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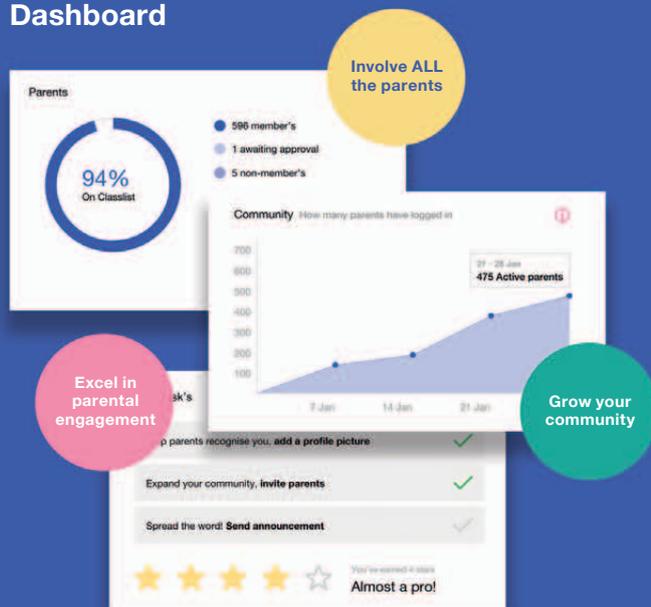
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5



37

AUTONOMY, STRUCTURES AND LEADERSHIP

- 5 'Much Promise': 15 steps for policy makers to build on, *Barnaby Lenon*
- 11 If you play with fire, you're gonna get burned, *Loic Menzies*
- 22 The reality of becoming an NLE, *Cathy Longhurst*



22

FINANCES AND RESOURCES

- 12 Does recruitment need to be like this? *Roy Blatchford*
- 15 Minimising risk and cost in recruiting leaders, *Tim Cook*
- 53 Parent-school communication: the 21st century way, *Geraldine Archbold-Shore*
- 57 Talking differently about your buildings

GOVERNANCE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL GOVERNANCE ASSOCIATION

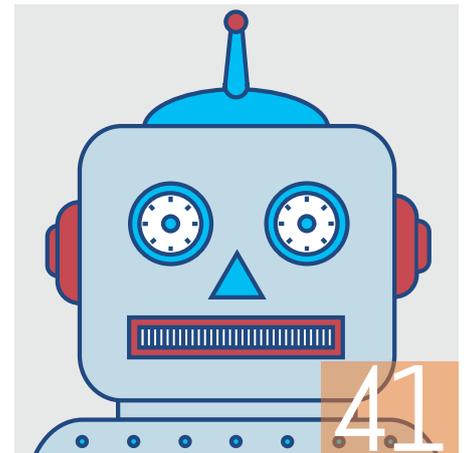


- 28 Back to basics: Forming or joining a MAT
- 30 Schemes of delegation
- 31 The right people around the table
- 33 The role of members in MATS

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41



46

LEARNING AND WELLBEING

- 20 Incremental coaching: the best way we know to improve teachers' classroom effectiveness?, *Andy Buck*
- 25 Build quality in, *Stephen Tierney*
- 34 Communication is the key to supporting staff, *Julian Stanley*
- 37 Have lesson observations had their day?, *John Dabell*
- 41 10 ways computer games can help your pupils at school, *Shahneila Saeed*
- 45 Virtual learning benefits all students, *Andy Percival*
- 46 Preparing primary pupils for life at 'big school', *Steve Hale*
- 61 University is not the only route, *Tim Firth*

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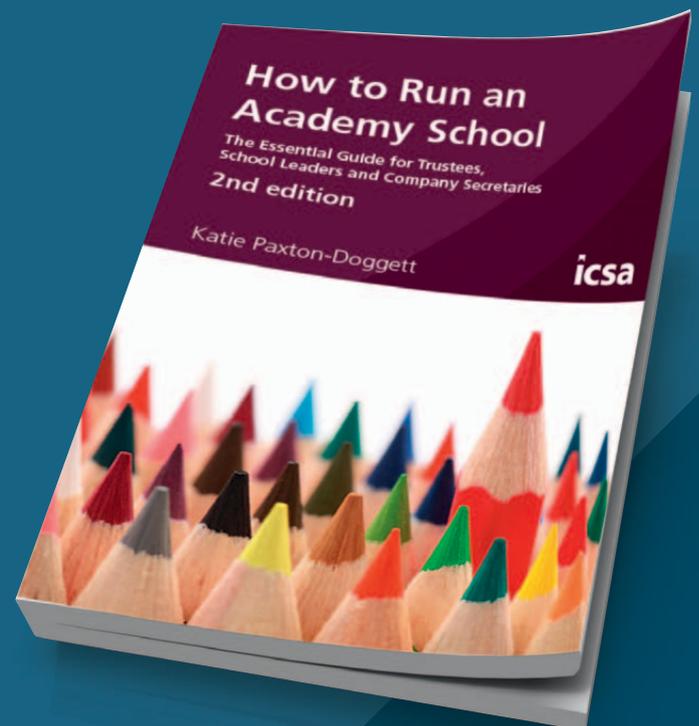
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MUCH PROMISE: 15 STEPS FOR POLICY MAKERS TO BUILD ON AFTER THE ELECTION

Barnaby Lenon, chair of governors at the London Academy of Excellence, offers his manifesto for education in the run-up to the General Election

The English education system shows much promise. For the top 50% of academic pupils high quality school exams are followed by successful entry to good universities. The progress made by girls and ethnic minorities in the past 30 years has been tremendous, as has the increase in the proportion of students from poorer homes making it to university.

But the system is less good for the least academic 50%, much less good for boys and many of those from poorer homes. As the country leaves the EU and seeks to become competitive globally, we will need an education system which gets the bottom 50% to a significantly higher level in terms of English, maths, work ethic and vocational skills. We have to be more ambitious.

We know we can succeed because hundreds of good schools are already proving it can be done. But we are a long way from the standards of technical and vocational education which would strengthen the English economy and provide a more satisfying life for many of our pupils. Which is why it is fair to characterise the system as showing promise.

As we approach another General Election, here are my thoughts on what

the next government needs to focus on, to keep our schools on the right track.

1. The main problem with the English education system is the long tail of underachievement. In 2016 57% of pupils in state schools gained five GCSEs grade A*–C including English and maths. This is a low figure – after all, a C grade in a GCSE is not a great achievement for most pupils. For pupils on free school meals the figure was 33.1% (DfE, 2016).

In 2016 69% of all GCSEs were passed at grade C or above but 36% of those who passed only achieved a grade C – a bare pass. At the top end our pupils do well. A-levels are a secure and challenging qualification and many of those taking A-levels go on to good universities. Given that a high proportion of those not achieving the five GCSEs benchmark are from disadvantaged backgrounds, it makes sense for the Government to focus on this group – the tail of underachievers. According to the OECD this tail is what distinguishes England from other developed countries.

PISA 2015 found that the difference between the top and bottom 10% of 15-year-old pupils in England is the equivalent of over eight years of schooling in both science and maths – a larger gap than in most OECD countries (Jerrim and

Shure, 2016). If we are going to move from being a low-pay, low-productivity country to a high-pay, high-productivity country we need to do much more. What is more, we know that ill-educated parents beget ill-educated children. So we must break this cycle of deprivation. With Brexit we are on our own. To survive we have to become one of the most competitive countries in the world; in this context our current standards of education are not good enough.

The London Challenge showed what could be done. In ten years London went from being the worst performing part of England in terms of school results to the highest performing. A small number of non-selective schools have eliminated the underachieving tail and much more needs to be known about how they have done it.

2. For disadvantaged children the gap in achievement is already apparent at nursery age. This is where government investment is needed – in nursery schools and parenting courses of the sort found at Tollgate Primary School. We should be prioritising policies to increase the quality of age 2–4 childcare and education. More Early Years teachers should be trained because if children can be got to a good level by the age of five their life chances are hugely improved.

The focus for pupils from poorer homes should be on developing vocabulary, social skills and behaviour, not on teaching reading and maths at a young age. Children who are taught well at primary school

will learn to read and do maths as long as the school readiness skills are in place.

3. Decisions about whether children should pursue an academic route or a more vocational route should be taken after GCSEs, not before. All children are capable of accessing a conventional academic curriculum up to the age of 16 and they have a right to do so.

The 2016 Sainsbury Review, with its recommended fifteen post-16 vocational courses, should be implemented. But this will be ineffective if the teachers of these courses cannot be found.

In 2015 only 266,000 students completed A-levels out of a total cohort of 633,000 (DfE, 2016). The main providers of full-time education for 16–18-year-olds were FE colleges (484,000 students), school sixth forms (433,000 students) and sixth form colleges (157,000). There is a strong social mobility argument for focusing reform and spending on the FE colleges that deliver technical and vocational courses to huge numbers of students: this is the group who need and will benefit most from extra investment.

As Vince Cable said during his tenure as Secretary of State for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills: Our post-secondary education has become distorted. The OECD concluded that our post-secondary vocational sub-degree sector is small by international standards – probably well under 10% of the youth cohort, compared to a third of young people elsewhere. In the US, more than 20% of the workforce have a post-secondary certificate or an associate degree as their highest qualification.

In Austria and Germany, sub-degree provision accounts for around 50% of the cohort (Cable, 2015).

The conversion of polytechnics to universities removed the thrust of technical education in the UK. In the constant push to increase the proportion of students going to university such institutions have been trying to do

everything but, often, doing nothing really well. The proposed Institutes of Technology are a good idea – if good teachers can be found and trained. But there have been endless reports and plans to create something similar to the Institutes of Technology since the Second World War, so this is an issue with a terrible history of policy failures.

The Government should refocus its apprenticeship programme from low level courses, which have little financial benefit to those taking them, to higher level, technical apprenticeships of the kind that are commonplace in Germany.

Once we have good vocational and technical pathways available after GCSEs, it will be necessary to persuade parents and teachers that these are much more valuable for some children than academic alternatives. At present schools have an enormous financial incentive to keep students on to take A-level courses for which they are ill-suited.

4. In general terms there should not be too much emphasis on school organisation. Variation in the quality of results within individual schools is much more important than variation between different types of schools (maintained schools, Academies etc). Some Academy chains are succeeding, others are not. There needs to be a much more open competitive bidding process. At present the process by which Academy chains are formed is opaque.

5. The most important influence on a child's performance is their individual teachers. Policy needs to be focused on the recruitment and retention of excellent teachers and in this respect we have some way to go. There is limited evidence that Teaching Schools or School Direct will in themselves solve the problem of teacher shortage. More money needs to be spent on teacher recruitment: a more educated workforce would more than repay the investment. The economist Eric Hanushek estimated that replacing the least effective 5–8% of teachers in the US with just average teachers would increase the annual Gross Domestic Product by 75 to 110 trillion dollars (Hanushek, 2011).

There should be incentives to get good teachers into the most challenging schools, in the way they do in Japan and

Singapore. These teachers should have access to a generous house-purchase scheme. The Brexit negotiations must make it easy for teachers from the EU and outside to come the UK to teach subjects where there is a supply shortage.

6. Teacher training and professional development of teachers is still quite weak compared to the standards being achieved in other countries, not least those in East Asia. There needs to be a careful appraisal of the systems used in places like Finland, Singapore and Shanghai, together with



an evaluation of the effectiveness of in-school teacher training in England.

7. One of the things which influences the effectiveness of a teacher is their teaching method (pedagogy). Excellent progress has been made in the past six years promoting phonics and maths mastery methods. This should continue.

There is evidence that textbooks are more effective than handouts or digital alternatives. Teachers must be encouraged to use textbooks. The DfE should take set up a unit to co-ordinate the best online

resources for schools and continue to encourage publishers to produce textbooks which are stretching.

8. Grammar schools should follow the example of the King Edward's Birmingham Foundation which lowers the 11+ pass score to grammar schools for pupils on free school meals in order to get the FSM proportion up to 20%. Only in this way can grammar schools benefit the group who needs them most.

9. The academic elements of the examination system (GCSEs and A-levels)

have only recently been reformed. Many of these reforms are excellent. They should be allowed to settle down before any more changes are made. Constant change to the exam system diverts the energy of teachers away from things which matter. GCSE reforms have made these qualifications more demanding. This was essential because the standards expected in England have fallen behind other countries (page 14). As Kuczera et al (2016) found 'the evidence points to upper secondary programmes in England which



require lower levels of basic skills than many other countries.'

If existing exam boards fail to show a high level of competence we should consider moving to one exam board per subject.

10. It is very important that Ofqual continues to clamp down on unwarranted grade inflation which gives the nation the impression that education is improving when it is not.

11. The supply of school places needs to increase in many areas as the school-age population grows. Free schools should be set up driven by staff from the most successful existing free schools, academies, Academy chains and local authorities.

There is some confusion about the role of free schools – are they being built to deal with the shortage of places or are they supposed to provide parents with choice in areas with sufficient places but few high quality schools? There is a case for developing two separate programmes: a basic need new schools programme, where the Schools Commissioner's office would work closely with local authorities to identify the local need and find a suitable provider to meet it; and a quality schools programme, through which the DfE would allow new schools to open in areas of generally low quality. Meanwhile too many free schools are failing to find sites; planning rules need to change urgently.

12. Independent schools should be used to help solve the supply of good school places. Parents from low income homes (pupil premium qualified) should be allowed to use the money that would have been spent on a state school place to buy a place at an independent school if they wish, the school making up the difference in price.

Independent schools should also be encouraged to help state schools that want that help. Independent schools are not a good source of advice if the task is to educate disadvantaged pupils. But they are a good source of advice when it comes to subject-specialist teaching at primary level, boarding, university entry, modern languages and science teaching, cocurricular activities like sport, music, drama and cadet forces.

13. Schools alone cannot reduce gaps in achievement because a high proportion of the attainment difference between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils is caused by non-school factors such as poverty or weak parenting. It is a policy mistake to assume that schools alone are capable of creating a more equal society. Something has to be done about weak regional economies, house prices, income distribution and quality of parenting.

14. A myth has grown up that English society is becoming less equal. We must improve social mobility further but should also attend to the average level of achievement of all our children. It would be great to eliminate all gaps but even greater to lift our average standard of education in England to that of the best in the world. In the UK 40% of young people go to university and a minority study STEM subjects. In South Korea 75% go to university and the majority study STEM – so the gap is quite wide.

Gaps between the results of pupils of different ethnicities, genders and socio-economic groups persist in most schools.

But the best schools get much better results for disadvantaged pupils than other schools. Focusing on gaps between sub-groups is less valuable than raising the bar for all children in a school.

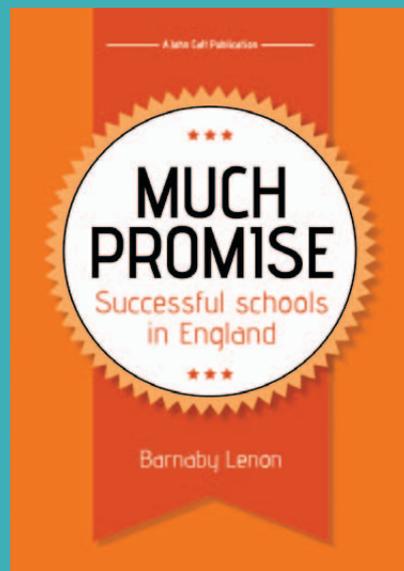
15. If society cannot or will not fund schools and colleges well, the progress of the past few years will stall.

The important thing to remember is that, while the data suggests that schools in England do quite well compared to other countries based on average pupil performance, average performance conceals an important truth – our top 20% do incredibly well, our bottom 40% do rather badly. So that tells us where government priorities should lie.

Schools in England have improved greatly in the past twenty years. The system shows much promise. But poor pupil performance correlates too well with low household income, which is why those schools achieving good results with disadvantaged pupils should be of great interest. The teaching methods and levels of discipline which lead to success in these schools are what really matters.

