we want them to enjoy the

experience, to work hard and to try their best. We rarely shout and when individuals struggle, we'll take them to one side and fill in the gaps. We'll differentiate our lessons so that every child is receiving personalised and tuition. That's what we all spend hours upon hours planning for. And the result? Progress. That's the barometer of classroom success. Do we teach sport lessons and judge our success as sport teachers by the same criteria? I'm not sure. At Eagle House we are proud of our sport. The kids enjoy over four hours of sport every week, excluding PE lessons. Amazing. Are we successful though? According to some of the e-mails we receive and the comments on the side lines – probably not. We lost to our local rivals the other week. "Disaster". "School sport in freefall". "We need better coaches".

So what does sporting success really look like? We've decided that if a child comes off the training pitch red-faced, full of smiles, having enjoyed the experience and having developed as a sportsman or woman, then that's a successful session. We've done our job. We don't want our kids spending hours in a line waiting to work on a skill. We want loads of game play with brief skill and tactical interludes, then we want to go back to the game. We were challenged to record how much time a child actually spends playing sport in one of our sessions. You'll be amazed how little that can be.

And on match days? The result is not important. In Years 3 and 4, we will not keep track of the score and no score will be published. We will use

the match as a coaching opportunity. As coaches, we'll be on the pitch helping our kids to develop and to enjoy the occasion. What better way to improve standards than in a match environment? If the game is too one-sided then we'll mix the teams up.

In the older years, match days will never be one-sided. If a side gets too far ahead, we'll call the game or find a way to even it out. We don't want to either win or lose by too large a margin. If needs be, the coaches will be on the pitch talking to the players. Win or lose, the result is not important. Progress and enjoyment is everything.

What about the parents? We bring them with us on this journey. Parent sport forums are being organised as communication is vital. We hope they will focus on the progress made, not the result. After the game we would love the first question to be, "did you enjoy the game?" rather than "did you win?" We've considered giving the parents target cards for their child to encourage them to applaud the areas we have been working on.

Some will argue this philosophy will create kids that lack competitiveness, who won't learn how to lose and who'll be ill-prepared to learn how to win. We disagree. We feel that this approach to coaching will help improve their enjoyment of sport, in turn helping them develop tactical know-how and teamwork. They will become better sportsmen and women who will be much better prepared for sporting life once they have left our school.

Gossip and communication: facts and fiction



Simon Detre, the Headmaster of St Teresa's School, takes a look at the infamous concept of 'fake news' that has dominated the media

I am not a fan of Donald Trump. Regardless of politics, compared to his predecessor who seemed gentlemanly, statesmanlike and a gifted orator, to me Trump comes across as a nasty bully (and bullies always get their comeuppance in the end). But although I disagree with Trump about more or less everything, there is one area where I can just about see his point of view: 'fake' news. I don't mean stories that have been made up and have no factual basis. No – I am referring to his accusations of bias in the mainstream media. Trump would have us believe that the likes of CNN, The New York Times and even our own BBC are reporting with bias and not sticking objectively to the facts.

Whilst I do not suggest that these long-established and well-respected news organisations are nearly as bad as he and his henchmen make out, it cannot be denied that there is bias in all reporting (humans are always prone to bias and promoting their

own points of view, naturally) and no media can be entirely objective.

There is bias in the news for all sorts of reasons. For a start, if the media simply reported the facts, the news would be much less interesting to consumers. Gossip and scandal sell newspapers. Gossip can also be a problem in schools – the gossip on the school gate can cause widespread anxiety amongst parents, staff and pupils. Unless school communication is consistent, open and clear, it is likely to make matters worse.

For headteachers in particular, it's not just about what you say but how you say it – every nuance is open to (mis-)interpretation. There was an old headmaster of Westminster School who used to offer parents the following deal: "If you don't believe everything your children tell you about school then I won't believe everything they tell me about home". I applied this when, at lunch the

other day I found myself sitting with a group of girls discussing how long their parents spend in the shower (answers ranged from "five seconds" for one mother to "far too long" for a father).

Most of us carry in our pockets a plethora of different channels of communication available via our smartphones. Text messages, email and the various different flavours of social media – Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram and many more (not to mention the possibility of a good old-fashioned telephone call). You might have thought that these would help schools with communication, enabling them to push out their messages loud and clear. In some ways they do.

There is another side to this though – apps such as WhatsApp can serve to feed and stir the rumours, so that what begins as ill-informed gossip can quickly spread and take on a life of

Parents feel that they are somehow disadvantaging their child if they don't tutor them, because they feel that everybody else is.

its own, becoming a large scale game of Chinese whispers played out over the course of an evening and, dare I say it, fuelled by the odd glass of wine or similar which loosens the tongue (or rather, the fingers tapping the messages in to the group chats).

Many parents are too level-headed or too busy to pay much heed to this sort of thing and the most sensible are the ones who simply ask the school for clarification ("Is it really true that the computer room is going to be done away with to make room for another classroom?" Answer: "No").

Sometimes though, the rumours go unchecked because the school is unaware of them. I have seen – not at my own school – these channels of parent communication take on quasi-official proportions, with emails sent to year groups of parents using the school's logo and colours and circulating information about forthcoming events, homework and more, presumably with the best intentions but without the school's knowledge. A deputy head friend tells a story of a parent who came to ask an "Is it true that..." question and when he set them straight on the facts, the parent retorted that they were more inclined to believe what they had heard from other parents on the gate! My own children's school produces a comprehensive weekly newsletter – but I know some (many?) parents don't read it.

One area where the gossip on the gate can cause real anxiety is when it comes to tutoring in preparation for tests. In my current school it's the 11+; at my last school it was the ISEB Common Pre-tests. Parents feel that they are somehow disadvantaging their child if they don't tutor them, because they feel that everybody else is. But if a tutor has never actually seen the test for which they are coaching children, it's worth considering how effective this is likely to be.

With these tides of information and misinformation sloshing around, how are schools and parents to respond? School communication in the twenty-first century has to be multi-channelled – schools nowadays publish updates to Facebook, Twitter and so on, providing parents with an ongoing drip feed of communication. Some engage specialist companies to help with or manage these. But this needs to be backed up with personal interaction and regular opportunities for parents to talk to staff. Staff – including senior staff – need to be visible, for example on the school gate in the mornings. Any amount of misunderstanding can often be quickly dealt with by a short conversation, to clarify a matter.

When I arrived at St Teresa's, there was criticism from parents about communication. Some of the information on the web site was

old and its design was outdated. We replaced it with a responsive site that works equally well on smartphones, tablets and computers and included an online calendar so that parents can keep up with what's happening at school. Other innovations like an online booking system for parents' meetings have helped too, and we are overhauling our systems for reporting and parents' evenings so that parents will receive information about their child each half term.

We also now have a system whereby class reps have a termly Q&A with me and any parent can submit a question. I was encouraged that at our most recent meeting there was only one question about communication whereas previously there had been several. But communication – like marketing – is one of those things that can never be ticked off as done. It needs ongoing thought, innovation and refinement of processes.

It gets trickier when the problem is the message rather than the medium. Have you heard the latest gossip about Donald Trump? Apparently he's planning to build a wall along the border with Mexico! Can you believe that?

Simon Detre is Headmaster of St Teresa's School, Princes Risborough.
He tweets @SimonDetre..

