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In this issue...



Crime talk

Television historian Lucy Worsley OBE has delved into the nation's peculiar fascination with crime as part of the lecture series at Dame Allan's Schools, Newcastle.

The author and Chief Curator at Historic Royal Palaces explored society's curious obsession with murder over the last 200 years before giving an insight into her life work and passions.

Lucy's talk, 'A Very British Murder', examined notorious crimes, such as the Ratcliffe Highway Murders, and illustrated how heinous acts became a form of national entertainment through literature, plays, puppet shows and poetry.

During her visit, Lucy was given a tour of the new archive room by history teacher and Head of Dame Allan's Girls' School, Elaine Fiddaman. They were joined by Head Girl, Imogen Golding-Douglass, the Sixth Form's chief archivist – a position akin to a role Lucy held while a pupil at St Bartholomew's School in Newbury.

Lucy also met with a select group of Sixth Form History and English Literature students. During their informal discussion, she was posed with an interesting question: which historical figures would she invite to her dinner table?

"I'm going to choose Jane Austen, Agatha Christie and Queen Victoria because they all had very distinct characters and all were a little bit, what we might call, opinionated, strong minded, clever and argumentative. I think they would have a spirited time together!" she said. "Then, for some added amusement, I'd chose George IV, who was Jane Austen's creepy fan. He loved her, but she didn't love him because of the way he treated his wife."

Pictured: Lucy Worsley with Principal Will Scott
Credit: Crest Photography

Cover background

AI and Tech

With AI changing the landscape of education understanding the effective use of AI is important for everyone not least teachers. For more on this and a roundup of other tech news go to page 10.

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A look at some of the potential legal and political challenges

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Reviewing the current exam focused framework

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Is Your School Mentioned?

Schools featured in this issue include:

Abingdon School; ACS International Egham; Aldenham School; Belhaven Hill; Benenden School; Bolton School; Bromley High School GDST; Bryanston School; City of London School; Dame Allan's School; Dauntsey's School; Derby High School; Dollar Academy; Downe House School; George Heriot's School; Glasgow Academy; Gordonstoun; Haileybury; Hazlegrove Prep School; Heathfield School; High School of Dundee; Hutchesons' Grammar School; King Alfred School; Lomond School; Loughborough Grammar School; Loughborough High School; Morrison's Academy; Old Hall School; Oundle School; Pocklington School; Queen Victoria School; Robert Gordon's College; Rossall School; Royal High School Bath; Strathallan School; St Aloysius' College; St Columba's School; St Edmund's College; St Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen; St Mary's Lower School, Colchester; Taunton School; West House School; Winterfold School; Woodhouse Grove School

Obstacles to adding VAT to fees

Education and skills thinktank, EDSK assessed some of the issues that could complicate efforts to add VAT on to fees.

EDSK Founder and Director, Tom Richmond, outlines some of the findings of their research.

In the current education policy landscape, the debate over adding VAT to independent school fees is by far the most high-profile dividing line between Labour and the Conservatives. That said, the question of what would actually happen in practice if Labour won the next election and tried to implement this policy, has received remarkably little attention.

At the beginning of March, EDSK published a new report that outlined the findings from our detailed investigation into the obstacles that a future government may face if it sought to add VAT to independent school fees. Although the report covered a wide range of issues, the main message was simple enough: if anyone thought that adding 20 per cent VAT to school fees would be a straightforward matter then they may need to think again in the not-too-distant future.

Take the question of parents paying school fees in advance to avoid VAT on fees under a new

government. The Labour Party has said publicly that they would ensure their proposed VAT legislation “is drawn in such a way to ensure that avoidance can’t take place”. Even so, if a school receives advance fees from parents before the next General Election then the VAT would have to be calculated under current VAT rules. As VAT does not currently apply to school fees then it is perfectly possible that parents paying fees in advance of the next election would not be affected by any retrospective action by a future government. As our report noted, Sir Edward Troup, a former executive chair of HMRC, described the prospect of retrospective tax measures in relation to school fees as “very tricky” – so not impossible, but not likely to go without legal challenges.