Barnaby Lenon was the headmaster of Harrow School. On his retirement he helped set up a state school in east London, widely regarded as one of the most successful free schools. In 2016 he went on a tour of schools in England that achieve outstanding results, in many cases with disadvantaged pupils.

In *Much Promise*, he describes how they do it, set in the context of the latest research into school and teacher performance. He evaluates the school system in England and the effectiveness of recent reforms; he looks at how parents and governors achieve results and puts the spotlight on the school curriculum, exam systems and social mobility.



Much Promise: Successful Schools in England, by Barnaby Lenon
Published by John Catt Educational, £15



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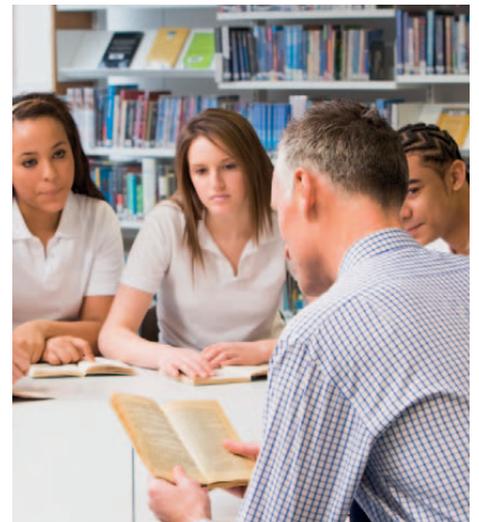
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IF YOU PLAY WITH FIRE, YOU'RE GONNA GET BURNED

Academies need to be careful to disassociate themselves with the toxic grammar school debate, says Loic Menzies, director of think tank LKMCo

For years, academies have been plagued by politicised controversy. They have been attacked by some who are opposed to their very existence whilst politicians' efforts to talk up their 'preferred structure' have often backfired. This has placed schools under the microscope and turned them into pawns in an ideological battle.

The new Secretary of State, Justine Greening is considered by sources in the DfE to be more pragmatic. She is said to be agnostic about what type of school delivers high quality education, as long as it delivers. This could finally herald a less ideological era in which schools can get on with it, without having to navigate a political minefield. In such a world successful academies could finally become a normal, accepted part of the educational landscape.

Unfortunately, Theresa May's inexplicable enthusiasm for grammar schools could throw a spanner in the works. Academies and those working within them therefore need to be very careful how they respond if they are to continue serving their communities and if they are to avoid a re-politicisation - replete with fresh attacks and controversy.

All the evidence makes it clear that on average, poor pupils suffer as a result of selection. Poor pupils rarely get into grammar schools and even if a small number of 'bright but poor' pupils make it, the remaining majority of 'poor but average', or 'poor but lower achieving'

pupils suffer. This is because selective schools find it easier to recruit great teachers, easier to get parents to support the school, and because peer effects have a powerful impact on pupil achievement and school culture. The pupils who therefore most need support - those whose achievement is most fragile, are therefore left behind.

Given this, there is a strong moral imperative to oppose grammar schools and it is crucial that academies do so. If Multi Academy Trusts begin to be associated with grammar schools then quite apart from the impact on pupils, it will be a PR disaster for them and the teachers within them. The message that academies are the enemy of disadvantaged pupils, whilst untrue, would still do huge damage and undo the progress that might otherwise result from Greening's pragmatism.

Secondly, we know that a desire to make a difference to society is an important factor in 87% of teachers' decisions to enter teaching¹. In a tough recruitment climate, MATs need to be able to tap into these motivations by becoming known for their contribution to society. Given that selection is harmful to the most vulnerable pupils in society (as the worrying gap in educational achievement in selective areas shows), MATs need to make their opposition to selection clear if they want to galvanise staff across their schools behind a social mission.

Finally, MATs are an important front in opposing selection. One of the easiest ways for the government to reintroduce selection will be to allow chains to open grammars within their family of schools. MATs could therefore become vehicles for rolling out selection. Cutting off this potential supply line by refusing to select could slow down the return to a nation divided by the eleven-plus.

For this reason, the current willingness on some MATs' part to dabble with selection by agreeing to open new grammars is a serious cause for concern. In a climate where funding is short, accountability higher stakes than ever and senior leaders' careers painfully precarious, the temptation is understandable. Who wouldn't want to remain on the right side of government? However, the temptation should be resisted. On top of the obvious negative impact on pupils, MATs would do well to remember that if you play with fire you will only get burned. Renewed politicisation and alienation of scarce teachers is surely too high a price to pay.

Loic Menzies was Head of History and Social Sciences at St George's RC School in London, before setting up 'think and action tank' LKMCo.

DOES RECRUITMENT NEED TO BE LIKE THIS?

Roy Blatchford argues that the profession can no longer afford to waste precious resources on advertising for teachers and school leaders.

Saxton Bampfylde; Odgers Berndtson; Perrett Laver; Gabbitas; Heidrick & Struggles; Korn Ferry.

What do these names have in common? Legal firms from the novels of Charles Dickens? A cluster of Cotswold villages? Authors of chemistry textbooks?

They are the names of successful headhunting firms, specialising in education and the recruitment of senior leaders for leading state, independent and international schools. As you might guess, their businesses thrive. And it doesn't come cheap to secure a top Principal.

Away from the headhunting arena, secondary headteacher colleagues estimate that their schools can spend in excess of £70k per annum on recruiting teachers. Primary leaders suggest the annual figure, in many areas of high teacher turn-over, is £30k plus.

The Times Education Supplement has enjoyed a near monopoly over many decades. One local authority recently estimated that 93% of adverts for teaching posts in its schools featured in the TES. National and local newspapers across the country have shared in the flow of advertising revenue. Almost none of this financial bonanza has found its way back into classrooms.

Nor have most of the profits of the many teaching agencies which now operate across the country. Typically, a school might pay to an agency 25% of a first year of salary. In common with the NHS, the national education service risks being bled dry by agents' fees which divert increasingly scant resources away from the classroom.

Devotees of 'Winnie The Pooh' will know of Edward Bear's predicament:

Here is Edward Bear, coming



downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it. And then he feels perhaps there isn't.

The teaching profession has been supine for too long. Profligate spending on recruitment has to end. The school system must challenge the status quo, albeit belatedly. Current budget tightening should surely lead us to find different solutions. I have a few, not mutually exclusive suggestions.

1. Agents

Working with a group of deputy heads a couple of years ago discussing professional steps to headship, one entrepreneurial

deputy told us that he and a colleague had set up a recruitment agency, with most of the profits channelled back into a partnership of schools. He also predicted that, over time and in common with professional football, every teacher would have an agent - and that schools would be paying those agents when teachers transferred between schools. Perhaps. Could school partnerships and MATs establish agencies and teacher-agents whose profits are reinvested in the school system?

2. Social media

Disruptive technologies disrupt. There is a strong argument that the 'digital native' generation of teachers and school leaders can lead the way in ensuring that various forms of social media provide the 'go to' sources for on-line recruitment, cutting out the middle men. This would need co-ordinating, safeguards and due diligence. Perhaps Facebook guru and self-professing altruist Mark Zuckerberg, with his recent global community manifesto, might be tapped up to sponsor. Seriously, there may well be an interested social entrepreneur who could run with the idea.

3. Professional Associations

Whilst professional association and union leaders over the years have talked in my presence about cost-saving initiatives on recruitment, they have to date been sluggish on this agenda. Perhaps new leadership at ASCL, combining forces with NAHT, could stake out a real intent to provide free on-line adverts for all primary, special and secondary leadership positions across England. Their website infrastructures already exist.



And in parallel, the newly merged NUT/ATL could do the same for all teaching positions. What a long overdue gift the savings would be to members wrestling with tightening budgets.

4. Department for Education

Whilst once local authorities did much to support teacher recruitment, those days are gone. Might the DfE step in? Is it impossible to imagine a centrally funded and run on-line service, given every teacher in the land is registered by the Department to teach? There might indeed be added value in government being able to identify more readily where geographically, and in what subjects, teacher shortages are emerging. Or where in the country there are difficulties in securing strong middle or senior leaders. Decentralisation has been the mantra for several decades now, but this might just be one area of the school system where a central lead would be welcomed.

5. Charitable foundations

Look carefully in their small print and you'll find that Oxford University Press (OUP) is a charity, making handsome profits from schools. Might the Masters and Scholars of the Ancient University step forward and carry, free of charge to schools, primary teaching vacancies on OUP's well established website, currently frequented by thousands of teachers? Could the respected Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) or Education Development Trust (formerly CfBT) devote some of their resources to subsidise on-line recruitment of school leaders? Other educational publishers or charitable foundations may be willing and equipped to take on such an initiative.

Across the kingdom, schools individually, in primary-secondary clusters, in MATs, in all kinds of partnership and alliances are engaged in

a wide range of 'grow your own' strategies to bring on the next generation of teacher and leaders. That's as it should be. But there are few schools this interview season which are not having to pay over precious funds to a profit-making company in order to be fully staffed for September.

Resources are precious and becoming ever more so. We need to do things differently. There must be an adventurer or two out there who can make this happen. It would be financially transformational for schools.

Roy Blatchford CBE is Founding Director of the National Education Trust. He is the author of 'The Restless School', and co-author with Rebecca Clark of 'Self-Improving Schools: the Journey to Excellence'.

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MINIMISING BOTH RISK AND COST IN RECRUITING LEADERS

Tim Cook on the risks involved with recruiting for leadership positions

Heads and Principals across the country are, rightly, held to account for the expenditure of public funds. In the current financial climate, where only 'core budgets' are ringfenced by the present Conservative administration and where inner-city leaders face the consequences of the new national funding formula, the focus on securing the very best value for money is more significant than for many years.

As a Principal myself, I was recently asked for a three thousand pounds recruitment charge for a member of teaching support. A two-form primary doesn't have this kind of cash to spend, however good the colleague may be! Roy Blatchford's article earlier in this magazine is, therefore, timely in raising the issue of how recruitment fees can be kept down.

Mitigating cost:

Blatchford is right to wonder if there are ways to mitigate this cost. Some local or regional MATs are well placed to establish can of course mitigate cost by establishing preferential agreements, but that rarely works for national MATS as local labour markets are dynamic. The talent pool with one agency in one area will be different to that elsewhere, so a potential economy of scale for national MATS slips away and even for localised MATs and individual schools, significant costs remain.

School Improvement.net advertised

recently the launch of an app that might cut out the 'middle man'. Hopefully, local heads' groups are exploring this with some pace and on the assumption that someone could take on the safeguarding risk around ensuring DBS, references etc, collectively, we could erode agency business at a stroke.

However, whilst we may save some money on day-to-day supply cover, it is unlikely that apps will save costs associated with recruiting leaders. To do this, we need to look a little further.

Recruiting leadership:

We know that the leader is important. Sir Michael Wilshire argues that "leadership is undoubtedly the single most important factor in improving the quality of our school system". Sir David Carter argues, in a similar vein, that 'leading' MATS have a mature talent management system to ensure ongoing success. Given the importance of the leader then, it is critical to get recruitment right.

Recruiting leaders is a risk. In another industry bedevilled by agents' fees, Manchester United saw their outcomes tumble as David Moyes picked up the gauntlet from Sir Alex Ferguson. The only eyes that were smiling were in the red of Liverpool FC. Given this risk, interview panels at board level may prefer to employ specialist firms to underwrite some of their own potential liability. Small wonder that costs are high when risk is too. So, the Holy Grail we are seeking is

a first class specialist organisation that is affordable by all

All of the organisations that Blatchford highlights are fine, reputable bodies that are deeply committed to excellent outcomes for all children. However, one omitted from the list and one which is best placed to have significant impact, however, is Ambition School Leadership. The product of the merger of Teaching Leaders with the Future Leaders Trust, Ambition School Leadership offers the prospect of an effective pathway from middle leadership to senior executive tier.

The infrastructure of training, support and challenge already exists at Ambition School Leadership for success. As a one-time Future Leaders participant (does one ever stop being a Future Leader?), I have had the privilege of learning from great people. Ambition School Leadership, in tandem with the Regional Schools Commissions, is in prime position to support the drive to secure skilled leaders in every school.

That said, the organisation has to look seriously at how to get leaders into the most deprived areas, those areas of rural and coastal neglect. Years on, still nobody wants to live in Morrissey's coastal towns they 'forgot to close down'.

Even a successful Ambition School Leadership organisation, however, is secondary to the steps that I advocate below:

1. for MATs to move away from the football culture of looking for the

inspirational leader, the Bill Shankly or Alex Ferguson figure to lead the way to glory. Even when you find the super-head, they are human. Humans fail. Given this, a single point of failure is too great a risk to take;

2. developing a significantly more systematic and comprehensive programme of how to develop already existing talent, from NQT upwards. Given that our industry is so focussed on human capital, the lack of investment in people over time beggars belief. With more support and training, teaching talent will grow and learner outcomes will rise. More teachers will enjoy the

experience and more will rise to be in positions of leadership. The demographic of retiring primary heads and the attrition rates of NQTs leads us to the question of what other choice is there?

3. to make the selection of the head less of a risk by adopting an approach to school strategy that is rooted in evidence and research. We know enough from Hattie and from the Education Endowment Fund to know 'what works most'. Through the process of MAT directors deciding which teaching packages to adopt from a secure evidence base, the risk of a rogue appointment that undermines school outcomes is minimised.

Across the country, multi-academy trusts cannot afford to ignore the best practice of their more established contemporaries and the turbulent nature of our industry means it is in the interest of all to raise standards urgently. Well, perhaps all but the agencies!

Dr Tim Cook is the principal of Liskeard Hillfort Primary School in Cornwall





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Name	Price	Sets of		Instruments	Storage*
		Primary	Secondary		
10 Player Buddies	£347	£97	£487	10	20-30cm
New 15 Player Budget Buddies	£367	£97	£507	15	20-30cm
20 Player Buddies	£597	£147	£857	20	30-40cm
New 30 Player Budget Buddies	£747	£147	£927	30	30-40cm
30 Player Buddies	£917	£187	£1,297	30	40-50cm
African Drumming Level 2	£757	£137	£757	7	45cm

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Name	Budget	Standard	Premium	Instruments	Storage*
10 Player Buddies	£617	£847	£1,017	10	40-60cm
New 15 Player Budget Buddies	£677	£907	£1,077	15	40-60cm
20 Player Buddies	£1,247	£1,997	£2,357	20	60-90cm
New 30 Player Budget Buddies	£1,387	£2,137	£2,497	30	60-90cm
30 Player Buddies	£1,997	£2,977	£3,687	30	70-100cm



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Bag for 3 nesting surdos & percussion

Name	Primary	Sets of Primary Bags	Secondary	Sets of Sec Bags	Instruments	Storage*
10 Player Buddies	£537	£77	£577	£87	10	30-40cm
New 15 Player Budget Buddies	£627	£77	£667	£87	15	30-40cm
20 Player Buddies	£987	£147	£1,067	£167	20	30-40cm
New 30 Player Budget Buddies	£1,127	£147	£1,207	£167	30	30-40cm
30 Player Buddies	£1,497	£217	£1,617	£247	30	40-50cm



Please note. Secondary packs have bigger diameter surdo drums (14", 16" and 18") than the Primary (12", 14" and 16").

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Name	Desk Top	Floor Standing	Bags	Instruments	Storage*
10 Player Buddies	£667	£737	£77	10	10cm
New 15 Player Budget Buddies	£727	£797	£77	15	10cm
20 Player Buddies	£1,327	£1,427	£147	20	20cm
New 30 Player Budget Buddies	£1,467	£1,567	£147	30	20cm
30 Player Buddies	£1,967	£2,177	£217	30	30cm



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Incremental coaching: the best way we know to improve teachers' classroom effectiveness?

Incremental coaching allows teachers to develop mastery in the full range of classroom skills and pedagogies, says Andy Buck

In the last few years I have become increasingly convinced that a powerful way to support teachers' development and improve the quality of teaching is to use regular coaching.

I first came across this approach in Paul Bambrick-Santoyo's excellent *Leverage Leadership*. He uses the term instructional coaching to describe the process. For a UK context I have chosen to adopt the phrase incremental coaching, as it seems somehow to work better in our linguistic setting.