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Taking exams

Kate Allen, from the Independent Schools Examinations Board (ISEB), reflects on the dreaded exam period that every pupil endures



Summer term arrives, bringing long days of sunshine, picnics, cricket matches, sports days and, inevitably, exams. How do our prep school pupils balance the needs of their academic demands with the excitements offered in the final term of their prep school life? How do their teachers and families support them in this?

The absolute certainty is that all our pupils will meet examinations of increasing formality as they move through their education. Most, by quite an early age, will have taken examinations, perhaps in music or speech and drama. Each child's experience will be different. Some will have had to cope with pre-exam nerves; others may have enjoyed the challenge of performing for the

examiner and the 'high' that comes from the feeling of stretching to achieve all that they can.

Examinations are not a new aspect of school life. We have all encountered them and, in varying degrees, survived the experience. How, though, can we ensure that our pupils' first experience of 'major' examinations is positive, to promote confidence and set the tone for their future challenges? Teachers and parents are at the forefront of this. With their guidance and encouragement, even the most cautious of pupils can successfully navigate their first examination experiences. They will then build a positive attitude to take with them into the years ahead. What is the best way to achieve this? It is

interesting to look at how an athlete or a sportsperson might prepare for a competition. Naturally the building of strength and stamina must start early, at first gently, until moves and skills have been mastered and muscles and stamina developed.

Practice sessions may well be short, focusing on one key skill at a time until each has been mastered. Selective practice, to address individual needs, will achieve more than repetition of skills which are already secure. Rest and variety will be equally critical, both to recharge energy levels and to stop 'burnout' and fatigue. A trainer will be alongside, monitoring the athlete's state of physical and mental preparedness. He or she will

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As in sport, the preparation for examinations will start early, often built very gradually and imperceptibly as far as the pupil is concerned.

emphasise the power of positive thinking and every effort will be made to build confidence and to focus on success. Setbacks are inevitable, but will be met by the trainer and athlete working together, looking at what may have gone wrong and learning as much as they can from the process. In this way, the athlete will be able to deal with problems and build resilience and determination for the future.

The final preparations for competition will focus on rest, good nutrition and a positive and optimistic attitude. No trainer would want to raise levels of stress or encourage last minute overwork. Indeed the trainer will make sure that his or her own demeanour is calm. It is time to let the preparation stand and for the competitor to feel relaxed and ready for the challenge. Good teachers know this too and use the same principles as they prepare their examination groups. They take time to reflect with their pupils and help each to assess his or her progress. They know that confidence is crucial and that pupils who are over-anxious will not achieve all that they are capable of.

There is much current concern in our schools about pupil well-being and how to help children to maintain their equilibrium in a fast-paced and demanding world. Sometimes striving for academic achievement is seen as a cause of stress, but should this really

be the case? Pupil well-being and academic success are not mutually exclusive or even in competition with each other. It is clear that pupils who feel calm, confident and sensibly prepared will be far better equipped to achieve their potential. Well-being is vital to achieving high standards.

As in sport, the preparation for examinations will start early, often built very gradually and imperceptibly as far as the pupil is concerned.

Exciting lessons promote enjoyment and interest, encouraging pupils to be actively involved in their learning. Lively and engaged teaching will be interwoven with opportunities to learn the all-important skills of reading and responding to questions and working within time constraints. By introducing these skills steadily, in small and achievable steps, no pupil should be daunted or feel over-faced. Indeed, the challenges met are likely to be enjoyed and relished, fostering an 'I can do it' mind-set from the start.

In sport, the importance of skills practice to improve performance is clear. Teachers and trainers make this enjoyable for children through a variety of activities and games. Within academic learning and the lead-up to examinations, practice may be more complex. This is particularly the case when it comes to the difficult topic of revision. Here, all too often, there can be confusion for the individual. Each

pupil may need to try out different approaches before knowing what works best for him or her. Many will benefit far more from applying their skills, rather than simply trying to commit facts to memory.

Focused learning will achieve more than hours of repetition. Short bursts of activity are likely to be more productive than hours spent making revision lists. Parents may also need guidance so that they give appropriate support to their children and help them to approach their examinations with a balanced and positive attitude. We often hear our top sportsmen and women, giving thanks to all who have prepared them for competition and contributed to their success. They know that their achievements have depended upon those who have given them good advice, practised with them, encouraged them when things were difficult and rejoiced with them when personal targets were met or exceeded.

So, as the summer term comes to an end, will our pupils move confidently to their senior school secure in the knowledge that they have all the skills that they need to deal with the challenge of 'formal' examinations? If so, they will have a real sense of achievement and a solid foundation for the next stage of their education. Our schools and teachers will know that they have done their job well.

Is homework a waste of time?

Cindy Blanes, the Lower School Principal at ACS Egham International School, examines the importance of homework – in response to last issue’s article from academic coach Lucy Parsons

Homework has always been one of the biggest challenges to school and home life. Family tension, stress and time pressures are just a few of the negatives associated with homework. The discussion about the value of this ‘traditional’ homework is ongoing; several high-profile celebrities, including Kirstie Allsopp and Gary Lineker, for example, have called for a National Homework Boycott Day. Abandoning homework, as its currently understood, simply isn’t going to transform the learning experiences of our students and help them develop the much-needed skills they require to succeed in the world beyond the school gates.

Personalised approaches

At ACS International Schools, which has three campuses in Surrey and Greater London, the teaching team collaborated on a research project, which highlighted that for homework to be truly beneficial it has to be highly personalised for each student.

Traditional homework or ‘busy work’, as it should be better known, does little to enhance the student learning experience. Old-fashioned homework assumes that every student is the same, that each has the same maturity, concentration and ability level. In real-life this can vary enormously from one student to the next.

This kind of generic ‘busy work’ takes up a lot of time at home, which could actually be used in a more effective way, to apply the knowledge students develop in the classroom. Rather

than interrupting family life, while children make time to carry out a rigid schedule of homework when they return from school, learning at home can be made more meaningful, manageable, and worthwhile. This is what we have replaced home work or ‘busy work’ with at ACS: a personal, guided approach building on class work learning which parents and students can share together.

Supporting parents

Rather than set homework, ACS teachers instead share with parents the ‘units of inquiry’ or learning topics for the upcoming term and suggest that these subjects are explored at home. The Lower School intranet hosts ‘talk topics’ which link in with lessons and can be discussed at home around the dinner table or during car journeys. We also include extracurricular activities which tie in to each unit, such as visiting a museum, art exhibition or hands on activities which can be done at home.

All of these opportunities allow students to apply their class-based learning in a different context. In a multi-cultural class, exploring topics at home can be particularly important for students who have a native language other than English, giving them the forum in which to widen vocabulary in their mother tongue.

Arithmetic and literacy skills can also be enhanced at home without endless sums and compulsory reading times. Parents can help their children practice mathematical skills in

everyday scenes; counting out change at the supermarket or using a tape measure to size up furniture on a trip to IKEA. Equally, parents are actively encouraged to read with students as much as they can and for as long as it’s enjoyable - there is no minimum or maximum time. When reading is not a chore but an enjoyable activity, students’ literacy skills benefit.

More constructive approaches

There are far less stressful ways to help students engage with learning outside of the classroom setting than setting rigid homework assignments, like written tasks or sums that are marked right or wrong. Students can often find homework a torment, especially if they feel they have been set impossible tasks that they must face alone.