Another potentially thorny issue is the question of how charitable independent schools will fare under Labour’s plans. It would not be difficult for a

future government to remove ‘independent schools’ from the list of ‘eligible bodies’ that are exempt from charging VAT. However, according to HMRC, an education provider such as a school is also “likely to be an eligible body, where it’s a charity, professional body or company that cannot and does not distribute any profit it makes, and with any profit that might arise from its supplies of education, research or vocational training used solely for the continuation or improvement of such supplies”.

This raises the possibility that charitable independent schools could still be classed as an eligible body even if ‘independent schools’ are excluded from the same list. A future government could try to amend VAT legislation to stop independent schools from using this separate ‘eligible body’ classification, but such an approach could inadvertently affect other charitable organisations delivering education and training. What’s more, independent schools operate under a wide variety of legal structures (e.g. charitable foundations and trusts) that are also used by other organisations. In short, trying to carve out ‘independent schools’ without a single other charity being caught in the crossfire could prove surprisingly difficult.

Perhaps the most contentious issue raised by Labour’s plans is its impact on special needs provision. Labour could have chosen to exclude all registered independent ‘special schools’ from their VAT plans, but they rejected this option on the grounds that it may encourage independent schools that are not currently registered as special schools to pursue such a registration to avoid charging VAT on fees. Instead, Labour chose to exempt pupils with Education,



Tom Richmond

Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) from VAT on their fees.

This approach could be problematic for three reasons. First, it creates a powerful incentive for all independent school parents to secure an EHCP for their child, which could place an unmanageable strain on local authorities’ (already overstretched) special needs budgets. Second, it means that two pupils could be sitting in the same classroom in the same independent school, but only one of them has VAT added to their fees (VAT is supposed to be charged on goods and services, not on the individuals accessing those goods and services). Third, EHCPs do not even exist in other parts of the UK whereas VAT legislation applies to the whole UK, presenting yet another hurdle for future legislators.

To be clear, there is no logistical reason why a future government could not change legislation in pursuit of the goal of adding VAT to independent school fees. Even so, the EDSK report showed that legal and political complications could quickly arise from even a single contestable or inappropriate change to the legislation. Some of these complications may be avoidable, whereas others look almost inevitable. The debate over VAT on school fees shows no sign of abating this side of the General Election but, as our report explains, the growing list of challenges inherent in designing and implementing such a proposal cannot be ignored indefinitely.



To read the full report ‘Obstacles to adding VAT to school fees’ please visit: www.edsk.org/publications/obstacles-to-adding-vat-to-independent-school-fees

Curious chemists



As part of celebrations for British Science Week, budding scientists age 5 - 8 were wowed by colour-changing potions, magically inflating balloons, toothpaste for giants, indoor fireworks and magical dry ice at a Curious Chemists session at St Mary’s Lower School, Essex.

Attended by St Mary’s pupils and primary-school age girls from the community, the event

Pictured: Mrs Nicola Griffiths demonstrates indoor fireworks

was designed to inspire the next generation of female scientists and to mark British Science Week, where the theme for 2024 was ‘smashing stereotypes’.

Science experiments were demonstrated in two special science shows, one of which was led by St Mary’s Principal, Mrs Nicola Griffiths aided by Lower School Head Girl, Lucy, in Year 6.

Why students deserve a variety of assessment methods

Deputy Head at The King Alfred School in North London, Alistair McConville, discusses a new research paper, which shines a light on the problems with the current exam-focused assessment framework.



Alistair McConville

As exam season rolls around again, the number of voices questioning the dominance of timed, written assessments in schools is growing. And with a General Election looming, whoever forms the next government should see this as an area in which they can make meaningful and immediate changes in the interests of children and young people all over the country.