His approach is based on avoiding some of the common errors he believes we make when thinking about how best to improve the performance of teachers. In the diagram below, which is based on his work, the left-hand column summarises what he thinks are common pitfalls that many schools fall into.



It is better if coaches are not the line managers of those they are coaching, and the outcomes of coaching are owned by the coachee rather than management

The incremental coaching adopts an approach that is designed to avoid these shortcomings. It typically involves a short drop-in into a lesson where the short coaching conversation that follows, ideally that day, elicits the areas of strength and a single area of focus for improvement with some strategies to try. Ideally, the teacher has a chance to practise these as part of the follow-up conversation. The teacher then spends just one week really focusing on this single area for improvement until the next short drop-in a week later when there can then be a discussion about the progress that has been made. This may result in another week or two on the same focus or the opportunity to move into a new area.

Questioning starts very open, allowing the teacher to work out as much as possible for themselves. Only if needed, are more

closed or probing questions introduced. In all cases, clear actions for follow-up are clarified, with a clear timeline for each.

Keep left			
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
100% teacher driven	50% teacher driven.	Leader guided	Leader driven (when all else fails)
Teacher identifies the problem.	Teacher can identify the problem when leader prompts with appropriate scaffolded questions.	Leader needs to present the classroom data for the teacher to be able to understand the problem.	When teacher has been unable to identify the problem despite attempts, the leader identifies the problem for the teacher.

leadershipmatters.org.uk honk.org.uk

Over time, this incremental process enables teachers to develop mastery in the full range of basic classroom skills and pedagogies that will lead to improved classroom delivery and improved outcomes for pupils. At its heart, the incremental coaching approach gives ownership for improvement to the teachers themselves.

So what's the evidence?

Peter Matthews has looked into incremental coaching and believes its potential is significant. In his recent article for Professional Development Today he says: "In the research carried out into incremental coaching I found that where it has been adopted by a school, incremental coaching is the core process for developing the teaching workforce; it builds on other training and is central to continuing professional development (CPD), effectively transforming continuing to continuous professional development. One further characteristic, essential to the successful establishment of incremental coaching, is that it is developmental and non-judgemental. It is best when detached from performance management; indeed, perceptions of such a link are detrimental to the process. For this reason it is better if coaches are not the line managers of those they are coaching, and the outcomes of coaching are owned by the coachee rather than management."

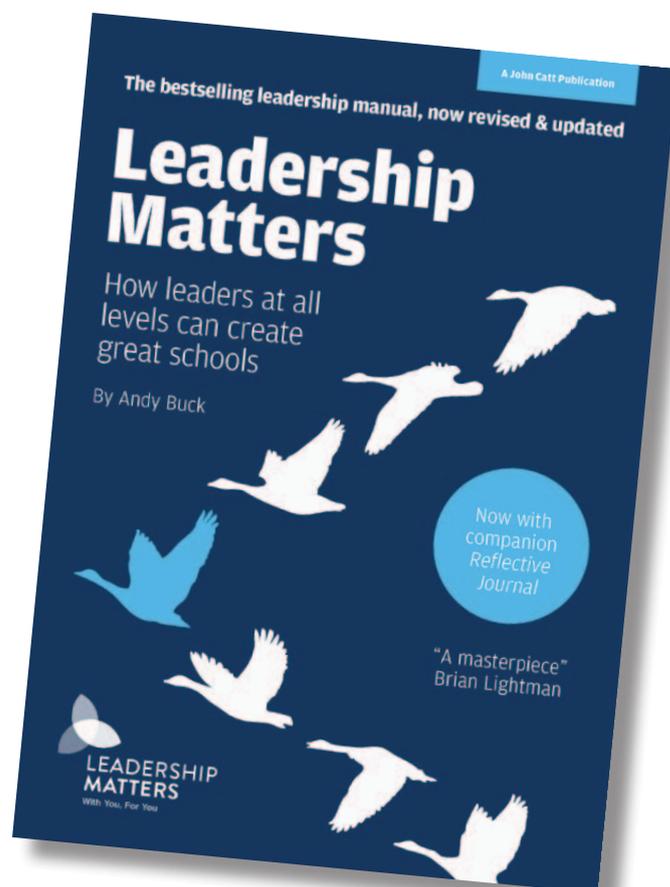
Matthews also notes that the way in which incremental coaching is presented is crucial. The climate within which it is implemented makes a real difference: "The schools presented incremental coaching as an entitlement for teachers: something that will support them in their work, enhance their skills and accelerate their progress towards professional mastery. Even when this stage is reached, it remains valuable, as demonstrated by leaders in education and other organisations and in a range of occupations. Coaching has the potential to make teaching more effective, more satisfying and more successful, through its agency for professional and personal growth. Undertaken systematically across a school, it can improve instructional quality and consistency."

In other words, the approach is all about helping teachers be better teachers and is separated from the judgemental approach that sits behind formal lesson observations and appraisal.

Crucially, the focus is on "fattening the pig, not weighing it".

The term incremental coaching encapsulates a regular, frequent and ongoing cycle of observation and action-based coaching. The coaching is a dialogue that typically includes review, praise, feedback, reflection, modelling, planning and goal setting:

- The process focuses on one action step at a time.
- Each step is followed up in subsequent observations until it is demonstrably embedded in practice.
- There is a minimal interval between observation and coaching.
- The observation and coaching events are planned into the organisation of the school.
- Coaching is a disciplined activity which incorporates common elements.
- Coaches are trained in the process.
- Coaches are lead practitioners who have earned professional respect.



Andy Buck is a former Head and managing director of United Learning. He has founded two organisations, Leadership Matters and #Honk. This article is an extract from the second edition of Leadership Matters, published by John Catt.

THE REALITY OF BECOMING AN NLE

By Cathy Longhurst, Head Teacher at Mandeville Primary School, part of Spiral Partnership Trust – a group of four academy schools in Herts

National Leaders of Education (NLEs) are officially accredited and appointed as system leaders to both support and improve the quality of education and leadership in schools across the country. Like myself, they are serving head teachers who are all too aware of the pressures and direct challenges that many schools face today. They are also well placed to be able to help raise standards for children by providing the right support to schools and other education leaders, who may find themselves in unexpected but challenging circumstances.

As a result of the designation, the Headteacher's school essentially becomes a National Support School (NSS). This means that the entire staff can be called upon by the NLE at any time to support the specific requirements in other schools that match their areas of specialism and expertise. In our school, this has involved our trained school-to-school (S2S) support teachers, SLT, members of the office team and members of the premises team at times, too.

Leading by example

The application process to become an NLE is thorough and detailed with strict criteria. I qualified by meeting the criteria and also through my experience as acting-Head at a primary school I previously worked at. The school found itself in very challenging circumstances after a long period of absence and ultimate resignation of the head teacher, which



meant I was seconded to the school for four terms.

Shortly after I arrived the school has an Ofsted inspection that judged the school to be inadequate and placed it into the Special Measures category. Progress at the school was rapid and as a result it was removed from the category within just six months. The school is now judged to be a 'Good' school – which is a great improvement.

I received my designation in December 2016 and attended the induction training in January 2017 but it hasn't changed the way we work and operate in school. We've been a National Support School for five years not as the previous head teacher was an NLE and the school was designated

the role under her leadership. We have a number of experienced teachers that are trained in school-to-school support and as such we have opened our classrooms to many colleagues from other schools who make visits to learn from good practice.

Valuing excellence

The difference for me personally, is that now I am able to broker and direct my own work and support in my own right as an NLE, which is positive for the school and in terms of making decisions. There are many pros to the NLE scheme in my view, because through supporting others you also reflect on and improve your own practice in turn, because you are constantly evaluating your approach and processes. It is also very rewarding because you feel like you are making a real difference to more children than just those pupils in your own school.

The retention of experienced staff is also increased because they are consistently provided with new opportunities to challenge themselves and learn new skills such as supporting adults. For example, our academy trust runs a training programme for school-to-school support teachers. This looks at the psychology of working with adults rather than children and gives them fantastic skills in observation, giving feedback and planning development for individuals and teams.

This is particularly beneficial to those amazing teachers out there who traditionally don't want to leave the

classroom but eventually go into leadership as a result of these new experiences. It's also a great way to demonstrate as a head, how highly you value their excellence in the classroom.

No wobbles

As with any initiative like this, there are challenges to consider too. We have a phrase at our school 'We will not wobble' and what that really means is we are very conscious in our decision-making that our school comes first. For that reason, time management has to be very carefully considered and I have to be very aware of

the workload of my teachers at any given point. They are always extremely flexible and happy to help but sometimes it is about knowing when to say no.

Sometimes it is difficult to walk away from another school or leader who needs your help or when a project hasn't generated enough funding and it is not yet quite finished in providing support, but these are just some of the regular challenges we have to face.

Understanding the recurring challenges of the system is important because we learn from those situations

and experiences. The issue of funding is an ongoing one, because sometimes it doesn't stretch to the duration of the project, this often happens if the support required is an urgent case and needs to be front-loaded and that can be very disappointing for the school needed support.

Window of opportunity

Under the scheme it is possible to bid for significant sums of money from the NCTL but only during specific windows of opportunity. The reality of this will leave the school I am currently working with, without any support for a significant length of time before the next window in September 2017, which is far from ideal.

Moving forward I look forward to making the most of new experiences and skills, it is early days and I am just enjoying learning and putting those ideas into practice to support children in education. I will also undertake training very shortly to become a Pupil Premium Reviewer, which I know will be invaluable in developing my own school.

Considerations for becoming an NLE

For anyone considering becoming an NLE, I would say it is a big commitment because it means spending more time outside of his or her own school on a more regular basis. You need to be confident in your own leadership team, because without this your role as an NLE would not be possible. Before committing to this role, it is essential that you have the leadership capacity in your own team to ensure that your school won't 'wobble' as a result.



Spiral Partnership Trust is a community of schools working together to make a positive difference to children's lives. The partnership of schools, work in collaboration to provide exceptional quality education to children. The Trust aims to grow and to extend support to a small number of other schools and academies in the region that will benefit from, and contribute to, its ethos and experience.



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BUILD QUALITY IN

Stephen Tierney on the critical importance of quality assurance



With league tables published for another year it's time to turn from our quiet satisfaction or resolutions to do better. At this point in the post mortem it's too late to make the patient better but lessons can be learnt; time to build quality in. Quality assurance is too often overlooked in schools/academies and across multi academy trusts. Yet this is exactly the area we should be focussed on as directors and school leaders.

As a teacher, middle or senior leader, headteacher or in my case the CEO of BEBCMAT; strengthening your processes and systems in year may seem part of a rather dull management style approach. However, it's the necessary flip side to moments of inspiring leadership. Both are needed if a school is to succeed. Where are we going is one thing; smoothing the path to help more people get there is another.

The Trust's Business Plan adorns the wall in my office. I have a monthly reminder, in my electronic diary, to "check QA Plan". Looking at the month gone; has everything been done, lessons learnt, remedial action taken if necessary? Looking at the month ahead; what reminders do I need to send out, have items been scheduled into the appropriate meetings? Academic standards, attendance and behaviour, professional development and safeguarding all appear. Checks on ethos and business functions

also form part of the rhythm of the school year. My black felt pen ticks off the jobs as they are done.

Planning our approach to quality first took a bit of time and a full year's run through to iron out various issues. It's important to see the quality assurance calendar as the servant of what is going on in the school and not the master. It's all too easy to create unnecessary, unproductive and overly bureaucratic processes and systems to feed the quality assurance machine. If you're not careful workload has increased with people focusing time and effort on the wrong things; pupils come first not paperwork. A lot of our processes around standards, attendance and behaviour flowed out of the rhythm of the school year. Where significant data points are reached the information is collated, scrutinised and questions asked.

An example of this is our work around academic standards. We reduced the number of meetings of the Standards Board to three per year. September to review the previous summer's SATs, GCSEs and A-level results and identify any issues we need to address. January and April to review mock data and see where extra resources or focus needs to be put. Collecting whole school aggregated academic data twice a year is sufficient; any more often becomes burdensome, time scales between collections too short and workload of staff excessive. Once the data is collected in, small groups of directors hold a two hour quality assurance meeting going through the information with the headteacher and myself. With three academies in the Trust we hold two in the morning and one in the afternoon followed by a full Standards Board Meeting, at the end of the day, to collect and collate our thoughts and any necessary actions.

View the quality assurance process in two ways; firstly, a means of seeing whether time and energy needs to be focussed on putting things right. It's

the pilot analogy; when flying a plane small in-flight tweaks keep you on course. Early remedial actions around standards, attendance or budget can all nip problems in the bud; before they become major issues. View them as in-year readjustments. Secondly, adding all the quality assurance bits together you build up a picture over time of whether things are going well or not so. Beware the dangers of ignoring early warning signs; none of us like bad news but equally important is not to overreact to a single bit of information.

Systemising your management of a class, department, school or trust helps you develop an automaticity; an orientation towards quality first and quality built-in. People you work with will have a structure, a framework, with clear expectations and time frames; the what and when are sorted and they can get on delivering for the pupils and colleagues. Clarity and predictability help people deliver on time to the standard required. Nothing is fool proof or complete but it's a great start.

Whether leading in the class room or the staff room make quality assurance a metronomic part of your year. From the September or summer post-SATs, GCSEs or A-levels analysis of pupils' papers, to the in-year data and information you get on pupils, staff or outcomes; don't wait to the next post mortem before you act. Remember the metronome.

Stephen Tierney is the CEO of the Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust in Blackpool. He is the Chair of the Headteachers' Roundtable and author of *Liminal Leadership*. He is on Twitter as @LeadingLearner. This article is an extended version of one of his blog posts: leadinglearner.me

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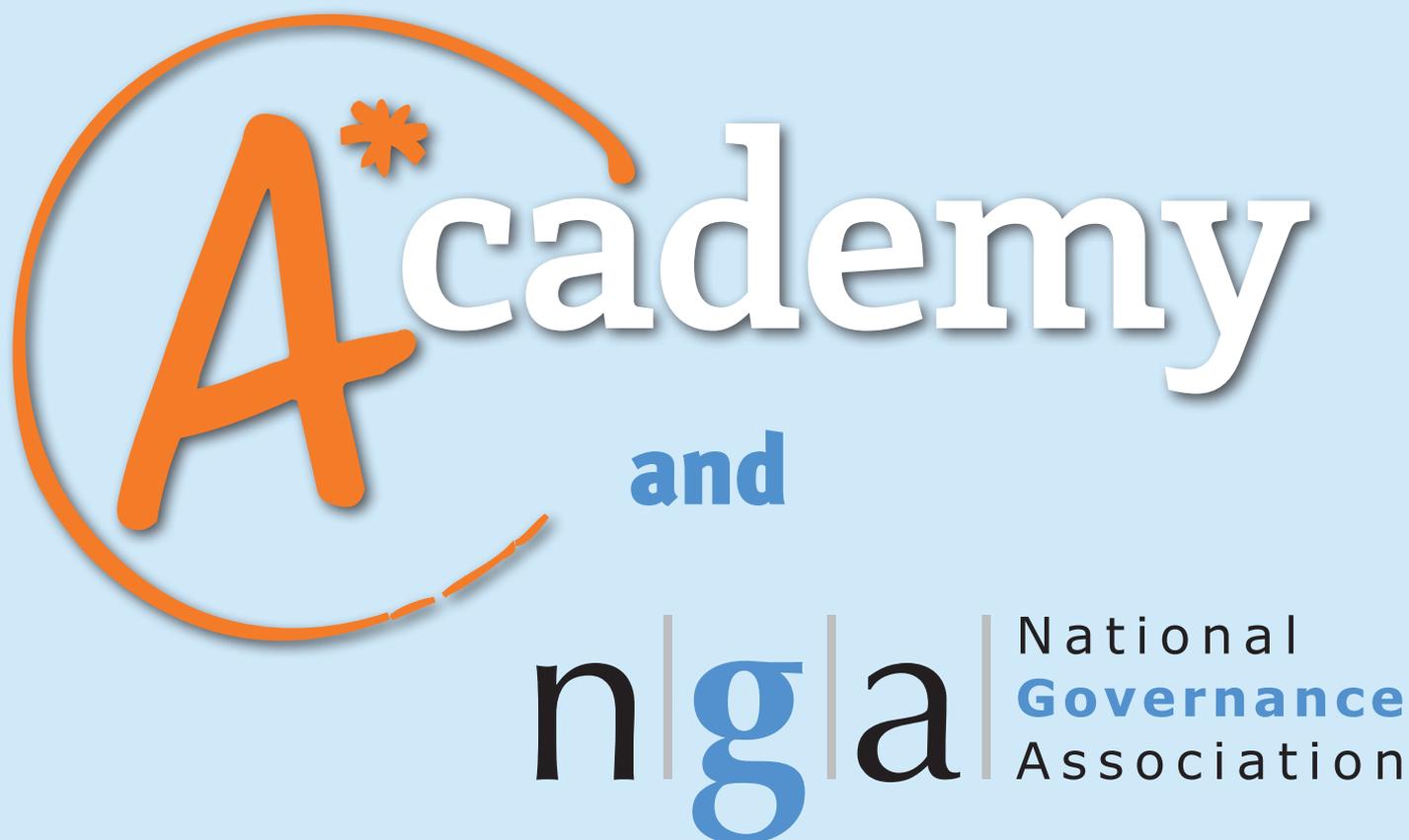
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Announcing a new partnership...