Research from Stanford Graduate School of Education conducted amongst 4,300 students highlighted that over 56% considered homework to be a primary source of stress, whilst others reported increased levels of anxiety, sleep deprivation, exhaustion and weight loss. These symptoms often increase when parents are unable to assist with traditional homework tasks - they may simply not be equipped with the knowledge, time or even the vocabulary to provide help.

Homework should come with a fail-safe - a method that allows parents to notify teachers if students have struggled with a task, or that they have worked on an exercise, with help, until no further headway could be made.



This would signal to teachers that students need more support in specific areas and students would not fear being penalised for 'failing to complete homework.' If students are unable to finish off tasks, they are often left feeling demoralised and demotivated.

Using home time to refresh body and mind

Children are already at school for seven hours a day and 'busy work' simply eats up their free time, when they should be spending time with their families and taking part in extra-curricular activities in order to refresh their minds and bodies.

Younger students especially should be encouraged to use the time after school for unstructured play - developing their own creativity. It can also be beneficial for children to experience boredom every so often, as it acts as a catalyst for their imagination.

Extra-curricular activities are vital for ensuring students develop into well-rounded adults. At ACS, all of our students can choose from over 39 different sports teams; the 'Geek Club'- a technologically skilled student group that mentors teachers and other children; and the school's choir and bands. Taking part in sports teams or performing arts activities not only

enhances important skills such as teamwork and communication, but improves student general well-being.

Developing skills for the future

Of course children need to be prepared for secondary education, and some parents may argue that traditional homework tasks are key to developing vital skills like time-management, organisation and independent study skills. However, this new approach we've adopted at ACS Egham ensures that throughout their school life, students hone more than these basics and develop a curious mind and lifelong love of learning - important attributes which set students up to thrive at university and the world of work.

We prepare our nine to eleven year olds for secondary education through 'I-Inquiry' projects. These are individual research topics which students investigate over a period of four to six weeks. Recently students designed, created and built their own planets, following a unit of inquiry that explored the solar system. Using their iPads, students researched the characteristics of different planets before creating and naming their own. The final projects were then presented back to the class using iPad

presentations, artistic drawings and in some cases, hand-built models.

Projects the children enjoy working on

Through the I-Inquiry project, students developed a whole range of essential life skills; time management and organisational skills as students were required to work on the project both at home and at school; independent inquiry, exploring different sources to create their planet; as well as helping develop a creative mindset. Students also enhanced their communication skills and public speaking through their final presentations. Most importantly, students were energised by their learning and engaged with their subjects on a much deeper level.

Setting homework for the sake of it doesn't benefit children or prepare them in a robust way for their next steps. Where we've adopted our new approach at ACS, we can see our students develop life skills through extra-curricular activities, spending time with their friends and family, and engaging at home with meaningful, highly personalised tasks, like the I-Inquiry Projects, which equips them for success beyond education and develops a lifelong love of learning.

Improving the 'pitch' for religious education



Alex Synge, a member of the ISEB RS Setters Committee, responds to Charlotte Vardy's article on religious education at Common Entrance

Charlotte Vardy's thought-provoking article in the last issue of *Prep School* deserves a response. We all certainly subscribe to one thing she states: "... almost every head of department in a senior school would agree that ISEB Common Entrance religious studies needs reform, ...". However, her commitment to pursuing, or even accepting, such reform must be doubted when she reveals in her final paragraph that she plans not to use the ISEB specification, instead developing her own curriculum and assessment planning at Ardingly College.

No doubt such bespoke arrangements will suit some schools. However, ISEB seeks to promote a nationally recognised specification of high quality, which can be widely trusted and used with confidence in a wide range of settings. The standards sought are as high as possible, commensurate with the age group and

a broad range of ability. The aim is to promote a worthwhile and respected "common" benchmark; sometimes the clue really is in the name.

Ms Vardy's special bugbear is with the plans for philosophy in the TPR proposals. Yet she admits that she does "...empathise and sympathise with prep school teachers who find the prospect of tackling the problem of evil and suffering or the moral argument tempting."

So why not allow them to do so? Her answer is peculiar: "... what specialist teachers would love to teach is not necessarily what is best for students to learn."

If ever a consideration of the philosophy of curriculum planning was needed, it is at this point! Many would agree that it is often a good idea to include what students themselves find interesting or important. I feel certain that I am not the only teacher of Years 7 and 8 to note how often the assumed "atheism" of this cohort is expressed in such questions as: "If God is great and good, why does He allow famine/war/natural disaster to occur".

Far from being "not necessarily what is best for students to learn", these students are – quite often, if encouraged to do so – already making searching enquiries in the area of ultimate questions. They are demanding that such philosophical debates, as envisaged in the TPR specification, should take place in their classes and in the exam room.

To seek to address such demands, arising from the pupils' innate and deeply pondered interests, will do much to reduce a potential danger identified by Ms Vardy. She suggests "the juiciest topics" (and, incidentally, if such topics exist why should prep schools not be entitled to these?) will become "the subject of CE cramming." But there is no reason why, or evidence for, this being any more the case due to topic selection than in any other "fact-heavy" subject.

Indeed, I argue that cramming will be less intensive than might otherwise be the case precisely because pupils and their teachers will genuinely have explored the issues as real, live and personal. And there is really no exam candidate who would not benefit from

ISEB seeks to promote a nationally recognised specification of high quality, which can be widely trusted and used with confidence in a wide range of settings.

some short-term “cramming” in the run-up to any exam.

Ms Vardy employs a fair amount of special pleading, and not only in her promotion of the non-ISEB scheme she has devised at Ardingly. She admits that the TPR proposals “*may well have excited pupils and parents, marvelling over the opportunity to study philosophy from 11*”.

But she then proposes that these opportunities “*... will come at the cost of unrealistic expectations and high drop-out rates for senior schools RS*”.

From “marvelling” in the prep schools to “high drop-out” at the end of Year 9 suggests that something may be wrong in the senior school. But she has her own answer to this dilemma: “*Departments need to be able to engage students and show them the excitement and relevance of the subject in Year 9.*”

Quite so! When I was the RS head of department in a senior school, the promotion of the subject in Year 9 was possibly the key work I did. The ISEB RS committee is also very conscious of the need to give senior school colleagues the best possible chance to “pitch” their subject to potential GCSE candidates. Therefore, it seems unbecoming for Ms Vardy to suggest that the context for this all-important year group will be a negative one, where pupils “*... don't want to be reprising topics already tackled in Year 8 or spending all their time going over*

basics that haven't been understood or even taught at prep school.”

This, and her following remark about prep school teaching (“*.. it isn't helpful when ... knowledge has not been properly understood...*”), both seem rather condescending to prep schools. Certainly, one function of the ISEB specification is to make available a common strand of knowledge taught in Years 7 and 8, which would enable a Year 9 course to avoid the very pitfalls Ms Vardy envisages. I suggest that the topics throughout the proposed specification are wide-ranging and many are not likely to be repeated at GCSE because that exam does not require their study.

Moreover, the theology section includes a set of core texts that many senior schools are very pleased to find their Year 9 pupils have studied. In this way the enterprise shared by teachers of all age groups, to encourage the take-up of RS at all levels, has a greater chance of success.