Schools should be able to make assessment more relevant and inclusive for all students, to better prepare them both for success in higher education, and in the world of work beyond.

This issue was addressed at the recent Next Generation Assessment Conference (event report is on page 20), where there was standing room only for the breakout session about School Directed Courses. The panel discussion saw educators, who do not want to wait for policy reform, look at ways to move away from traditional exam-heavy GCSEs.

One of the driving forces of this movement is the feeling that the mono-focus on exams is letting young people down. Recent research conducted by Rethinking Assessment and The King Alfred School Society highlights how the school assessment experience is failing to adequately prepare students for higher education.

You cannot argue with the data, which shows that universities are making ever more use of multi-modal assessments. The research – entitled ‘A Review of Assessment Methods in Higher

Education’¹ – found that not one of the undergraduate degree courses analysed used only exams as a means to assess students. Instead, they use a mix of exams and ‘non-traditional’ methods of assessment (such as group work, creative projects, and industry-related assignments). At a point where young people are about to enter the world of work, they are also assessed on a wide range of subject-specific, practical, and technical skills.

In their assessments, universities are utilising a huge range of non-exam tasks which mirror employment situations. From creating subtitles in Modern Languages or mock press conference Q&As in Management Studies to organising a charity concert in Music and mock trials in Law – the assessments reflect the ways in which their knowledge and skills will ultimately be used in the real world. The research found that 62.9% of degrees already assess students through collaborative projects or presentations.

This commitment to holistic skills development makes complete sense, so why are we not building it into the educational experience earlier? In the current system, students could arrive at university having aced every exam they have been set but with no experience of the skills needed to work in a group or of presenting their ideas except under timed conditions. Schools need to prepare our young people for the rich variety of tasks on which their degrees will be judged, and which more accurately reflect the tasks

graduates will be faced with in the workplace.

At The King Alfred School, I teach a School Directed Course called Global Challenges. It introduces students to the big socio-economic, environmental, and ethical challenges facing the world, and allows them to develop their own social impact projects. My current Year 11 cohort devised a project to investigate whether regular volunteering with a group of elderly people would positively impact the lives of both parties. They met online with Harvard professors who helped them shape meaningful questionnaires and they presented their findings. They worked together to devise the activities they would undertake with the elderly people and to deliver their results in a cohesive and engaging way. The project-based nature of the course gave them a real-world learning experience and built relevant skills, as well as giving them an accredited ‘Higher Project Qualification’ and a certificate endorsing their ‘Junior Research Fellowship’.

Bedales School, Hampshire has been running its own suite of alternative qualifications for a number of years and in September last year, Latymer Upper School announced it would be moving away from all GCSEs, apart from Maths and English, from 2027. As educators, we are not just abandoning these exam-focused courses because we do not like them. It is because they are not setting students up for Higher Education assessment or the future world of work they will inherit.

And we are not alone.

Representatives from exam boards and universities attended the Next Generation Assessment Conference too. They are supportive of system change so that a third of students do not have to fail – as they do in the current GCSE set up – and so that students are looked at as rounded humans, not just a set of numbers or letters.

Considering how we teach and assess students is, of course, just one part of the puzzle. As we move towards more varied modes of assessment, we need to also look at what we record as achievements for our young people too. Evidencing skills like creativity, spoken communication and collaboration in a digital student learner profile gives a much fuller picture of what they are like as a learner.

Core skills and knowledge are still vital, but they are only one element of the personal toolkit students will need as they move into Higher Education in the first instance, where the assessment landscape is far more diverse.

Exploring the use of digital learner profiles was one of the recommendations in a recent report from the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Schools, Learning and Assessment, further demonstrating that support for changes to the education system is growing.

Making assessment work for young people is the goal, the question is how soon can we reach it?