We, the National Governance Association, are very pleased to be partnering the *Academy* magazine to produce their governance pages. I hope many readers knew us as the National Governors' Association, but last month we officially changed our name, by just 4 letters! And we still are the NGA. Our members took that decision at our AGM last November, but now the Charity Commission has confirmed it.

So why bother? We wanted to recognise that not everyone now who governs a school is a governor, most of the readers of this magazine who are governing will be trustees or members of an academy committee. If you are still calling yourself a governor while governing an academy, you should double check that. Your trust may have existed for a number of years with old articles which might need changing. Have a conversation with your board's or committee's clerk; those governance professionals should be the first port of

call for advice on governance procedure. Our new name also recognises the role played by clerks, and we hope emphasises the expertise of NGA. We remain the national voice of those governing in state schools and continue first and foremost to provide information tailored to them. But governors are not the only ones who need to know about governance: we want to spread knowledge across the whole schools sector, including to improve senior leaders' understanding. Academy executives sometimes do not have experience and knowledge of trust governance and it is critical they too understand what good look like.

NGA has the same structure as academies: we are both a charitable trust and a company limited by guarantee. Our mission is to improve the well-being of children and young people in England by promoting high standards in all our schools, and improving the effectiveness of their governing boards. In attempting to meet that charitable

objective, we champion fairness and opportunity for all young people. We value the voices of all, evidence, expertise, and our independence. As well as following the Nolan Principles of Public Life, we aim to be courageous, creative, visionary and light on our feet. You can judge whether we achieve that with our information, advice, guidance, training and development.

We think with our induction guides for multi academy trustees and our model schemes of delegation have shown us to be at the cutting edge of new models of governance. This was endorsed by Lord Nash when asked by the House of Commons Education Select Committee last term as to why the Department for Education had not published more on multi academy governance: he made it clear what NGA had produced "has been really helpful and really thorough.....The NGA has done some excellent work on this".

BACK TO BASICS – FORMING OR JOINING AND DEVELOPING A MAT

Don't jump into a partnership without learning from the mistakes of those who have done so before

In November 2016, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools Lord Nash stated there was more interest in schools wanting to academise than “ever before”, with the trend now being towards schools seeing the benefits of becoming academies in groups through consensual approach.

But while interest may be high, many schools are jumping into partnerships too quickly without learning from the mistakes of those who have gone before them. Choosing the right partners really matters – just ask those who have got it wrong.

Of course this doesn't just apply to maintained schools. The opening of new single academy trusts (SATs) appears to have dried up entirely, the focus now being on groups of schools. Many SATs that haven't already done so are looking at forming or joining MATs themselves. The department is also now (in theory) no longer approving ‘empty MATs’ – MATs that are made up of only one school with future expansion in mind; many existing empty MATs are already looking at joining forces with other empty MATs or established MATs, before being pushed. Then of course there are the existing MATs looking at taking on new schools – many of the basic learning points for forming or joining a MAT equally apply to them.

Governing in groups of schools (whether that is in maintained school federations¹ or MATs) and shared accountability has been shown to bring substantial benefits including better

progress and attainment for pupils, more strategic ways of working, shared thinking and spreading of expertise and realised economies of scale. Identifying at an early stage the key motivation for forming partnership will help drive those key priorities and ensure that those on the governing board are all on the same page from the word go.

One organisation

Successful partnerships start with understanding that being part of a MAT is a huge cultural change. You are joining one organisation with one vision and ethos for the trust – does this work for you? If it doesn't, then it's almost certainly the wrong MAT. This culture change begins by realising the MAT is not about one school; there is no leading school of the trust, and the trust board cannot show favouritism. This is about all the pupils of all the schools in the MAT.

Being a part of a MAT brings a fundamental change to the identity of its schools which no longer have their own legal existence. The trust board and its stakeholders have to understand and accept this identity. This means, certainly at trust board level, there is no room for a ‘my school’ mentality. This problem can exist especially in small MATs where the trust board is comprised of those who previously served as governors on the governing body of one school in the MAT. It is also potentially a problem for MATs where principals or chairs of academy committees of some academies within the MAT sit on the trust board.

Inevitably some schools have found themselves at the bottom of the list with MATs not wanting to touch them, and so go with whoever will take them. Yes underperforming schools can't have the same control over their destiny, but forcing incompatible partnership won't solve anything; the due diligence and sensible expansion strategies of the trust boards of existing MATs will play an important role here in making the right decision. Yes we all want to help, but if you haven't got the capacity then it isn't just the joining school that will suffer. As a trust board if you know your organisation, then you will also know whether it has the educational and management capacity to expand. If it doesn't then have the confidence to say no to the Regional School Commissioner

Ethos and vision

Those joining a MAT will need to focus on the existing ethos of the trust, whereas those forming a MAT need to create a shared ethos. Either way, compatibility of culture is essential, without it the partnership is destined for rocky times. Ethos and values should be clearly stated and reflected through MAT policies. Most MATs will have operational policies such as H&S, HR policies, finance procedures and some may have overarching policies on curriculum, teaching and learning, behaviour.

Likewise the vision will need to be trust wide and include the MATs approach to growth and size by way of pupil numbers not just number of schools,

the geographic proximity of schools and a broad picture of what the trust will look like in 3-5 years' time. Addressing this at the beginning will help create a united organisation working towards the same aims. It will also help to ensure that any non-negotiables, such as approach to local governance arrangements, are picked up, worked on and agreed now, rather than when it is too late to wave goodbye.

Do your homework

Joining, forming or developing a MAT without conducting thorough due diligence places the sustainability of the partnership at high risk. Investigation is essential both at a MAT's conception and throughout its development. Regardless of whether a school is looking at existing MATs to join or schools to form partnership with the details require careful consideration. Due diligence should cover all the bases: ethos and culture, finance, educational performance, and premises. Getting to the bottom of any issues the school faces whether that be performance related, organisational, financial, legal or commercial, will help provide the confidence needed to shake hands or indeed run.

Who's in charge?

Autonomous governance at school level within a MAT is a myth. Many MATs

have been distracted by power debates between the trust board and those at local level but ultimately the trust board is the accountable body and can decide which functions it delegates and change this at any time. While there has been much work over the last 12 months or so to increase understanding of what being in a MAT means in terms of governance, there are still misunderstandings.

Power struggles often manifest where a previous governing body has joined a MAT, and been assured nothing would change and of course it did. For MAT trustees the key question is 'how does the governance structure allow the trust to know its schools, ensuring the education of the children in the school and no loss of trust oversight'.

While academy committees have less decision making power, they must retain the ability to influence and many trusts are very happy for school identity to remain as is. This change in decision making authority has led some to question why anyone would volunteer to sit at academy level. While it is true that some people will only be interested if they can be a trustee, there are many others who have a real connection to their local school and the opportunity to still be involved and make a difference to children will still be attractive. The key is to be open and honest about what is and what is not delegated to local level.

Regardless of whether you are forming a MAT, joining an existing one or looking at how to develop a trust, it is essential that the academy committees should be able to influence trust board policy. If there is no opportunity to influence, the committee doesn't have a meaningful role

Think differently

Being part of a MAT means thinking differently especially in relation to governance and executive leadership. When forming a MAT don't assume other schools joining are happy with your governing body forming the trust board or your headteacher becoming the CEO. Being a MAT CEO is an entirely different job to being a head and a proper appointment and induction process must be followed. Remember this can't be a revolving position. New MATs also need to think about what the central staff will consist of, where they will be based and how this will be funded.

There are some real challenges for the evolving MAT system, especially in relation to governance. Governance will almost certainly not remain static, if you do grow the structure will need to be amended. Think about this early on and plan for it as part of a growth strategy. The system is still relatively immature and it is still learning what works – talk to other MATs learn from what went well and what didn't.

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SCHEMES OF DELEGATION

Some governance functions can, and should, be delegated

Delegation of governance functions in MATs has for many trusts been right at the core of their success story so far. Sadly for others, instead it has led to confused structures and loss of trust amongst key stakeholders. MAT trust boards are accountable in law for all major decisions about their academies. However, this doesn't mean the board is required to carry out all governance functions themselves; many can and indeed should be delegated, including to the CEO, the board's committees, as well as to local level academy committees.

A scheme of delegation (SoD) is the key document defining the lines of responsibility and accountability and a simple yet systematic way of ensuring clarity across a trust. This is achieved by establishing who makes which decisions and communicating that information to all those within the MAT and governing bodies of schools potentially looking to join a MAT so that they understand how it works.

Just because one model has worked for a successful trust doesn't mean it will fit the shape and make up of your trust – tailor yours to work for you

While deciding what to retain at trustee level and what to delegate will vary from trust to trust, every MAT needs to capture this detailed information in a concise and helpful way.

Yet some trust boards have made a mess of transmitting how their governance structure works. There has been a regular swathe of stories over the last few years depicting how local level academy committees have been operating with reduced or in some cases non-existent governance functions and not

understanding this – often as a result of the trust board's failure to communicate clearly. It must also be acknowledged that in some cases this misunderstanding has also been brought about by a lack of research from those joining a MAT. A detailed, upfront SoD will prevent confusion and misunderstanding and avoid loss of trust and damaged working relationships.

A scheme is not an optional extra – it is an essential requirement for effective governance and management. The Academies Financial Handbook now makes it explicitly clear that all trusts must publish their SoD on their website, yet still some trusts are failing to comply, which begs the question whether the document exists. Some other MATs do have a published scheme, but they are just not clear enough, leading to blurred lines of accountability.

Simplicity is fundamental to trusts getting their scheme right; an overcomplicated scheme will send the wrong message. The importance of getting the format right cannot be overestimated. The best schemes include:

- A diagram showing the structure with each layer of governance and clear lines of accountability
- A short paragraph of text which describes the structure
- Detailed narrative on roles and responsibilities
- A grid format, with columns for each layer of governance

The language needs to be relevant and succinct; not full of legal jargon no one understands. It is a working document that the trust board and executive leaders should be able to collectively own.

It should show how the layers work to deliver the trust's vision and strategy. Just because one model has worked for a successful trust doesn't mean it will fit the shape and make up of your trust – tailor yours to work for you. Many MATs are evolving rapidly as the system around them changes. Adapting to changes in context is not a failure but a key feature of an effective MAT. But sometimes the SoD hasn't kept pace with change and no longer reflects the MAT's structure. Your scheme must change as you change for it to remain useful. Where structures have been reshaped and roles shifted, the scheme should reflect this. Reviewing your SoD should be seen as part of the review of effectiveness of the trust board. Academy committees should have a voice to feed into this process if the current structure isn't working for them.

One of the first steps to avoiding problematic governance in MATs is a practical, straightforward, working scheme. As a MAT reevaluates and contemplates the right governance and executive structure for their size and makeup, it should question if the voice of each layer is being heard; does the structure enable policy and strategy to be enhanced and critically, does it allow the trust board to really get to know their schools?

THE RIGHT PEOPLE AROUND THE TABLE

New guidance pinpoints five key steps to getting the right people round the table, says Mark Gardner

Trustee recruitment is a problem. In our 2016 annual survey, half of the 5,000 respondent governors and trustees told NGA they found it difficult to recruit new blood to the board.

Having the right people around the table is one of NGA's eight elements of effective governance. It means striking a balance between diversity in skills and experience and the desire and time to govern.

Evaluating

Getting the right people around the table begins not when you have a vacancy, but should be part of the board's self-evaluation cycle.

Step one is to look at the existing range of people and skills. Think about whether all trustees are used in the best way? Do you have good debates covering the relevant issues and angles? What about your committee structure - are the same people on every committee? They shouldn't be.

Reviewing your composition and practice helps to establish what is and isn't working. Boards that evaluate current practice are more likely to be confident boards who know they are taking the right steps. The APPG 20 Questions (or 21 Questions for MAT boards) and NGA skills audits can assist you with this process.

Tip! When trustees move on, exit interviews provide useful intelligence. It's a chance for the departing trustee to reflect on their own work and the work of the board.

Recruiting

Time to think about who to look for and how to get them.

Diverse and inclusive boards have access a wider pool of talent and skill, they set an example about inclusion 'from the top down'. Advertising will cast a wider net. Our guide also features tips for getting more participation from under-represented groups.

There are various places you can advertise but www.inspiringgovernance.org is the FREE, national online recruitment service, connecting recruiting boards to volunteers interested in becoming governors and trustees. With Inspiring Governance all your new recruits will have access to a wide range of support from the National Governance Association, including an induction guide, telephone support, e-learning and online guidance. MATs boards can also access trustees through Academy Ambassadors.

Once you've identified candidates make sure you interview them. This is an important step for you and the volunteer to discuss the role, responsibilities, time commitment and requirement for a DBS check.

Consider setting up a panel to coordinate the recruitment process.

Appointing

After interviews, inform candidates of the next steps in the process and when they'll find out. Try to make a decision as soon as possible after the last interview. Be sure to take up references before making the recommendation to the full board. References are a relatively new phenomenon in school governance. It might seem like overkill but isn't. Being a trustee is a position of significant responsibility and, as the name implies, trust. If someone is already serving on another board, as well as their skill set you need to assess their capacity to be effective on your board. NGA supports the recommendation that generally individuals should not serve on more than two boards at the same time.

Induction

The value of support and training for your newly appointed trustees should

Tip! When trustees move on, exit interviews provide useful intelligence. It's a chance for the departing trustee to reflect on their own work and the work of the board.

Being a trustee is a position of significant responsibility and, as the name implies, trust. If someone is already serving on another board, as well as their skill set you need to assess their capacity to be effective on your board

not be underestimated. All new trustees should undergo induction, tailored to their needs. NGA's guides *Welcome to Governance* or *Welcome to a MAT* are good places to start.

All trustees should have an ongoing commitment to self-development, which is essential to ensure a self-improving board. Investment in this area can make the difference between a functioning board and a great board. It should be made clear at recruitment stage that this is an expectation.

Succession planning

Succession planning is part of a healthy cycle in board development – as the school or trust changes, so will the needs of the board. NGA recommends that trustees serve no more than two terms of office on any one board, that's eight years and plenty of time to make a difference. Chairs should be limited to six years in post as chair on the same board unless there are exceptional circumstances.

This is also the stage to reflect on the work of the board by learning from feedback offered through exit interviews. A key aspect of succession planning is enabling the transfer of knowledge and experience from those handing over the reins.

Download the right people around the table from www.nga.org.uk
 Mark Gardner is NGA's Public Relations Officer



THE ROLE OF MEMBERS IN MATS

The role should be ‘eyes on, hands off’ - if working well

The role of members in academy trusts is often blurred with the role of the trust board, but members have an entirely separate, largely hidden role, narrowly defined in terms of the running of the trust. Members are the custodians of the governance of the trust, forming the top governance tier.