Ms Vardy notes that a “personal response” is no longer required at GCSE. It is true that the command in CE is “Do you agree?”, but I wonder how very different that is when compared with the GCSE command “Evaluate this statement” with its final sub-command being “reach a justified conclusion”. The generic mark scheme in CE really seeks the same kind of answer eg “ideas developed

in a balanced way; well-chosen and relevant examples; another point of view considered, supported by clear reasons.” (Level 7 of 8).

While it is helpful to have debate on something as wide-ranging and important as a new exam specification, and the ISEB RS Committee has welcomed Ms Vardy's comments, it seems that she is arguing to restrict RS in prep schools even while she admits that there is something to “marvel” at in the proposals for TPR. We would certainly not wish to restrict the hand of senior school head of departments. But we believe that the proposals will in fact broaden their scope, especially in devising interesting, non-repetitive and challenging pre-GCSE – i.e. pre-recruiting – courses for Year 9, which can build on the skills, knowledge and understanding at the heart of the ISEB proposals.

Alec Synge has been HoD RS in one senior and four prep schools, as well as a GCSE RS examiner and moderator of coursework. He was until last year General Secretary SATIPS. In the increasingly distant past, he spent a total of 15 years as Head of two different prep schools, Birchfield and Hazelwood.

These girls can, so what's stopping them?



Charlotte Avery, Headmistress of St Mary's School, Cambridge and the President of the Girls' Schools Association (GSA) considers a positive sporting education for girls

Children's initial experiences of sport have a defining impact on their life-long attitudes to physical activity. Imagine being six or seven years old in the playground of a new school. Everyone else is playing football, but you haven't quite figured out the rules of the game – perhaps it just hasn't been part of your experience of growing up so far. Some children won't be put off and will have the confidence to join in without a second thought. There will be some who hesitate, because they are too shy to ask to play with the group without first knowing what will be required of them and whether they will be any good. The one who initially hesitates might then progress through the school considered by others as 'the boy who doesn't play football' and so isn't invited to play in future. He perceives his barriers to joining in becoming bigger and bigger.

Girls starting secondary school will arrive with completely different sporting backgrounds to each other: some will have regularly participated in competitive fixtures as part of a

team in junior school, while others might have had no such experience. During the first weeks of term, teachers will ask the new Year 7 girls whether they will be signing up for the netball team. The girls who have previously experienced competitive netball are more likely to sign up while the girls who don't yet know whether they would do well in the netball team are less likely to have the confidence to do so – and so a similar cycle might develop here. If you're not selected for the team in Year 7, how then would you develop the confidence to join the team at a later date? Some girls go through their entire education, and into adulthood, believing that they are 'not the sporty type'.

Running must be the most accessible sport of all: it can be done for free, outdoors; it can be used to get from A to B as part of a regular routine, or as a means to see more of the local surroundings, or indeed to improve fitness levels. Yet there are plenty of adults who consider themselves 'unable to run'! What is it about our school age experiences that make children feel that if they aren't winning races or matches, they should gracefully bow out of taking part at

all? The longer these seeds of doubt are allowed to grow in children's minds, the more they will take root and children will believe that they cannot be good at sport.

This is why it is so important to lay a positive physical foundation during children's early years. I'm sure most adults at some time in their lives will have had to force themselves in to physical activity for the sake of getting/keeping fit. Being able to do so is a skill in itself but clearly being physically active regularly becomes that bit easier, and more sustainable long-term, when people have found a sport that they truly enjoy and want to do. For some it might be a personal race against the clock in a swimming pool and for others it might be the adrenaline of playing competitive rugby with teammates. There's no one sport fits all solution and yet at our school we do have a mantra of 'sport for all', which refers to our determination to help each child in our care find the sport(s) that they will enjoy, so that they have a positive experience from an early age on which to develop their attitudes to physical activity.

If we want four and five year olds to grow up bucking the current national trend – that sees young



people becoming increasingly likely to suffer from obesity, and children's misconceptions about body image continuing to plague them and play a prominent role in the development of mental ill-health – we need to do everything we can to instil a positive outlook while they are still forming their beliefs. As well as providing children with opportunities to try out a vast range of different types of sports, and giving them some freedom and ownership to dedicate their time to those that they prefer, we also need to encourage them to believe that however much they know or don't know, however talented they might or might not be, they can always improve their abilities – and that having a go is all that's needed.

When you consider that children in Key Stage 1 are still just developing their fundamental movement skills and co-ordination, and children in Key Stage 2 are only beginning to understand the key concepts involved in team opposition games, the fact that some might have written

themselves off in terms of one sport (or even worse, sport generally) by the time they reach senior school is simply not good enough.

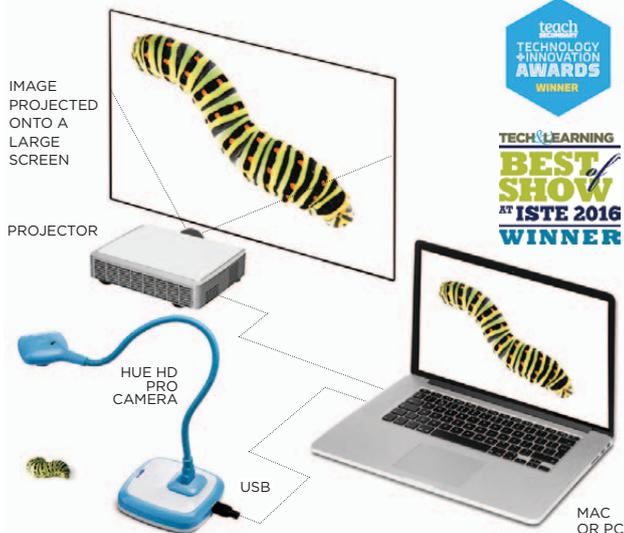
As girls progress from junior school to senior school many of them will become a little, or a lot, more reticent to take part in activities when they don't feel confident. Curricular, and even more so extra-curricular, sport is an area that sees less and less uptake by girls as the older they get. *Always* (whose #LikeAGirl campaign was a great success) argued that 75% of girls' confidence plummets during adolescence – in line with their levels of physical activity. We recognise the important link between physical activity and the way girls learn, and feel, about themselves, and the potential positive impact of sport and PE on girls. This was evidenced in a poll of sports directors conducted by the Girls' Schools Association (GSA) in 2016; when asked what the top benefits are for girls taking part in competitive sport and other fitness activities, 92% said improved self-esteem.

This is why GSA member schools are doing everything they can to offer their students – girls – an alternative narrative. In a single-sex environment we are more able to promote the entire range of sports as opportunities for girls – there is no prioritising one sport for boys' timetable and another sport for girls' timetable. In the same 2016 GSA poll of sports directors 89% of directors said that they believe girls participate more readily in competitive sport and other fitness activities in girls' schools than they do in co-ed schools. The lack of judgement from the opposite sex – whether you think this is genuine or simply something that teenage girls exaggerate – is not something that has to be countered in single-sex schools, and so girls even from junior school age and right through to sixth form feel much more confident about participating in different sports without any fear of being judged by the opposite sex. You might think this is not pertinent to junior girls, but a 2014 study (Biddle, Braithwaite & Pearson, 2014, p. 129) found that the increases in girls' participation in sport in single-sex contexts were not only seen in adolescent girls, who may be experiencing body image concerns, but younger girls too. At our junior school, many girls are involved in sport at every age and we work to ensure that there are opportunities for all pupils to experience competitive matches before they leave the junior school. For instance, we have a number of netball teams, particularly in Year 5 and Year 6, to ensure that all of our netballers benefit from experiencing a competitive environment before they leave Year 6.