1. A Review of Assessment Methods in Higher Education – <https://www.kingalfred.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/The-Variety-of-Assessment-Methods-in-Higher-Education-research-paper-1-1.pdf>



Course expansion

Lomond School, Argyll and Bute, has launched two new courses to help forge new career pathways to engineering and activity tourism.

The school has introduced a Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Mechanical Engineering and a

National Certificate (NC) in Activity Tourism as part of its International Baccalaureate Careers Programme (IBCP).

It is hoped that the new Mechanical Engineering HNC will help address existing demand for

technician level skills in mechanical and manufacturing engineering, while the NC in Activity Tourism will equip pupils for a burgeoning and sustainable sector experiencing a significant increase in demand across Scotland.

Pictured: Pupils Lilly Boulty and William Harper ready for the mechanical engineering HNC course

Reframing failure as a means, not an end, to learning

Failing is a part of the human experience but how can a school create a culture of psychological safety in the classroom, where students can experience failure without fear? Teacher of Psychology at Abingdon School, Oxfordshire, Lucinda Powell, discusses.

How does failing make you feel? I expect like most people it will not be a pleasant feeling, a mixture of negative emotions such as shame, embarrassment or guilt along with physical feelings associated with dread or fear. Everyone has experienced failure; it is part and parcel of the human experience, and no more so than in education. This negative psychological and physiological response leads to fear of failure. Fear of failure can act as a motivator to avoid failure: it pushes people to either work harder to achieve or prevents them from reaching their potential (Conroy et al. 2002).

The performance oriented system of education leads us to believe that failure is bad (Giel et al. 2019). However, Edmundson (2023) argues that not all failure is bad depending, in part, on the degree of psychological safety individuals feel within their environment. Psychological Safety is the extent to which people feel able to admit mistakes, express concerns, take risks and ask questions without fear of negative consequences. In figure 1 we see that where standards and expectations are high (as in schools) and there is low psychological safety, the result is 'fear of failure' leading to risk avoidance and covering up failure, which results in poor academic outcomes. On the other hand, where psychological safety is high and fear of failure is reduced there are more positive outcomes.

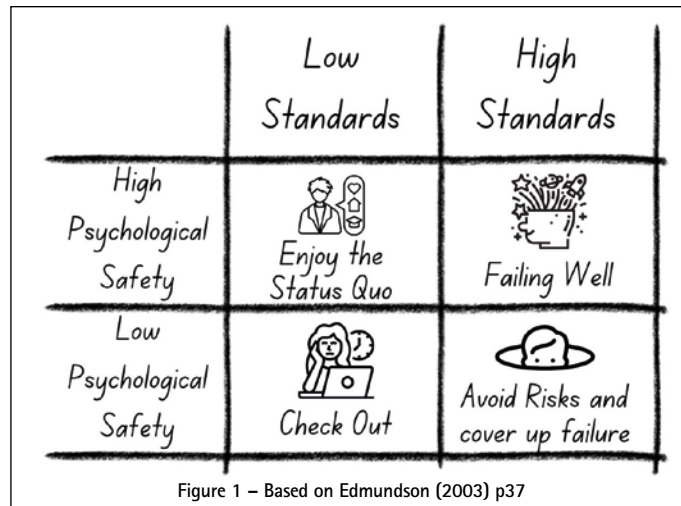


Figure 1 – Based on Edmundson (2003) p37

The path from fear of failure to poor academic performance is associated with behaviours that impede learning such as increased procrastination, reduced self-regulation, stifled creativity, reduced ability to persist, stunted self-efficacy, and reduced risk taking (e.g. Elliot and Church, 1997 & Zarrin et al, 2020). Over the last 20 years in the classroom I have seen these behaviours play out. It may simply be a case of students failing to ask for help when they need it, or not reading the feedback on their work (hiding their papers deep in the back of their files, (just like I used to do). Perhaps students find the mark scheme online or ask ChatGPT to do the work, as a result neither they nor I know whether they understand the content. Sometimes the fear of failure has more serious consequences: sitting in an exam

unable to put pen to paper, cheating in a test, lying to parents or simply giving up. All of these behaviours sit firmly in the bottom right-hand corner of the matrix above and not one leads to better outcomes.