The first members sign the formal funding agreement as the trust is set up. As the signatories to the memorandum of association, they agree the trust’s first articles of association which will include how members are appointed and replaced. An organisation/corporate body can be identified as member which has the right to appoint and individual to serve. Where a MAT has a sponsor, it can usually appoint members and trustees.

Essentially the role is ‘eyes on, hands-off’ when the trust is working well, but members do have a crucial role in ensuring the academy trust’s charitable objectives are being met. This involves maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of the trust structure, and holding the board to account for the improved progress and outcomes for the pupils. Members will almost certainly have the power to appoint and remove trustees and will also appoint the trust’s auditors and receive the annual report and accounts from the board of trustees.

The beginning of 2017 was graced with a revamped version of the Department for Education’s (DfE) governance handbook; in it can be found a reinforced section on members. The DfE has now made it clearer that the role of members in the running of the trust is indeed minimal and one of oversight. The guidance clarifies that members must “avoid overstepping their powers or undermining the

boards”. The trust board not the members are charged with the three core functions and for conducting the “business of the trust”. This means that members should not be running trust board meetings and agendas, or taking control of the performance management of the senior executive leader – these are both the role of the trust board.

However, the DfE still likes to draw comparison between the role of Members and the role of shareholders in a company limited by shares. This is an awkward comparison, as it draws parallels with profit making organisations or individuals paying dividends, lending weight to the idea of individuals becoming involved in the governance of the organisation out of self-interest; this is incompatible with good governance in the school sector.

Clear separation

It is now more clearly recognised by the DfE that there needs to be clear differentiation between the individuals serving as members and those on the trust board and this is made explicit in both the Academies Financial Handbook and the Governance Handbook. In the latter the wording now says that there should be a “significant degree of distinction” between the Members and trustees.

There was no requirement for early trusts to have this separation between layers and many may still be operating within these original structures. This can give room to a few influential and dominant players appointing a large section of the board.

The DfE also now recommends at least five members, but the legal minimum is still three. These are two separate tiers of

governance in the same trust, one holding the other to account. If these are all the same people the objectivity of that lens is open to question.

Five or more members also helps to ensure there are enough members to take decisions via special resolution (which requires 75% of members to agree) without requiring unanimity.

The current model articles do not allow employees of the trust to be members, but under some older articles, the headteacher/CEOs were often either members through having been signatories to the memorandum or were just automatically made members. The inherent conflict of interest in the lack of separation between governance in trust is even more stark when the senior executive leader is also a member and has caused some well –publicised issues recently. Sir David Carter recently agreed that CEO’s being trustees, let alone Members, blurs the “edges of accountability”.

If your trust does still have significant cross-over between members and trustees then you should be seeking to reduce it. Robust and transparent recruitment procedures (see page x) for new trustees will also help to deliver a board of diverse perspectives and less potential for group think.

COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY TO SUPPORTING STAFF



As the pressure is turned up and stress rises, make sure you are communicating effectively, says Julian Stanley of the Education Support Partnership

With a growing recognition and understanding that good wellbeing is fundamental to every aspect of our lives, if we are to create happy, thriving schools, pupils and students, we must first ensure we have well-supported staff. As the only UK charity dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of the entire teaching workforce, Education Support Partnership understands the unique pressures experienced by all in the field, academies being no exception. We champion good mental health and the wellbeing of all; teachers, school heads and leaders, support staff; - in fact anyone in education throughout their careers and into retirement.

Get it right and good communication is a key tool that can go a long way towards relieving much workplace stress and help resolve many conflicts. Get it wrong and poor communication can be a major cause of stress and anxiety across schools. As anyone working in education knows, staff at every level have to deal with many different types of people and manage a wide range of relationships. The difficulty can be in knowing how

to manage so many different needs, demands and expectations. What can be most challenging and stressful is managing a particularly difficult relationship.

Tips for better communication:

How can we do this successfully? We are of course, all human. We all have days and times in life when things seem more challenging and it is important to remember that. Conflict can result from a number of behaviours including unbalanced teamwork, disagreements over how to deal with particular students and a lack of support maybe from managers or co-workers and even self-doubt which can sometimes lead to defensiveness. In the pressured environments of schools, these feelings and behaviours are likely to be magnified.

It is important to be upfront with others when there are clear issues that need to be addressed for a better working relationship. Increasing our understanding and improving the way that we respond to conflict can make for happier people and happier schools. 'Effective challenging' needs to steer a

clear course between being too aggressive or submissive. Some people are not very self-aware so maybe you just need to tell them constructively what the issues are or what you need from them. We suggest:

- Asking a direct, open question: "When, how, why, what, where?"
- Give feedback. Be honest about how a person's behaviour or attitude is affecting you or others.
- Offer advice on help and the support that is available if appropriate.
- Remember that effective challenging is a two-way street.

Also useful is being able to identify different types of people to better frame our responses and behaviour to get results.

For all of us, communication is better in some relationships than in others. Many teachers are adept at communicating very effectively with pupils and students but might be less successful when talking with other adults.

Before you can start to work on your communication you first need to think about what helps and what prevents you, your staff or your academy from communicating as effectively as you



would like. Think about the people that you enjoy communicating with: your friends, your family and colleagues. Identify the attitudes, values and skills that make this easy.' Next, think about the people you or others struggle to communicate with and go through the same process with the heading 'barriers to communication.' Look at your answers to both and this should give you a clearer understanding of what you need to be able to communicate well.

Listening is a key part of the communication process. Whilst poor listeners are likely to interrupt, argue, jump to conclusions or argue, good listeners in contrast will encourage, ask questions when they don't understand something and look at things from another person's perspective.

None of us of course can ever be sure

how another person will react and anxiety is a normal part of the process. If you fall victim to this you will be less effective than you might otherwise be. But there are times when, if effective, it could make such a difference to your working life.

To read more on the issue you can find our 'Life guide: Relationships at work' on our website www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk

Established 140 years ago, initially as a benevolent fund for teachers, the charity today offers a wide range of services. Our free, confidential helpline operates 24-hours a day and our trained counsellors support thousands of staff every year who have reached breaking point; maybe it's a challenging student, maybe you or a colleague is suffering from stress and depression or personal financial worries. We are here for anyone experiencing

a crisis. We also offer a confidential grants service helping those working in or retired from the sector who may be suffering financial problems caused by ill health or sudden life events such as a bereavement or personal injury. At the same time we offer support to school leaders and staff to help identify and improve professional and organisational development.

Julian Stanley has been CEO of the Education Support Partnership since 2009 and is a passionate advocate of the benefits of investing in and focussing on the health and wellbeing of the education workforce.

THE SOUTHERN EDUCATION & ACADEMIES SHOW

A not-to-be-missed appointment in the diary is the Southern Education & Academies Show (SEAS 2017), perfect for educators looking for sector updates by leading industry speakers, network with like-minded peers and develop vital relationships with key suppliers.

At SEAS 2017 you will have a unique opportunity to network with like-minded peers, develop vital relationships with key suppliers and hear from leading industry speakers.

High Value Keynote Stream

Come along to SEAS 2017 in Farnborough on Wednesday 28th June to hear from key industry organisations including the Southern Regional Schools Commissioner, the National Governor's Association,

and Ofsted. The opening keynote, "An Optimist's Guide to Becoming Outstanding" will be presented by the charismatic principal of Passmores Academy, Vic Goddard, who came to the nation's attention in TV's 'Educating Essex'.

The Southern Education & Academies Show, Farnborough International Venue & Events (FIVE) on Wednesday 28th June, register online at www.southerneducationshow.co.uk. Email seas@revolution-events.com or call 01892 820930

Get Hands on at the Demo Hub

A visit to SEAS 2017 is out of this world when you step into the Winchester Science Centre's pop-up planetarium and gazing at the night sky will provide an immersive and unforgettable experience. The Tablet Academy will be demonstrating a variety of STEM solutions including robotics and Virtual Reality in the classroom.

The Leading Regional Education Event

From the organisers of the EduKent EXPO & Conference, the Southern Education and Academies Show is one in a national series of education events that promote effective school leadership, management, learning and teaching through high level conference sessions and an extensive exhibition area.



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36 Academy magazine | Summer 2017

HAVE LESSON OBSERVATIONS HAD THEIR DAY?

Video recording is lesson observation for the modern classroom and can be used to create new opportunities for the cross-pollination of ideas, says John Dabell

Lesson observations are about as popular as having a tonsillectomy without a general anaesthetic. They inspire dread and fear in many teachers, no one in their right mind would volunteer for one and they have a net likeability rating of -98. Thankfully, lesson observations are also 'old hat', at least in their traditional sense where someone with a clipboard stares and glares for 30 minutes. Lesson observations, as we know and hate them, have had their day.

In the November 2016 Teaching Schools Council (TSC) report 'Effective Primary Teaching Practice' Headteacher of Parkfield Community School Hazel Pulley states,

"If pupils are to make rapid progress they need teachers with excellent up-to-date subject knowledge and an understanding of the teaching quality required. We have totally moved away from formal lesson observations. Instead, coaching partnerships have been developed using video technology, regular pop-in opportunities in classrooms and focused work scrutiny to provide bespoke professional development. Evaluation is a key aspect of all our CPD; checking for impact is seen as an imperative."

(<http://www.tscouncil.org.uk/resources/effective-primary-teaching-practice-2016/>)

At last, the voice of reason. Classrooms are complex, dynamic settings where

a lot goes on and capturing the action is never easy so to send someone in to ceremoniously observe a lesson and then provide a teacher with feedback has always been a bit hit and miss.

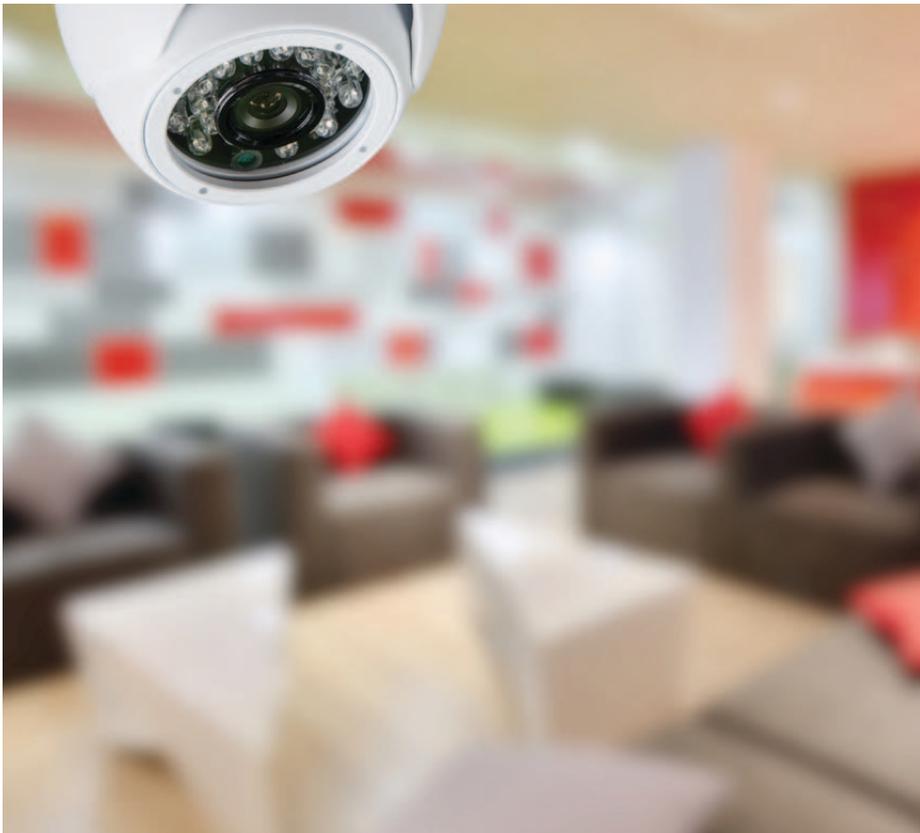
Why 'live' lessons are unintelligent...

When someone comes into your classroom to 'observe live' then everything changes. The class isn't the same class anymore. Behaviour and words change. Teachers tend to alter their style or over-egg their performance and children can either clam up or go over the top. Po-faced 'observers' probably mean no harm when they sit scribbling on the perimeter fence but they throw a spanner in the works and this stops the class moving 'as normal' as everyone is on guard and tense. Sometimes the strain is palpable.

There is a better way and that is unobtrusive fly on the wall videoing because this enables a lesson and everyone involved in it to breathe in and out and 'act' as they would 'normally'. An observer doesn't have to be present but can watch remotely there and then or 5 hours later or next year!

Videoing lessons isn't a high risk strategy because the dynamics aren't the same. It tips the scales in favour of teachers and pupils taking away the stress and anxiety and so puts their well-being first. It can actually focus on what the real job in hand is: to improve teaching and learning by using the video 'data' or intelligence as a coaching and mentoring tool.

Videoing makes perfect sense because teachers can use it a self-evaluation tool as well -no one else need see it if you decide that you are going to be the only observer but a video lesson always benefits from



the input of at least two others.

Planned 'walk in' lesson observations are intimidating and 'old school' because they fail to recognise the Hawthorn Effect and sometimes just how much harm they do. Videoing on the other hand is healthy observation. It can highlight good practice without the 'clipboard scribble' effect, recordings can be paused, fast forwarded and rewound to pick up on key points and it enables teachers to feel more comfortable in looking at what they do. A video observation makes the process more reliable too because it doesn't have to rely on one person's memory or one person perception. Reflections can be like looking in a fairground hall of mirrors – they get stretched, squeezed and distorted. A video observation helps to clean up the whole observation process by showing you how it is and gives you a much clearer and crisper picture.

Integrating video technology into our

classrooms can make observations a far smoother experience and help support 'proper' development and collaborative working. A video enables us to be forensic but without the negativity and so it removes the grit. No white gloves are needed either.

Whilst having another adult in the room can be more than a bit off-putting for everyone, the onus on the observer to see everything and report back accurately can be enormous. Let's not hate the observers, they have a tough time too and aren't blessed with the vision of a sheep dog. Classroom life is always multi-layered and rich, filled with nuances and subtleties and impossible for one person to capture.

Coaching

Schools are transforming the way they do lesson observations now by shifting from formal visits to informal video

recordings for mentoring, specialist coaching and collaborative coaching. A lesson is recorded and looked at with a colleague or colleagues as a means of providing personalised professional support through discussion about their practice. Collaboration is king and queen and intimidation is given the guillotine.

CUREE (the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education), distinguishes between three related processes:

- Mentoring is a structured, sustained process for supporting professional learners through significant career transitions.
- Specialist coaching is a structured, sustained process for enabling the development of a specific aspect of a professional learner's practice.
- Collaborative Co-coaching is a structured, sustained process between two or more professional

Growing pains: Considerations and best practice for successful Multi-Academy Trusts

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SCHOOLS IMPROVEMENT

Schools Improvement gathers the latest schools news in one place to help anyone interested in schools keep up-to-date with developments and opinions during a period of great change.

We also hope to help readers make sense of media reports about schools and education by inviting feedback and comment, and by linking, where possible, to original sources/reports/documents so the reality behind the headlines can be properly understood.

The site features a daily round-up of schools-related stories from the media, plus polls, competitions, comment and guest posts. It is aimed at school leaders, teachers, governors, parents and policy makers (or anyone who cares about our schools!).

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learners to enable them to embed new knowledge and skills from specialist sources in day-to-day practice.

(to find out more go to www.curee.co.uk/files/publication/1219925968/National-framework-for-mentoring-and-coaching.pdf)

Video can support all three processes but the rich footage can be especially useful to support teachers develop specific professional skills to enhance their teaching repertoire, support experimentation with classroom strategies and provide opportunities for reflection and problem-solving.

Watch and learn

Watching what happens in a classroom is an opportunity to learn. It enables you to focus on the details and the tiny particulars and the broader landscape. As teachers we need both.