Sport is so important – for developing fitness, maintaining a healthy mind, building friendships, challenging oneself, and improving cognitive function, brain flexibility and academic results – that we really must ensure our youngest girls embark on their adolescent years confident and optimistic about the sporting opportunities that lie ahead!

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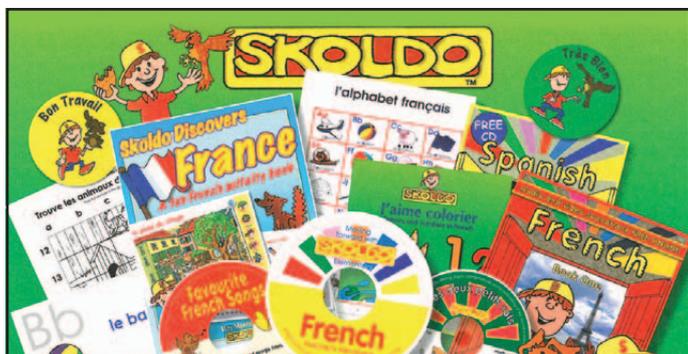
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10 reasons to use stop motion animation

Meriel Winwood, from HUE HD, discusses the advantages of using stop motion animation in the classroom



Stop motion animation has been around for many years. Previously, it was only for the few and they were mostly professional movie-makers. Now there are many easy-to-use software products available for children that can introduce them to the world of film-making. Using a USB camera or visualiser, the images can be captured instantly and edited in

real-time. Children can see the results of their efforts in a very short time.

With the click of a button, students can start animating anything from a favourite toy, Lego figures, clay creations to a 2D drawing. They can then edit their creation and add sound, text and special effects where they like, or they can delete or fix any errors. The uses for stop motion

animation in the classroom are endless. Fostering the 21st century skills of creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking, stop motion animation elicits a high engagement from students as they plan, execute, and present their creations. It can be used across the curriculum.

Animation also meets the needs of kinesthetic, auditory, and visual

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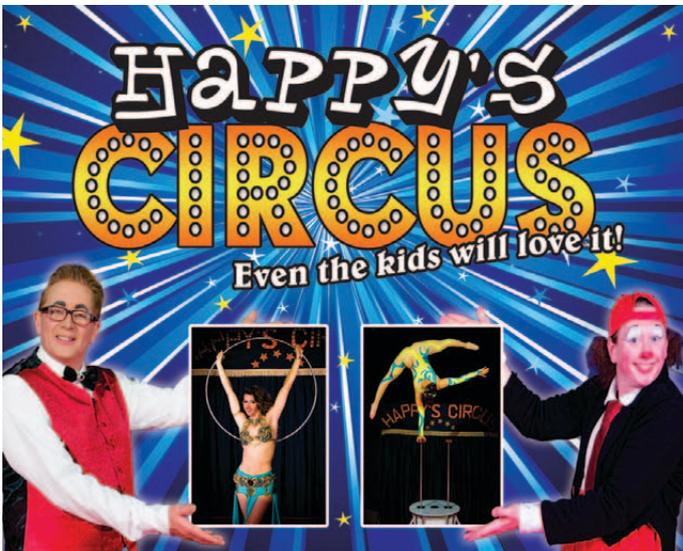
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learners, and has found great success with students with special needs (SEN). It is popular in numerous maker space areas in schools, and as a tool to teach STEAM subjects. Whatever the subject, students will be developing both creative and digital literacy. Teachers can assess their students' learning as they demonstrate what they know.

The headteacher of Lionel Primary School has described stop motion as *"a fantastic resource which we have used in our school for several years. It has been instrumental in raising standards in a range of curriculum areas. Pupils are inspired and motivated and thoroughly enjoy making their own films and animations. Staff use them daily to model*

and display pupil work, lesson objectives and exemplary work."

1. **Digital story telling:** Teach a reading lesson by having the students recreate a scene from a book.
2. **Maths:** Teach math by having students illustrate fractions.
3. **Geography:** Use stop motion animation as a tool for students to demonstrate their understanding of physical processes like a volcano, stages in the life of a river, the water cycle.
4. **History:** Re-create a story from history by building characters and scenes from a historic event.
5. **Art:** By taking a picture at various stages in the creation of a piece of artwork you can demonstrate how the picture or sculpture is created.
6. **Chemistry:** Use time-lapse to capture crystal growth.
7. **Languages:** Tell a story and record the voiceover in a foreign language.
8. **Biology:** Conduct an experiment using the time-lapse feature (i.e. to watch a chick hatch) or illustrate the lifecycle of a frog or a butterfly. Mrs Z Myerson from Beis Yaakov Primary School recalls her time using stop motion: *"We had the Living Egg project at school. Ten eggs delivered at day 19 out of 21. The camera monitored the cracks and eventually the moment of emergence of the chicks. (Only one didn't hatch but that's nature!) The visualiser caught this miraculous occurrence and the excitement of the pupils too. After two weeks it was time for the chicks to go to their new and bigger home. We will miss them but have a wonderful memory forever."*
9. **Dyslexia:** The ability to bring stories to life using animation has helped children in our setting give purpose to story telling. *"Dyslexics find it hard to write what's in their minds but this allows them to write their stories."* - Mils & Leon Chaffrey Super Thinkers Ltd.
10. **Autism and severe learning difficulties:** *"I have used HUE Animation software and cameras with my class of students who have autism and severe learning difficulties. They were able to create their own short movies with minimal support – the activity also encouraged them to work cooperatively, something that they can find very challenging. They were all very pleased with the results which we put onto our MLE to share with families."* - Sally Paveley, The Bridge School.

Why handwriting matters

Anita Warwick, Headteacher of Uplands Primary School in Sandhurst, explains the importance of good handwriting and how to make it work in your school

Some ask: “Is it worth schools spending time teaching handwriting when it seems to matter less and less?”. I have been teaching for over 30 years and have never wavered from my belief that handwriting really does matter. There is a special kind of beauty when you see a well-executed piece of writing whether it is by a pupil, teacher, friend, relative or, even, someone you have never met! Apart from my predilections, there are many of us who still believe in the significance of handwriting. Indeed research suggests that it matters in some very specific ways.

1. It has major cognitive benefits.

Writing things down means we are more likely to remember, process and expand on them. For example Steve Graham said: ‘Mastery of handwriting and spelling is required for idea conceptualisation and production of high-level content’. Research has also shown a link between children’s handwriting ability and their performance at composition. Recent studies have similarly emphasised the

value of speedy handwriting for note-taking and the skills associated with selecting and prioritising the most important information.

2. It is part of the communication tools children need.

Even the most avid of typists agree that everyone should be able to pick up a pen or pencil and write well enough that others can understand what they have written. However, some suggest many teachers place too much emphasis on ‘neatness’ (i.e. legibility) rather than encouraging fluency (i.e. speed). My experience is that once children have learnt to form and then join letters correctly, legibility, fluency and neatness will follow. To achieve this, handwriting does require regular practice.

3. It reflects our culture and imagination.

Actor Steve Carell captured this succinctly. He said: ‘Sending a handwritten letter is becoming such an anomaly. It’s disappearing. My

mom is the only one who still writes me letters. And there’s something visceral about opening a letter – I see her on the page. I see her in her handwriting’.

Authors, particularly those who have ‘switched’ from digital to pen and paper, argue that the act of handwriting facilitates reflection and the expansion of their ideas – it is far too easy to ‘edit before you think’ with a keyboard!

What can you do to ensure that handwriting is embedded in your school’s curriculum?

1. Create a school-wide handwriting policy

An aim of every school should be to teach every child to write legibly, fluently and at reasonable speed. By creating a school-wide policy you can provide every child with a consistent approach throughout their time with you. When you come to create your policy, you need to look at current practice, work out how you want to adapt it, and agree a process for doing this and measuring the outcomes.

Arrange a staff meeting and discuss current practice together, sharing any difficulties, concerns, successes or issues. You could use the following questions to help:

- Does the school’s current approach ensure that every child achieves their full potential?

“Is it worth schools spending time teaching handwriting when it seems to matter less and less?”

- Would more children achieve national expectations in English at the end of Key Stage 1 (or equivalent) if the school's handwriting policy were different?
- What resources do you have or need?
- Can handwriting practice be linked to spelling/phonics progression?

Decide on a model to use and agree the time to be given to handwriting as well as which materials will be used and when. Evaluate and review your policy annually if you can. It keeps both policy and guidelines alive and informs both old and new staff. Teachers need encouragement too. Ensure you recognise, celebrate and advertise your successes!

2. Make handwriting engaging!

There are a range of pre-writing activities we can do to make

handwriting fun and help children to develop their fine muscle control, visual discrimination and co-ordinate eye-hand movement. They will also help establish a clear preference for left or right hand.

Provide opportunities for children to draw and paint using large sheets of thick, blank paper and a variety of media (e.g. wide and narrow paint brushes, pencils, crayons, chalks and finger paint). Playing music during these activities can help to create a relaxing environment and will also assist in rhythmic control. You could also try:

- Threading beads, macaroni or cotton reels on wool, string or fine plastic tubing.
- Practising forming individual letters – for example in a sand tray or using a whiteboard.

- Making water or chalk paintings on fences, walls and concrete paths.

With older children, it's a good idea to carry out some warm-up exercises before your handwriting lessons. This will help children to relax the necessary muscles and focus their body and brain on what they are about to do.

3. Provide clear, consistent models of handwriting

Handwriting is a skill that needs to be taught explicitly and with consistency. Teachers need to model the formation of each letter, talking through the process as they do it – ideally using the same language throughout the school. Encourage children to verbalise the process from time to time. This can give you a window into their thought processes and can help you pick up on problems.

Draw attention to the connection between letters and the related writing patterns. Encouraging children to use the basic handwriting patterns both for practice and for decorative purposes is a valuable technique for fostering fluency and rhythmic movement.

As children grow older, it can be tempting to assume that handwriting practice can be subsumed into other curriculum areas. However, it is also necessary to provide regular lessons for the teaching and/or revision of handwriting skills. Many children enjoy the quiet concentration of handwriting practice lessons. They find that producing high-quality, well-presented work leads to self-confidence and a sense of achievement.

Whether it is about helping children to think at a higher level or simply about better note-taking, writing fluently and legibly, developing a useful skill in a rounded communications portfolio, a creative tool that feeds growing imaginations and reflects our culture, or just helps children write better the argument for good handwriting skills is hard to refute. Teaching handwriting well clearly remains important!



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Maths in a box set

The award-winning magnetic construction toy is to launch a new 'Maths In A Box' classroom set...



Magformers, the award-winning magnetic construction toy, is to launch a new 'Maths In A Box' classroom set later this year to sit alongside its other educational lines.

Containing 192 magnetic geometric pieces, plus special maths worksheets, the new set can be used by pupils to help reach key Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 attainment targets in mathematics. Toughened ABS plastic geometric shapes like triangles, squares and rhomboids connect quickly and simply using the power of the built-in and very safe neodymium magnets.

In each Magformers piece, the magnets are safely contained within all the edge surfaces. Every magnet can rotate 360 degrees so that it always connects when two Magformers are held together.

The magnetic pieces allow children to identify, compare, sort and easily make different 2D nets and 3D structures including squares, triangles, pentagons, hexagons, rectangles, cuboids, pyramids and prisms.

Workbooks or cards are included in every set and these assist the study of number of sides, edges, vertices and faces, turns, angles, number

bonds, sequencing, geometric shape recognition and symmetry.

While the new supersized classroom set will be available for the next academic year, Magformers currently offers four educational boxed sets: the School Series 180, Maths 87, Maths 42 and Pythagoras Set.

Other themed Magformers construction sets cover STEM topics, using gears, air compressors, rechargeable power blocks and lights.

Prep magazine readers can get 20% off any Magformers order at www.magformers.co.uk using the special discount code PREP17.

From the Common Room...

Emma Reid tells us how former pupils from Cranleigh Prep enjoyed visiting Austin, a guide dog they sponsored during their time at the school

On Friday the 3rd of March, the Neve family and Cranleigh School pupils, who left the school the previous summer, finally met Austin, a beautiful yellow guide dog puppy.

The Cranleigh School pupils sponsored the puppy in memory of their friend Austin Neve, a former pupil at the school who loved dogs and sadly passed away in January 2015. The following year, whilst in Year 8 at the

school, Austin Neve's year group chose to raise funds for a guide dog. Austin the puppy was born on the 17th of August 2016 and has settled in to his new home, learning a range of skills that he will need as a guide dog.

This was the earliest available opportunity for the pupils to meet Austin, as they had to wait until he was over 17 weeks old. Our Guide Dogs Community Fundraiser was

responsible for organising his first visit to Cranleigh School, where the Neve family and lots of very excited former Cranleigh School pupils thoroughly enjoyed meeting Austin.

Austin was very bouncy and full of fun, lapping up all the attention from so many people. All the pupils and staff adored him, just like their much-loved friend, Austin.



Over to you...

The first word on absence from the 11th November edition has prompted some questions from readers of *The Weekly Word*. As I mentioned last week, the whole issue of term-time absence continues to attract considerable controversy and I note that both BBC and ITV have recently made documentaries on the subject. In one of these pieces a parent argued very strongly that they should be free to decide when they took their child out of school. As a result, the parents found themselves embroiled in a series of court cases with their local council.

I have no intention of getting drawn into that particular case. However, my article has prompted some parents to ask if, given my strong conviction that taking a child out of school always harms their long-term education and progress, I believe in issuing penalty fines to parents. My reaction might surprise you.

I have never issued a fixed term penalty notice to a parent for term-time absence. I will go further. Whilst I am head of this school, Lawrence Sheriff will not take this step. At first glance this may appear a contradictory stance given my views on term-time absence. However, if schools are not a partnership then they are nothing.

I will continue to seek to persuade and convince on the subject, but the matter then has to rest with the parents concerned. Parents have rights and responsibilities and in the end it is a matter for them how they balance the two. I fully accept that decisions on term time absence can involve weighing up a set of complex set of competing issues. I have always taken the view, supported by the governing body, that it is up to me to raise my concerns, but that the final decision must then rest with the parent.