When you are teaching you are in the thick of the action and it is sometimes difficult to really see and appreciate what is going on across the classroom. If a football manager wants to see the bigger picture then he will leave the dugout and touchline and head up into the stands. The view and perspective totally changes and you see things completely differently. Changing your viewing point will always teach you a lot more and it could reveal some hidden strengths and weaknesses as well as unearth some surprises, some pleasant and some not so pleasant. But if teachers can't climb up to the crow's nest to see more of what is going on what can be done? We need to box clever and press record.

As a teacher you are always on the lookout for what's happening and you try and tune into certain things. You might be monitoring a pupil who is reluctant to join in a discussion; appraising a pupil who is underperforming; looking at whether a group activity has overrun its usefulness; examining the way pupils interact with your Teaching Assistant. You could also be looking at the body language of pupils during a presentation or the impact of a display and how pupils interact with it.

Your eyes might tell you one thing when you are 'on the pitch' but how do

you see everything? Do you place your own filters over what is going on and see what you want to see? Are your biases and preconceived ideas clouding your judgements and interpretations? Do you overlook qualities and miss faults? We try and point our internal CCTVs (our eyes and ears) everywhere but there will always be periods of a lesson where what is happening to the side of us or behind us won't be caught on our teacher camera. Contrary to what we say to children, we really don't have eyes in the back of our heads and we can't swivel around 360 all the time because we'd never attend to anything for any length of time.

Supports improvement

School improvement is underpinned by teachers' learning and development and videoing plays a key role here as it can provide a vehicle for raising achievement and attainment. When teachers' learning is based on an authentic assessment and understanding of pupils' learning they can start to make alterations to their practice which can lead to real differences in outcomes. A formal lesson observation can only ever be a snapshot but a video is lesson observation 'widescreen' style and long-lasting.

Unobtrusive video systems are commercially available (e.g. www.lessonbox.co.uk) and these can blend into the environment and enable genuine assessment to take place and so provide the best conditions for 'real' performances. Looking back at a lesson informally with a teaching coach (e.g. a colleague, Deputy) enables teachers to:

- to experience and grow understanding of knowledge and skills
- to gain several opportunities to learn and apply information
- to have their beliefs challenged by evidence which is not consistent with their assumptions
- have opportunities to share new learning with others.

Video powerfully supports strategic CPD and so can be a friend and not a foe. A lesson that is videoed allows teachers to assess the quality of their planning, evaluate their level of challenge and feedback, assess relationships, look at the impact

of the learning environment, judge pupil motivation and see the links between teaching, learning and assessment.

Videoing can help put the trust back into a lesson observation by being impartial and when used as a coaching tool can support teachers who genuinely wish to improve to develop their practice and can be used to improve teaching and learning across the school as a whole.

Reach your potential

A coach and coachee might interpret a lesson quite differently but video technology provides a level playing field and a rich context for discussion. A recording enables you to unpack a lesson and closely scrutinise practice and so provides the opportunity to rewind and reframe a lesson experience. The concrete evidence provided in a video is enormous and so this is a dynamic resource for referring to and revisiting on more than one occasion.

Questions, discussion, feedback and challenge all grow out of the concrete evidence a video recording is able to provide and so help teachers develop and secure more professional knowledge and improve their teaching quality.

Video recording is lesson observation for the modern classroom and can be used to create new opportunities for the cross-pollination of ideas and the enhanced understanding of the role of professional knowledge in teachers' practice.

Videoing isn't spying or surveillance, this is transparent and open intelligence gathering so that we can learn from ourselves, learn from each other and make sense of what is going on in our classrooms. This is, at last, intelligent observation that we don't need to lose sleep over.

John Dabell trained as a primary school teacher and taught in a range of schools in London and the Midlands. He has also trained as an Ofsted inspector and I worked as a national in-service provider, project manager, writer and editor.



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10 WAYS COMPUTER GAMES CAN HELP YOUR PUPILS AT SCHOOL

Shahneila Saeed is the Programme Director for Digital Schoolhouse, a project established by Ukie, the Association for UK Interactive Entertainment

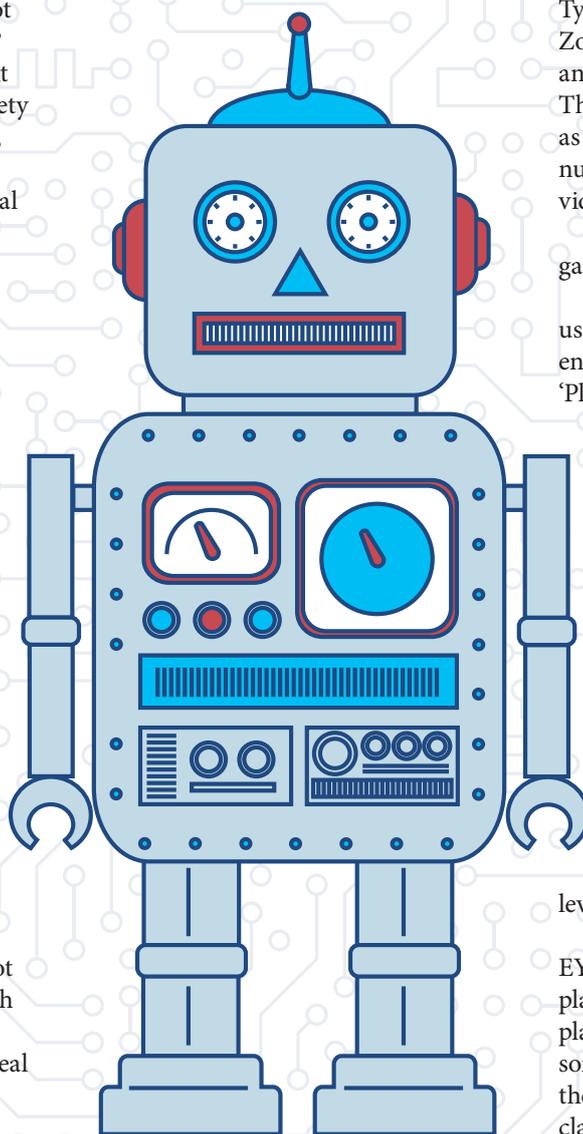


Playing games and studying are two things that often are not perceived to go together unless its PE lessons. Playing computer games is generally seen to be something that you simply cannot do at the same time as studying? Why? Well, when we try to visualise a student at work, we may picture them in a variety of ways; reading a book, making notes, talking to friends or asking questions from their teacher. Whatever the mental image it is highly unlikely that playing computer games will appear in that picture. We tend to associate playing computer games with recreation time, time that perhaps some people would argue would be better spent outdoors.

But computer games do have value and a place in education, and they've been around for longer than you might think. Since computers first came into schools in the 80s, computer games have been a common way to introduce students to digital literacy skills at the time. Later, Smile Maths produced a suite of games to introduce students to a range of mathematical principles, from teaching co-ordinates to angles these mini games kept many a student entertained.

More recently with the revamped computing curriculum in place the growth of educational games has yet again increased. Games such as Lighbot and Code Combat are designed to teach students programming skills. Other games such as Minecraft are seen as ideal environments for students to explore a range of cross-curricular concepts.

Other companies such as Classcraft and Education City also use games to help introduce students to a range of concepts and ideas.



While educational games might seem more 'palatable' the truth is video games more broadly have great educational value. Games such as Rollercoaster Tycoon, Angry Birds and Plants Vs Zombies all contribute to the academic and cognitive growth of the student. There are benefits also with games such as Mario Kart, Uncharted and any number of the broader and more popular video game titles.

How? Here are 10 ways that computer games can help your children.

1. It's a well recorded fact that the use of computer games help to improve engagement and motivation in lessons. 'Play' is an intrinsic human behaviour and computer games embody that for the modern digital student in a way that many other classroom resources cannot.
2. Children play games at home, by using them in the classroom we are more likely to encourage continued learning beyond the classroom. For example, setting a homework which requires the student to attempt a particular game level is more likely to get done rather than setting a simple Q&A exercise. In fact, it's quite likely that the student will attempt more than one level within that timeframe.
3. Developmental psychologists and EYFS teachers recognise the power of play and recommend learning through play for young children. In fact, it's something Ofsted will look for when they inspect nursery and reception classes. Primary school teachers teaching



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Key Stage 1 (Reception class to Year 2) do this extremely well in fact. Almost everything they do is turned into a playful activity. The pupils will not only learn the concepts intended but they will have learnt it within context and have a great deal of fun while doing so. Unfortunately, we don't seem to do enough of this as students get older and its practically non-existent in secondary schools.

4. Play makes abstract concepts concrete therefore making them easier to understand, particularly (but not exclusively to) younger learnings. Computer games are brilliant at presenting a virtual world that transports the player into a new reality. Within this world you can manipulate everything from your environment to your own and others abilities. It's a customised world that allows you to explore ideas and concepts that would otherwise be almost impossible to do so.

For example, using Minecraft to walk and explore your way around the Central Processing Unit of a computer, or playing Assassins Creed will enable you to explore ancient cities in a way that you simply cannot do so otherwise. With the advent of VR the possibilities are only increasing, with students now able to walk in space, explore the human bloodstream or the inside of a volcano.

Computer games help bring things to life. Rather than simply reading or listening to a stream of words, computer games allow students to see, touch, explore and manipulate environments that they would have been unable to do so otherwise.

5. Computer games allow players become producers rather than consumers. This is an essential skill for our students to develop if they are to be adequately prepared for the world of work tomorrow. Simply put, children learn by doing and video games can help students put skills and concepts into practice to embed them more firmly. Using computer games and play more broadly enables us to put students into the driver's seat, giving them direct responsibility over their own learning. It's methodologies such as this that help students develop essential

computational thinking and other key 21st Century skills.

6. Computer games help the player think like a scientist. In any engaging game, there will be a problem that needs to be solved, a goal that needs to be achieved. Accomplishing the goal or solving the problem won't be easy, there will be several obstacles along the way. But that's part of the fun, testing different strategies and ideas before ultimately arriving at the solution that works. Being able to hypothesise, test and evaluate their findings sensibly and objectively is something all teachers want their students to develop. So, it goes without saying that computer games can help to develop problem solving and computational thinking skills

7. Play has found to have strong links to help develop creativity and imagination amongst children.

8. Computer games support collaboration, for example, the growing sector of esports requires people to communicate effectively in teams to strategise and ultimately win the game.

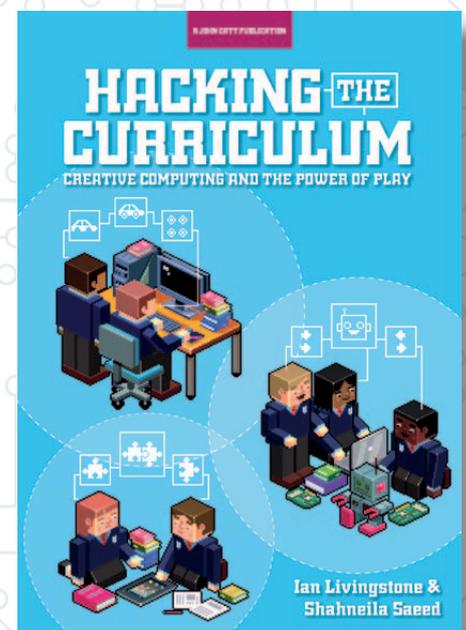
9. Computer games help to lower consequences of failure. They encourage players to take risks, explore and try new things. Think about it. When you play a game, if you fail a level you will try again and again in order to finally achieve it. However, that doesn't naturally translate to our approach with our studies. If we fail at a test, we can become demotivated, students may often feel like they have 'one shot' at this and no more. Computer games help students to deal with failure, to learn from it, pick themselves up and try again.

10. Playing games enables us to develop mastery and technical prowess over related skills. Children who play Minecraft for example, will watch YouTube videos, read magazines and articles to learn new skills and techniques to create a better world. They want to learn, because they want to get better at the game they are playing!

Computer games and the use of play more broadly can help develop a love of lifelong learn amongst students if used effectively in education. They encourage

students to test out new ideas, to pick themselves up from their previous failure and try again, and to be more creative in their approach. In addition, a range of studies have shown that computer games have been associated with numerous health and cognitive benefits including:

- They can help to address autism
- Help you destress
- Help you make faster decisions
- Improvement in attention
- Improves hand-eye coordination



Hacking the Curriculum: Creative Computing and the Power of Play explores the benefits of using play in the classroom and outlines practical strategies to help teachers cultivate a culture of creativity in their schools. From lesson ideas, to practical games that teachers can play as well as links to wider initiatives, the book brings together the key learnings across the disciplines to argue that students should be allowed to play in the classroom.

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VIRTUAL LEARNING BENEFITS ALL STUDENTS

Andy Percival, Deputy Head Teacher, explains how using a virtual learning environment has helped to successfully engage all students and boost their attainment and achievement

The Rodillian Academy in Wakefield is a larger than average secondary school and sixth form, with over 1,400 students, and is one of five schools within The Rodillian Multi Academy Trust. The academy was rated “Good” by Ofsted last year, with an “Outstanding” judgement for ‘Effectiveness of leadership and management’ and for ‘Personal development, behaviour and welfare’. As part of its ethos, it aims to create an inspiring environment in which any obstacles that may prevent students from achieving are removed.

I’m sure every teacher will agree with me when I say that engaging and motivating every single student can seem like a nigh on impossible task. And while, as teachers, we might explore different methods, unfortunately it’s inevitable that there will be a small number of students that may begin to “disengage” in the classroom as a result of being unable to fully engage.

At Rodillian, we’ve considered how we can reach and support all students, including those who are struggling with attainment, behaviour and achievement. Like all schools, we believe in the potential of each and every one of our students and as a result, we’re in the top 20 per cent of schools nationally for attainment.

The impact of VLEs

We began looking at VLEs to use as an inclusive whole-school resource to support students’ learning and teachers’ provision. While we had previously implemented another VLE platform, it was EDLounge that offered us the unique opportunity to develop a VLE platform that catered to our specific whole-school needs.

Using the VLE, students can access

their lessons – from languages to English and maths – carry out tasks, and have their work marked instantly, which enables them to monitor their own progress. Other functions available to access on the VLE include homework tasks, student timetables, supporting academic material, and other pastoral and mentoring provisions.

Another benefit to us is that we can track progress across all their lessons. Using the VLE to do this makes it easy to access the information needed to make informed decisions about students’ learning, so if, for example, grades begin to decline – either in one subject or across all lessons – teachers can intervene immediately and tackle the issue head-on, preventing the student from disengaging entirely from learning.

The teachers are also supported in their teaching as lesson work and material is already there and it’s then marked, so although excessive workloads for staff can be an issue, the VLE helps reduce this; tracking, monitoring and reporting are streamlined and made easier to manage.

We’re also able to use the VLE for exam intervention. So, for example, prior to their maths exams, our students can go into the IT suite and answer questions relating to the curriculum, which is then self-marked on the system, enabling them to see first-hand where they might need to revise further. We’re now looking to use this offering for other exams too, such as English, to further help our students with the core knowledge needed for their exams.

Students outside the classroom

For students that may have, unfortunately, disengaged in the classroom, and consequently be at home, in inclusion, or excluded, the VLE provides us with a way

to reach out and ensure these students are able to access lessons, guidance and support from their teachers, so that when they’re reintroduced back into the classroom, they’ve not fallen behind their peers. The VLE also offers them courses that seek to teach them why their behaviour is inappropriate and how they can modify it.

Student progress is continuously monitored by the school during their time outside of the classroom, and schools can contact parents at any time and update them on their child’s efforts, which also makes the reintroduction to the school environment seamless and as stress-free as possible.

As with any school work, there are consequences to not completing courses and lessons, and therefore, it’s no surprise that the percentage of students completing this work is very high.

The impossible made possible

While the prospect of engaging all students may seem like a somewhat impossible task, VLEs greatly ease this challenge, offering schools a platform through which they can reach students that are both inside and outside of the classroom, thereby creating an inclusive school environment. The VLE has been so successful in engaging our students and raising their attainment that it’s now used across all of the schools in the MAT.