I remember when our eldest child was born the doctor handed her to us and said 'Right, it's over to you now'. The phrase has always felt like a rather good summary of parenthood. I think I would now echo that doctor's words. We have explored the evidence on term-time absence together, but each individual parent understands the full context and so has to make the final choice.

Over to you.

Dr Peter Kent is the headmaster of Lawrence Sheriff School, Rugby
Let us know what you think of Dr Peter Kent's views, get
in touch with us at editor@prepschoolmag.co.uk

The SATIPS Broadsheets are a superb practical resource for schools. Each issue, we will highlight a different subject.

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Broadsheet

Welcome to the summer edition of the SATIPS PE Broadsheet. We hope you had a great Christmas holiday and are ready and raring to go for the new year ahead.

We are always on the look out for new contributors, so if you have something you want to publicise or even just to share some of your own or your schools success please get in contact.

Liz Myers, Physical Education Broadsheet Editor.

Building Learning Power - Improving Teaching, Learning & Education

Building Learning Power (BLP) is an educational philosophy that seeks to help young people become better learners, both within and beyond school education.

BLP aims to create a culture within classrooms and in the wider school that systematically cultivates attitudes and behaviours that enables young people to face difficulty and uncertainty calmly, confidently and creatively. This enables them to develop the resilience and independence to overcome barriers to learning and foster curiosity and interest in learning new and consolidating knowledge.

Building Learning Power's vision is for young people – who will be creative, energetic, and enterprising – who, in their school years, will develop the values, knowledge, and competencies that will enable them to live full and satisfying lives – who will be confident, connected, actively involved, in their education (Claxton, 2002).

Students who are confident in their own learning ability may be more likely to be able to become actively engaged in their own learning. Active engagement is a term used to describe the notion that students learn most effectively when they are interested, involved and appropriately challenged (DfES, 2004). This term has its academic routes in the concept of active learning, which is considered as the process in which learners strive for understanding

and competence, and seek out knowledge about the world (Piaget, 1972; Rogers, 1975).

Building Learning Power aims to prepare young people for an uncertain future. Today's education system needs to be educating not just for exam results but for lifelong learning, developing wider skills and creating holistic and well-rounded learners. To thrive, or as some might say to survive, in the 21st century, it is not enough to leave school with an array of examination certificates. Young people need to have learnt how to be tenacious and resourceful, imaginative and logical, self-disciplined and self-aware, collaborative and inquisitive, resilient and self-motivated.

Three Core Beliefs: Building Learning Power has developed three core beliefs that describes the core aims of it's pedagogical philosophy. Firstly, BLP believes that the core purpose of education is to prepare young people for life after school; helping them to build up the mental, emotional, social and strategic resources to enjoy challenge and cope well with uncertainty and complexity. Secondly, BLP believes that this purpose for education is valuable for all young people and involves helping them to discover the things that they are good at, enjoy and wish to pursue in the future, whilst strengthening their will and skill to be able to pursue them. Thirdly, BLP believes this confidence, capability and passion can be developed since real-world intelligence is something that people can be helped to build up. These three core beliefs are particularly relevant in societies that are full of change, complexity, risk, opportunity and individual opportunity for making your own way in life.

The Three Grounding Roots: BLP developed three grounding roots for a strong and stable foundation.

Root 1: Research into the nature of learning. In the last ten years or so a number of disciplines have come together under the banner of 'the learning sciences'.

Geneticists, psychologists, developmental psychologists, neuroscientists, sociocultural researchers and academic philosophers are shaping a new image of the malleability of young minds and BLP tries to make as much use of these ideas as possible.

Root 2: Practitioner research and experience. BLP is grounded in the reality of schools and classrooms, and what busy teachers find possible, practical and interesting to try out. Teachers are encouraged to see themselves as research partners in the BLP community of enquiry, and where possible to write up their experiments and small action research projects.

Root 3: Commitment to a vision of education. BLP is rooted on a vision of education that grows out of the real demands, risks and opportunities of the 21st century; is appealing and accessible to all young people, not just the academically 'able' or inclined; which values, in reality as well as in rhetoric, more kinds of outcomes than literacy, numeracy and examination grades.

So BLP may appeal to anyone who wants to know how to get better results and contribute to the development of real-life learners. It is for anyone involved in formal and informal education. It particularly appeals to those who want more than sound-bites and quick fixes; who seek a satisfying approach that leads to cumulative growth in students' real-life self-confidence and ingenuity.

Building Learning Power teaches young people to become effective learners and well-rounded individuals and goes beyond just teaching students content.

For more information, please see the Building Learning Power website at www.buildinglearningpower.co.uk/

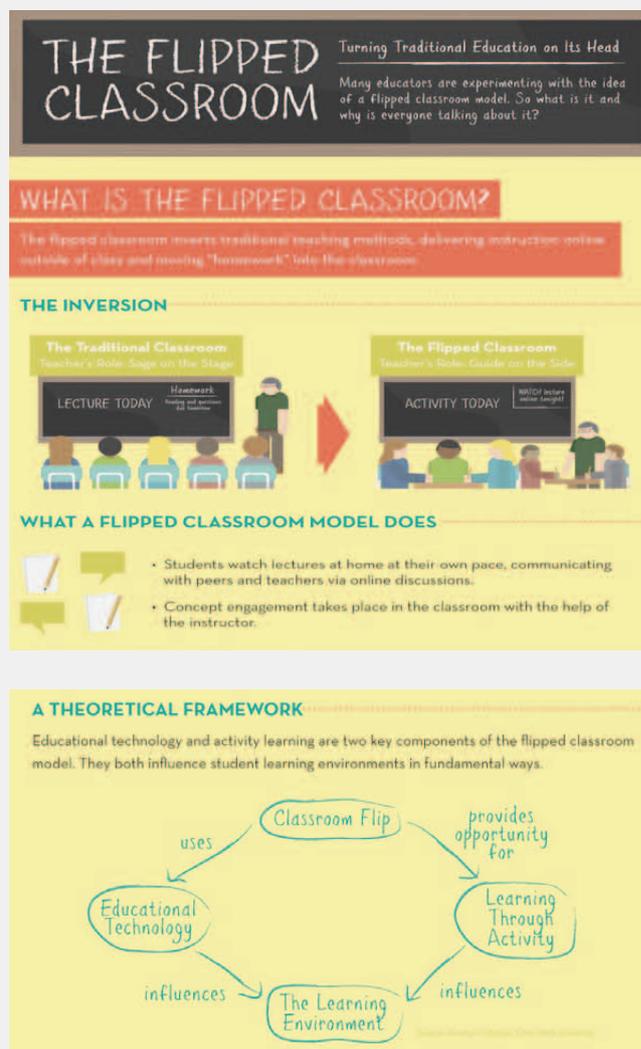
References: Claxton, G. (2002). Building learning power. TLO Limited Bristol; DfES. (2004) Key Stage 3 National Strategy: Pedagogy and Practice Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools - Unit 11: Active Engagement Techniques. London: DfES.; Piaget, J. (1972) Psychology and Epistemology. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.; Rogers, C. (1975) Freedom to learn. In Entwistle, N. and Hounsell, D. (eds) How Students Learn. Lancaster: University of Lancaster.