At Rodillian, we understand the need to support all our students and deliver learning in a way they understand and can relate to, not only to ensure they remain focused in the classroom, and prevent them from disengaging, but also so that they enjoy learning; after all, when a student enjoys learning, they learn better and they learn more.



PREPARING PRIMARY PUPILS FOR LIFE AT 'BIG SCHOOL'

Steve Hale, senior learning mentor at Mere Green Primary School, is using his years of frontline pastoral experience in the Birmingham Local Authority Education Sector to help children successfully move from primary to secondary school

The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership's Transition Guarantee aspires to deliver high quality key stage 2-3 transition to children at ATLP schools. Project co-ordinator, Steve writes:

The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership (ATLP) - an established multi-academy trust in Birmingham and North Warwickshire - has created the Key Stage 2-3 'Transition Guarantee' programme. This co-ordinated approach

is the MAT's commitment to pupils and families that all of its academies: Brookvale, Hill West, Mere Green and Slade primaries, and Arthur Terry, Coleshill and Stockland Green secondaries, will run the same transition activities, to give all children the same high level of quality transition.

The package will help all ATLP students to genuinely prepare for secondary school in the same way: this includes a broad combination of

activities, including taster days, drop-in sessions, Independence Weeks, parents and children meeting members of the secondary school, and reunion events.

Quality consistency

The 2008 Department for Children, Schools and Families' research: 'What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school?' found that 16 per cent of children moving from primary to secondary school felt



unprepared. Out of the 102 participants from low socio-economic status households (SES), a massive 72 per cent did not get used to the new routines easily, while 58 per cent did not settle in very well. In comparison, of the 186 high SES children, 50 per cent did not get used to the new routines easily and 39 per cent did not settle in so well.

It is clear that not all children have the same positive experience of moving from primary to secondary school.

Historically, all schools' transition packages have varied, which was evident when all the primaries and secondaries within the ATLP met to find commonality and explore the best possible model. Some schools simply offer an 'orientation day' where pupils visit their chosen secondary school, while others extend a range of activities, including 'Myth Buster' and drop-in sessions, plus reunion events, where new year 7s re-visit their former primary schools to share their positive experiences. It seemed unjust that there wasn't a

baseline level of quality consistency needed for the child.

A lack of engagement and aspiration among students at this vital time can often lead to low attainment and a downward curve in the first one to three months of their secondary school lives. At the ATLP we wanted a more linear line for all of our students.

There are several main areas of focus to ensure every child's transition is a success. There is the obvious administration paperwork that gives critical information on each child; understanding of the strategies for supporting children with additional needs or those who may be vulnerable; continuity of curriculum across the two respective schools; and understanding of the classroom-based practice that works best for each individual child.

Therefore, it is massively important to get this change right for each child. The challenge is understanding that child; what's their home life like? How do they get to school? Do they understand

how they react in different unexpected situations? It's all key information that secondary schools will benefit from knowing prior to September.

Pastoral care – listening to the pupil

As well as academic levels, the programme will include a strong focus on the pastoral side of transition, giving children their chance to have their say about their individual needs.

The programme provides a platform for teachers and pastoral leaders of primaries and secondaries to meet and discuss significant information relating to every child. Primary schools will hand out three transition information forms: one for primary pastoral teams to complete about the child, one for parent/carers to fill in (focusing on strengths, interests and challenges), and one for children themselves to complete.

These three compulsory forms – which will be shared between primary and secondary transition leads - will help to

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paint a 360-degree picture of the child, not solely what academic levels they are working at.

If a child from an ATLP primary is transitioning to a secondary school outside of the partnership, then that school will also receive that same information, and if a child is coming into a secondary school from a primary outside of the ATLP, then the secondary school will be sending out this same set of key information.

This is a chance for children to write down concerns around their transition; to describe what they are like, rather than just a school or parents' version. Together, the intelligent use of these forms can identify key strengths/challenges and target the correct intervention and support needed to accelerate their progress. The schools will work together to ensure that any concerns or additional needs can be met, even before that child

starts secondary school.

We have already completed one rotation of this paperwork, for children who moved to secondary school in September 2016. Feedback has been positive and unearthed different circumstances and issues that had previously needed secondary schools to react to in September, rather than focusing on prevention. We plan to review the guarantee after each academic rotation, so that we can learn and amend any grey areas.

Handing over the reins

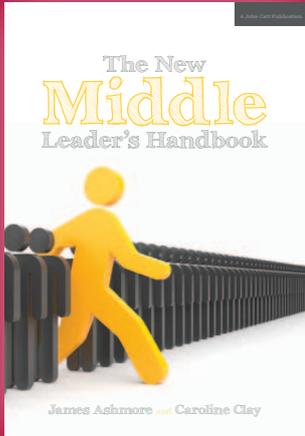
The project is about more than a set of paperwork though. The ATLP places a great emphasis on this key 'handover' period. Primary schools will have grown with a majority of the children since the age of three, all the way up to age 11. It's our strong belief that we do not just wave the year 6 pupils off at the end

of July and have nothing more to do with them – we owe it to the children to ensure they have as many 'safety nets' as they need. Following the child up into their respective secondary schools and providing them with a familiar face who they trust and speak to within the first two months means that this professional relationship can be utilised to great effect, without stepping on the toes of the secondary school.

It's taken a lot of time and effort to get to this stage, and it has been a genuine partnership, collaboration in its purest form. We have spoken to the children and parents about what they feel would make a big difference to their transition, listened to both primary and secondary staff and feel that we now have a strong fundamental baseline that we are all excited about.



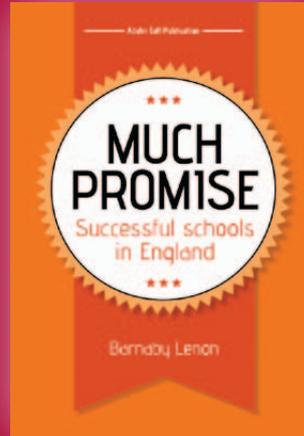
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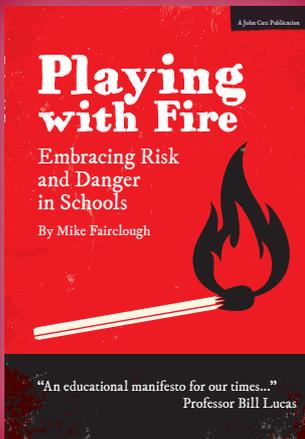
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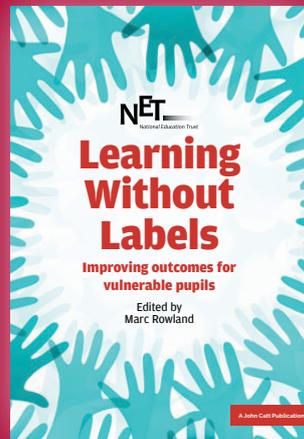


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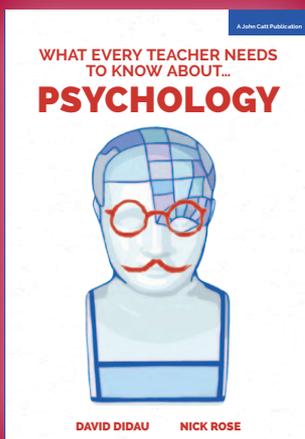


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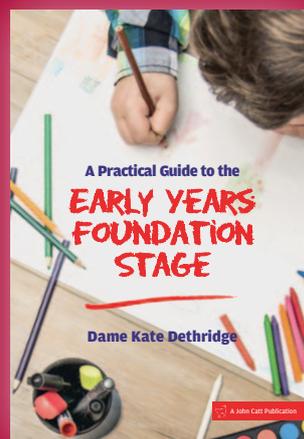
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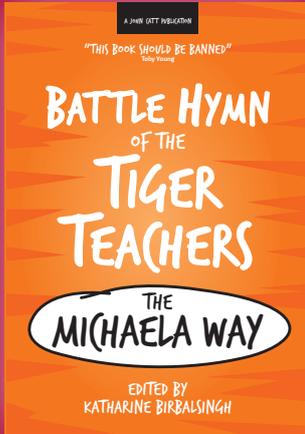
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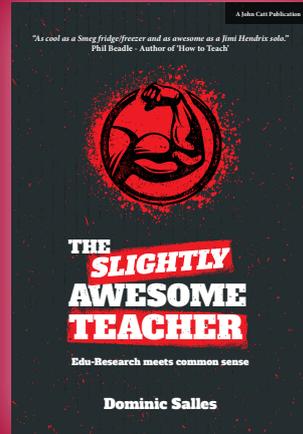


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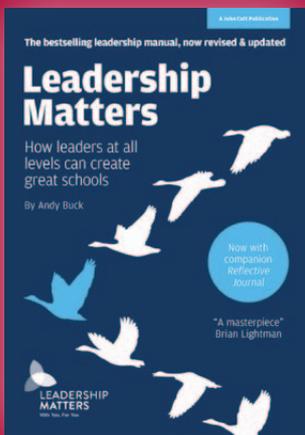


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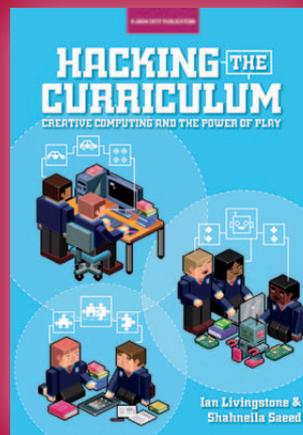


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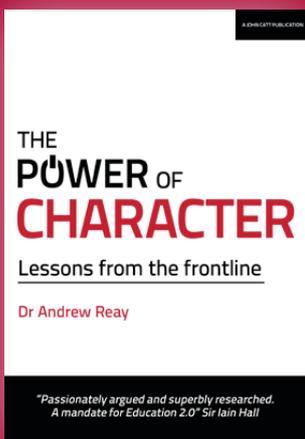


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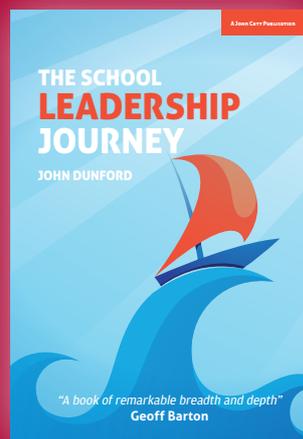


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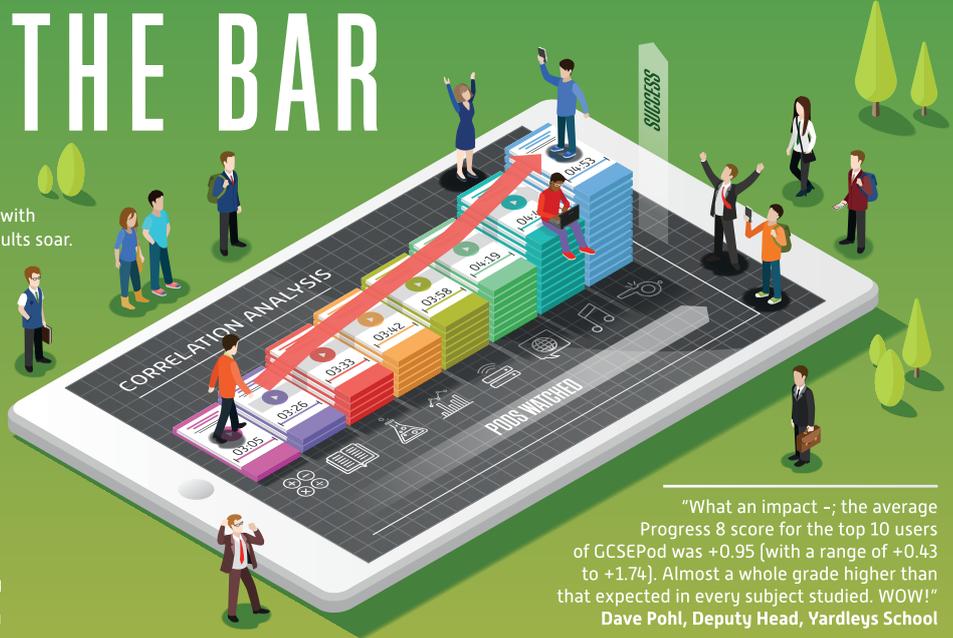
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PARENT-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION: THE 21ST CENTURY WAY

A dynamic, inclusive PTA means a boost in school funding and resources. Geraldine Archbold-Shore, PTA Chair at Harpenden Academy, a primary school in Hertfordshire, explains how pioneering platform Classlist can help.

When I first heard about Classlist my reaction was, ‘This is too good to be true – what’s the catch?!’ But there isn’t a catch. Classlist is free. It has secure data protection procedures. It’s a complete godsend for us.

At Harpenden Academy our way of communicating with parents used to be messages in book bags; posters round the school; piggy-backing on the school’s newsletter; word-of-mouth; various different Facebook pages... it was patchy and time-consuming and you couldn’t guarantee that all parents were seeing the information. Classlist has transformed that. In the two months since we joined about 95% of the children have at least one parent signed up to the site. Suddenly we have this online space that can be accessed by the whole school community.

For the PTA that means we can send out announcements; ask for volunteers for events; run surveys asking all the parents to contribute ideas. We can sell tickets for events. We can see exactly who has bought tickets and how many people are coming to an event, which makes it easier to arrange catering or seating. As the payments are all done online through Paypal we don’t have to spend time counting cheques and cash and keeping the money locked up.

The feedback I’ve had from parents is that they love it. They can engage with the site and what we’re doing whenever they want. They’re not missing stuff or being overwhelmed by school communications. They know where we are. They know where to find us. They know they’re part

of the community. The site’s easy to use, so that makes parents engage. And most use Classlist through a phone app, so they can look at it whenever works for them.

Working parents benefit too. The site gives them a place to connect with other parents and build bonds, even if they can’t do drop-off and pick-up. It has increased engagement throughout our school community.’

Classlist improves parent/school awareness

Jude Mills, PTA Secretary at Parkside Academy, a secondary school in Cambridge:

‘I want to use Classlist to build a stronger parent community at Parkside. The history of the PTA here has been mixed. We face that age-old struggle of parents at secondary school: how do you

I think Classlist will help to build that community. It’s an inclusive site where people can see what is going on and can get to know one another. Even if people haven’t signed up, you can still add them to invites and to alerts about events, so you know they’re being welcomed by the community

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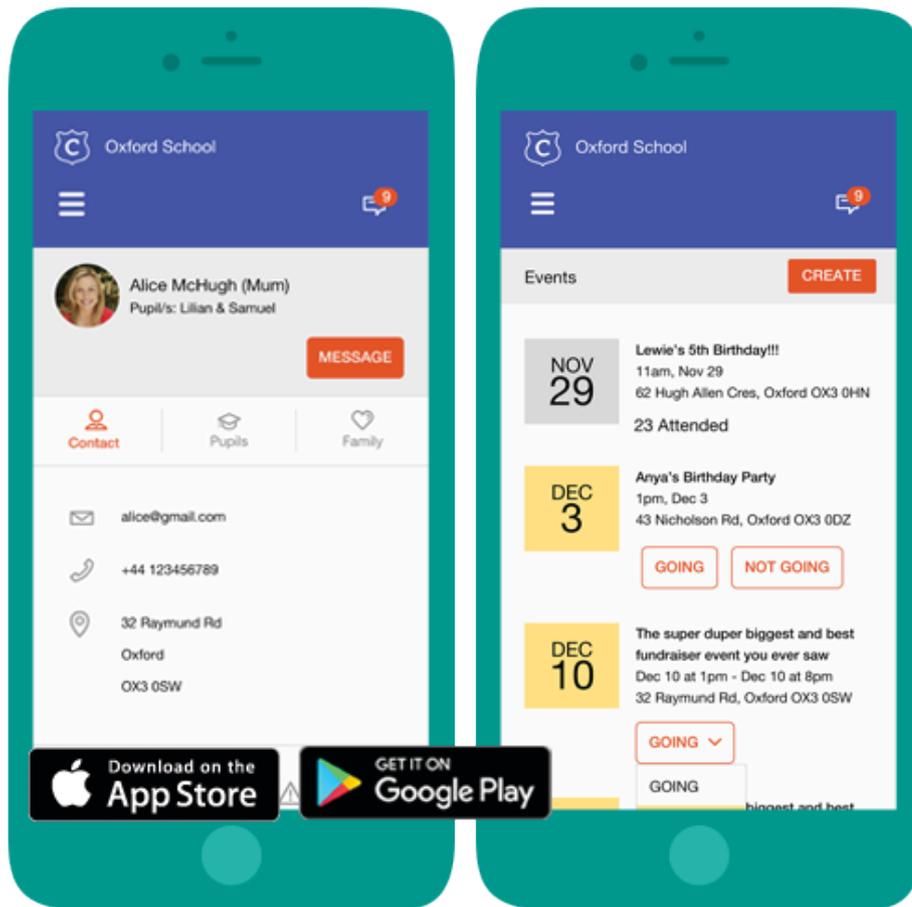
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had active networks on Facebook and WhatsApp, so I knew there would be resistance to the idea of introducing another website. But the PTA were keen to have just one platform for everything we do, a site that was safe, secure and open to our whole school community.