The Flipped Classroom - A Pedagogical Model

What is a flipped classroom? Why is it a useful pedagogical model? How can it be used to enhance learning? A flipped classroom may be an ideal pedagogical model for use within examination subjects such as A Level, GCSE or BTEC. This model may aid the development of independent

enquirers with the research skills and resilience to seek out new knowledge. This knowledge can then be consolidated within lessons and then developed further.

Do you, or have you used a flipped classroom in your own practice? What successes and difficulties have you discovered using this pedagogical model? What is your view on the flipped classroom? Please get in touch, we would be very interested to hear your thoughts.



Infographic created by Knewton and Column Five Media.

17 Reasons Why Students Should Blog

Blogging is such a powerful learning tool. Why? Well here's just 17 reasons for you...

1. It is FUN! It provides students with the opportunity engage in learning using a different strategy.
2. Authentic audience – no longer working for a teacher who checks and evaluates work but a potential global audience.
3. Accessible for different learning styles – written, verbal and video blogs.
4. Increased motivation for writing – all students will write and complete aspects of the post topic in writing. Many will add to it in their own time, comment on other blogs an reply to comments posted on their own blog.
5. Increased motivation for reading – students will spend time browsing through fellow student posts and their global counterparts. Many will link their friends onto their blogroll for quick access.
6. Improved confidence levels – a lot of this comes through comments and global dots on their cluster maps. It allows staff to often gain insight to how students are feeling and thinking. Students can set the topics for posts, this may lead to deeper thinking activities promoting independent enquirers.
7. Pride in their work –students will want their blogs to look good in both terms of presentation and content.
8. Blogs allow text, multimedia, widgets, audio and images which will encourage ICT literacy.
9. Increased proofreading and validation skills.
10. Improved awareness of possible dangers that may confront them in the real world, whilst in a sheltered classroom environment.
11. Ability to share – part of the conceptual revolution that we are entering. They can share with each other, staff, their parents, the community, and the globe.
12. Mutual learning between students and staff.
13. Parents with internet access can view their child's work and writings – an important element in the parent partnership with the classroom.
14. Blogs may be used for digital portfolios and all the

benefits this entails.

15. Work is permanently stored, easily accessed and valuable comparisons can be made over time for assessment and evaluation purposes.
16. Gives students a chance to show responsibility and trustworthiness and engenders independence.
17. Prepares students for digital citizenship as they learn cyber safety and netiquette.

As you can see, blogging is clearly a powerful learning tool!

PE Research

Physical literacy is a holistic concept that recognises that all people are on a journey throughout life, but how can we chart progress on this journey? And why is it charting progress important anyway?

Margaret Whitehead has written previously about charting progress as being the most appropriate form of assessment of physical literacy (Whitehead, 2010). Each individual is on a unique and personal journey, therefore in order to track progress on this journey, we should engage in ipsative and individualised assessment (Edwards et al., 2016). This assessment has been called the 'The missing piece' within physical literacy research (Tremblay & Lloyd, 2010). It is an important step, as a clarified and standardised measure could provide empirical evidence for the claims, use and benefits of physical literacy.

Although some research is beginning to tackle the issue, it is by no means an easy task. The multi-faceted nature of physical literacy makes the development of an assessment or charting progress tool a complex undertaking (Lloyd, 2016). Whilst preserving the philosophical integrity of the concept also presents a range of potential problems (Edwards et al., 2016). However, within England, physical literacy has been highlighted as a key performance indicator within the recent DCMS and Sport England strategies, as such; the development of an assessment or charting progress tool for physical literacy is now pressing if we are to achieve the government's vision for PE and physical activity in this country.

We are two researchers beginning a PhD with the aim of "Developing a Physical Literacy Assessment Tool for Primary School Children" and we are hoping to contribute to the physical literacy movement by creating a philosophically aligned assessment/charting progress tool,

guided strongly by the work of Margaret Whitehead.

As part of our project, one of our first tasks has been to develop a short video, promoting the IPLA's definition of physical literacy. We wanted it to be a useful way to summarise a complex definition and a way to start conversations about physical literacy. We have so far used it in presentations, lectures and of course on twitter! (www.youtube.com/watch?v=umMukVTCTaQ)

We are keen to engage with a wider audience to discuss and promote the concept, so please comment on YouTube, email, or tweet (using the hashtag #PL4Life) or contact us via Twitter (Cara Shearer – @Cara_Shearer94 and Hannah Goss – @hannah_goss).

References: Edwards, L. C., Bryant, A. S., Keegan, R. J., Morgan, K., & Jones, A. M. (2016). Definitions, Foundations and Associations of Physical Literacy: A Systematic Review. *Sports medicine*, 1-14. doi:10.1007/s40279-016-0560-7; Lloyd, R. J. (2016). Becoming physically literate for life: embracing the functions, forms, feelings and flows of alternative and mainstream physical activity. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 35(2), 107-116.; Tremblay, M., & Lloyd, M. (2010). Physical Literacy Measurement The Missing Piece. *Physical & Health Education Journal*, 76(1), 26.; Whitehead. (2010). *Physical literacy: Throughout the Lifecourse*. London: Routledge.

About the Authors

Cara Shearer and Hannah Goss are both PhD students studying at Liverpool John Moores University.

Contributors

We welcome any article contributions that pertains to the topic areas listed above. If you require more information on how to write an article or for guidance please feel free to contact the editor via email.



New council members

Anna Wheatley

I have over 15 years of experience in both the preparatory and senior sectors and am currently the Academic Deputy Head at Homefield Preparatory School. In this post I have focused on developing links with our neighbouring state schools

while also ensuring our own educational offering is excellent. In my previous role as Academic Director at Haslemere Preparatory School, I was a key member of the team which raised the school from a 'satisfactory' ISI rating to 'outstanding'. Prior to this, I oversaw the

academic development of Surrey Hills School as it extended from a Year 7 - Year 11 school into a Year 1 - Year 13 school. I have particular strengths in developing strategic vision and leading new innovations. I am open minded and enthusiastic about education and am excited at the opportunity to join the School Council at SATIPS.

(anna.wheatley@homefield.sutton.sch.uk)



Thomas Savill

I am currently Deputy Head (Academic) at Dulwich Prep London. My passions lie in contemporary teaching and learning endeavours. I am a reflective practitioner who seeks to evidence impact and empower others to engage in evidence-based

practice. As a former professional cricketer, I bring my 'team player' ethos into school and seek to empower others with 'growth mindset' principles. I am a strong believer in life-long learning in both students and staff alike.

(t.savill@dulwichpreplondon.org)



Alayne Parsley

I have the pleasure of teaching art and DT for a living. My background is in DT, but for most of my teaching life I have taught art. I believe my role is to enthuse and inspire children to feel able to attempt any aspect of this subject. I aim to give them as broad a range as possible and also to

teach the basic skills needed to achieve and progress. I want the children to appreciate the important role that art, decoration and design performs in todays world. It is important to reflect, but not for too long as it is all about the future and pushing the boundaries.

(a.parsley@cheltenhamcollege.org)

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 - SATIPSKI Gillian Gilyead (gilliangilyead@aol.com)
 - Annual Art Exhibition Alayne Parsley (A.Parsley@cheltenhamcollege.org)
- Full details of all these events are at <http://satips.org/competitions>

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Courses and events

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19/06/17	Staff wellbeing and pastoral care	London
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