I decided to take a couple of months to do research and see if this really was the right site for us. It had to be easy to use and it had to improve PTA communication. Once I was sure, I got input from the PTA. They liked it, so we did a demo for the class reps and got their feedback. By now it was clear that a whole group of us wanted to use Classlist – we could see it would save us time and admin work and improve communication with the parents.

But we did meet parental resistance. Parents grumbled that it was another online platform to get their heads round and that they hadn't heard of Classlist. We had to do a lot of talking, explaining the benefits. But, with a slowly, slowly approach, within one month we had 191 members (in a school with 220 children).

It's already made life so much easier. Instead of a newsletter where the communication is just one way, we now have two-way conversations with parents - posting information up to the whole school and getting responses. It's easier to collect money for events. I know that the more parents use the site, the more benefits we'll see. I wouldn't go back to our old systems. And I know the parents like it – because the complaining in the playground has stopped!

grow parental engagement when the kids don't want parents on school premises?!

At primary school you get to know other parents through drop-off and pick-up and it's easier to get involved. Those mechanisms disappear at secondary. But there's still huge advantages when a school does have a parent body to interact with. It's not just the fundraising benefits – it's the benefits of parents talking to one another; supporting one another; feeding that support back into the school. That can help tackle social problems; it can bring opportunities – because parents know more about what the school needs – and it can feed into a dynamic, positive school environment.

I think Classlist will help to build that community. It's an inclusive site where people can see what is going on and can get to know one another. Even if people haven't signed up, you can still add them to invites and to alerts about events, so

you know they're being welcomed by the community. Our PTA sends out a newsletter from Classlist every month and each time we do, we get a little flurry of parents signing up. At some point we will hit a critical mass where so many parents are on the site that everyone else will join, because all their friends will direct them there to find out about events or to chat.

Once that happens – once the community is fully in place – we can focus on Classlist as a forum for helping the PTA to fundraise. But we need to build the community first. People are much more likely to volunteer for things if their friends are volunteering too.'

Classlist improves school communication

Amell Amatino, PTA Chair at La Fontaine Academy in London:

'When I first came across Classlist I thought it looked good, but I approached it very cautiously. Some parents already

Classlist is a secure online platform and mobile app for PTAs to contact and interact with parents, and for parents to connect with each other. It's a one-stop site for sending announcements; organising events; selling second-hand uniform and driving parental engagement within the school. And it's free. To sign up your school or start a trial visit www.classlist.com.

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THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT YOUR BUILDINGS

How to save money, generate income and maximise your chances of securing funding

Schools in England are facing the most significant financial pressures since the mid-1990s. Some estimates suggest that schools will see a 10-12% decrease in their budget in real terms by 2020.

Last Autumn, we commissioned a survey with SSAT, the Schools Students and Teachers network, into the impact of school budget cuts. Over 160 primary and secondary school leaders took part in the survey, which formed part of our report “Triumph in Adversity?: how financial restraints are driving schools to do things differently”. 84% of schools that responded plan to run a deficit budget within the next three years, with 62% of schools already doing so.

Despite the challenges, our survey showed the solutions that schools and academies are using to reduce expenditure and to raise additional income. Many are making savings through new approaches to teaching and learning, such as utilising technology, sharing specialist staff across schools, and even in some cases introducing ‘super classes’ of over 60 pupils. A number of schools are also finding ways of generating income, for example through leasing of school buildings, hiring many of their facilities for community use, and providing services such as child day-care and catering.

The charts below show which strategies were being used or considered by schools in our survey:

Whilst times are tough, the charts below do show that there are things that can be done throughout the year that will make a difference to the bottom line.

The focus for Academy Trusts in the Autumn Term, we would advise, should be on bidding for Condition Improvement Funding (CIF) as an option to achieve potentially significant investment.

CIF allows Academies and small MATS (those with fewer than 5 schools or 3,000 pupils) to bid for condition related funding. This funding has been around for approximately 3 years and has focussed on projects required to keep school buildings safe, legally compliant, and in good working order. CIF also supports a small percentage of expansion projects, where these relate to overcrowding and increased number of admissions.

Primary and special schools have a minimum project threshold of £20,000 up to a maximum of £4,000,000. Secondary, all-through and sixth form colleges have a minimum of £50,000 and the same maximum.

In 2016-17 over £466 million was granted across 1,435 academies and sixth form colleges. However, the EFA received 3,800 applications totalling £1.3 billion, so here is our advice on how to maximise your chances of success:

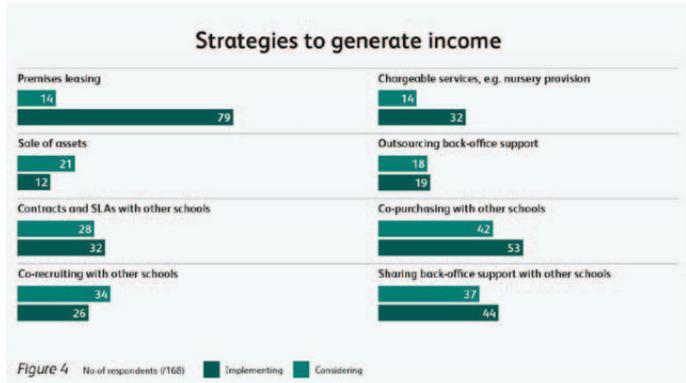
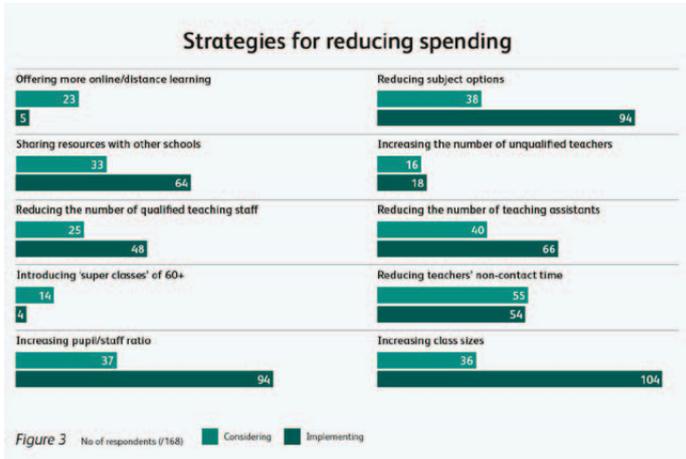
1 Target projects in the highest priority level

This is critical. The EFA guidance clearly defines categories of priority, from Highest to Lowest, Highest Priority relates to significant compliance and Health and Safety issues, including legionella risks, asbestos issues etc, and High Priority relates to building condition need, including water tightness of the building fabric and mechanical and electrical failure.

It is important that you can establish projects within these categories and that only elements of the highest priority are addressed within your bids.

2 Demonstrate Project Need using robust, project-specific evidence

In the last round of bidding, the assessment criteria were 70% Project Need, 15% Project Planning and 15% Value for Money, which shows how important this section is. Schools should define and agree your bids early in order to allow sufficient



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time to build evidence of Project Need before the submission date (which has been in early December in recent rounds). This is why you should start planning early in the autumn term.

We would advise that evidence should include condition survey data, targeted condition reporting, photographs of the main element failures, non-compliance notices and letters from statutory authorities, where applicable. Some of the more specific evidence may include minute extracts from premises meetings, letters and emails from staff reporting issues.

3 Investigate other opportunities to support the project

The Value for Money section will assess how you intend to support the project, and other sources of funding can be used to help support, and potentially strengthen the bid:

Salix Finance - an interest-free loan to support energy improvement elements of project, such as boiler/ heating replacement, electrical upgrade/ replacement works, roof and window replacement works.

The loan period is up to 8 years and the repayment and loan amount determined by the energy saving anticipated. This can form part of a CIF application or standalone application through Salix Energy Efficiency Funding (SEEF).

EFA Loan - low interest loan with a payback period of 10 year. This can be taken out to support any type of project. The EFA will apply an affordability test.

School Reserves - in most instances schools will have built into their premise plans a sum for ongoing reactive maintenance for the element that has started to fail. It is important to recognise some school support for the project.

Local Authority Support - this is only applicable in the instance of expansion projects.

4 Mitigate your risks

Risks should be clearly defined on a project-specific risk register to demonstrate that they have been considered. It is important that mitigation measures are recorded to show how you intend to deliver the outcome with as low a risk as possible. Prior to any bid submission you should aim to have as many of the risks actioned as possible. Common areas of focus may include investigation of asbestos and planning determination resolved.

It will be an advantage to your bid if projects have already gone through tender procurement with the contractor, cost and programme agreed.

5 Articulate your bid within the context of your school premises planning

Being able to demonstrate that you have a school asset strategy is important, as this shows strategic management of your assets. It will enable you to demonstrate other high priority works that you have planned and prioritised school funding for.

What to do if you're MAT is not eligible

If a MAT is too big to be eligible, it will receive formulaic funding instead. This provides a yearly allocation of funding to help support MATs with the overall management of their assets.

In this case, it is important that you:

Understand the overall condition of the estate, through objective, condition-led data.

Focus on addressing the highest priority works first, those that will ensure you keep your schools open, safe and water tight.

Understand if there are common themes across your schools and look to tender works as a single project in order to achieve better value for money.

Upskill your premises teams to carry out minor maintenance works.

It is important that your Trust develops strategic insight into the school estate. This will shift the focus from reactive to planned works, which in turn will drive improved cost efficiencies and enable a greater focus on teaching and learning.

For further information:

www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-improvement-fund

www.salixfinance.co.uk/loans/SEEF

Tony.Kinsella@arcadis.com

Louise.Robinson@arcadis.com

You can access the full Triumph in Adversity: How financial constraints are driving schools to do things differently, here: webcontent.ssaturk.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2016/09/16142106/Triumph-in-adversity.pdf

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UNIVERSITY IS NOT THE ONLY ROUTE

It is time to change our approach to education and recognise that we do have to provide the opportunity to tackle real life in school much earlier, says Tim Firth



The landscape of education is going through great changes at the moment particularly as people are starting to see not one size fits all.

Now it is time for schools to embrace those changes and look at how they can guide pupils and the opportunities they provide to really ensure they are ready for the world outside the academic arena.

The best version of yourself. It's what I am constantly telling our pupils to push for. Stretch yourself, aim high, exceed your own expectations. It is advice schools could also take on board.

All too often I believe a university degree is seen as the ultimate accolade of success in any educational journey but that is simply not the case.

Even for the most able academically.

In the push for exam results at all costs we have to some extent neglected to see that schools in the country also have a duty to teach real life skills and to show there are other options to the purely academic route.

That has become even more important now as tuition fees soar and we face a

constantly changing jobs market. Some of our brightest pupils are coming to the conclusion themselves that university is a buyers market and they want alternatives and we therefore have a duty to support them in looking at what is available to them.

We have to not only support the path to university but be open to the alternatives too and essentially prepare all our pupils for the world of work.

As schools we cannot bury our head in the sand and ignore the concerns we are hearing from industry leaders that many graduates from the so-called "snowflake generation" are not fit for work, lacking in key skills including resilience and a can-do attitude.

It is time to change our approach to education and recognise that we do have to provide the opportunity to tackle real life in school much earlier than we have felt the need to do in previous years.

It is the thinking behind the new business school we have just opened where we intend for business and school to blend on a daily basis. We want business leaders to have a direct impact on how we teach in a setting which resembles a corporate world rather than the classroom. There is a lecture theatre, boardroom and breakout spaces for hotdesking and collaborations.

Costing more than £1million it marks the biggest investment in our history in a single project but we feel it adds significant value to the all-encompassing education we provide here.

Young people today live in a very different world to the one we did and the challenges are new but they are such that we as schools need to think differently too.

University is not the only option. We need to say it out loud. Too often it has placed too much unnecessary pressure on youngsters including the most gifted and able academically to suggest there is only one path for them.

We need to look at how we educate and nurture the whole child. Alongside the academic drive and the push for A-stars we need to be looking at how we give children the skills to cope with real life which are necessary even for those who will choose university.

The business school now in its third month is a hive of activity. The corporate world and school blend on a daily basis and so far the building has hosted an event for start-ups, a Women in Business workshop and a challenge where several schools competed to solve a problem set by four leading industry experts. To see the children engage with and work alongside successful business owners in such a positive way has convinced me that schools need to open their doors as much as possible to the world of work.

I think it not only will help to improve the educational experience for pupils but will also improve confidence skills and promote a positive approach to the entrepreneurial spirit and also being an employee.

How often have I heard a boss say graduates arrive with plenty of qualifications but are unable to answer the phone or maintain eye contact with clients and colleagues.

These may seem simple skills but they are important and schools do need to take some responsibility for teaching them.

We are constantly encouraging our pupils to aim for their very best and if that



is a string of A-stars and a place at the university of their choice then of course we will support and encourage those aims but we also want them to be able to pitch a business idea, to be able to manage other people or a budget so that they will be ready for life outside of the classroom.

It is a tricky world to navigate but one which has so much promise. At Wrekin College we regularly comment on how we are currently preparing youngsters for jobs that don't even exist yet - well then we should be broadening our horizons in terms of what we teach and how we lead the way.

How to fail and move on to the next challenge is certainly a lesson that

should be high on the agenda. Many of our speakers at the business school now run highly successful businesses but have happily talked to pupils about their own stories and the mistakes they have made and how it shaped what they had achieved.

If a child is in a school where they know they are liked and where others admit their mistakes they are more able to stretch themselves to their limits, make a mistake and learn from it without the fear it will define them.

But we do need to ensure they don't see their ambitions are limited in any particular direction and that includes university.

We need to go back to putting value on apprenticeships, to creating good entrepreneurs, bosses and employees and key skills for the workplace rather than just great scholars.

Tim Firth was educated at Stockport Grammar School. He studied English Literature at Sheffield University and completed his PGCE at Oxford University. He is the headmaster of Wrekin College, an 11-18 co-ed boarding and day school



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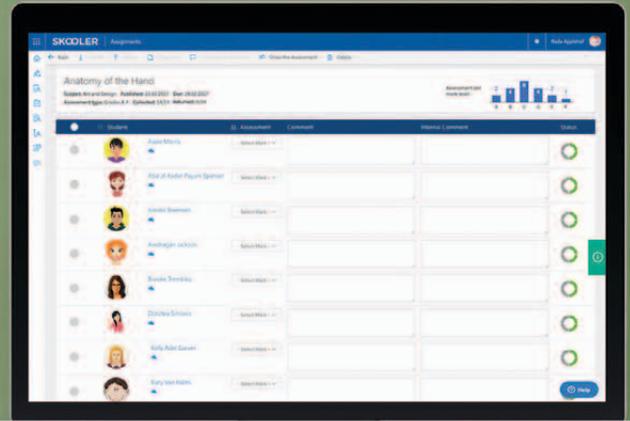
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