Therefore, it is important to reframe failure and create a learning environment of high standards and high psychological safety. This is not a place where we simply shrug our shoulders when students get it wrong (fig 1 top left) but instead challenge failure and learn from it, seeing it as an opportunity for growth. In this place we allow students to take risks in their learning without fear of punishment, or damage to their sense of self-worth.

This is easier said than done, as there are barriers that need to be overcome both by students and teachers, these include:

- Teacher self-efficacy: a set of beliefs that a teacher may have about how well equipped they are to implement risk taking in their classroom and manage failure;
- Curriculum pressures: the sheer volume of content may not allow for the opportunity to offer more open-ended, problem-solving tasks that encourage risk-taking;
- Performance oriented system: the final outcome of education may result in 'bad failure' and therefore any failure within that system is seen as 'bad';
- Effort: working against the dominant system of creating risk-free learning environments takes effort;
- Expectations of stakeholders doesn't allow for failure within the system;
- Student apprehension: students may be apprehensive of, or not value, learning activities that are new and involve risk.

(Creely et al. 2021)

Moving past these barriers is key because positive experience of failure creates students with better self-efficacy, persistence, self-regulation and adaptability (ibid.). If we want students to learn and grow they need to try new things and experience the uncertainty that comes with this (Beghetto, 2021). Here are five ways we can create a classroom (and ideally a whole

Agarwal, P.K. & Bain, P.M. (2019) *Powerful Teaching: Unleash the Science of Learning*. Jossey-Bass

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Creely, E., Henriksen, D., Crawford, R. & Henderson, M. (2021). Exploring creative risk-taking and productive failure in classroom practice. A case study of the perceived self-efficacy and agency of teachers at one school. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 42, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2021.100951>

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Elliot, A. J., & Church, M. A. (1997). A hierarchical model of approach and avoidance achievement motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72(1), 218–232.

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Abdi Zarrin, S., Gracia, E., & Paixão, M. P. (2020). Prediction of academic procrastination by fear of failure and self-regulation. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 20(3), 34 - 43.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.12738/jestp.2020.3.003>



Lucinda Powell

school) culture of psychological safety, where students can experience failure without fear:

Role Model

Bandura (1977) suggests that much learning happens by watching and learning from others. It is necessary to role model risk taking and failure. Whilst we can tell stories of 'the time when...', it is more powerful to try something risky in the classroom like a new teaching strategy, and tell students what you are doing, why you are doing it and ask for feedback. Even a simple typo on a powerpoint can be an opportunity to demonstrate we are all fallible: be a little more human.

Position failure as a problem to be solved

All students will fail in their education, and that failure will look different for each student – for some it will be slipping from an A* to a B, others will be failing to write anything down in a test. Whatever the failure, encouraging the student to problem solve – how do I avoid making this mistake again? What could I do better next time? – will result in learning and growth.

Don't correct immediately

Fear of failure may lead to students quickly giving up and seeking help. The time pressure to get through content means we, as teachers, jump in too quickly to give solutions. The research on desirable difficulties suggests that when students struggle a little bit they learn more (Agarwal and Bain, 2019) so encourage students to problem solve the solution – 'book, buddy, boss' is a good example – encourage them to go to the textbook, then ask a friend and last of all ask the teacher.

Teach them to manage their feelings around failure

Ask them to sit with the feelings of failure (and success) and to accept them. Encourage self-compassion – try to get them to reframe their failure in light of the wider context of learning and human nature, don't let them berate themselves too much.

Separate out the process and outcome

Help to reframe a failed outcome (e.g. a lower than hoped for grade) by reflecting on it as a successful process, if a student has tried a new revision technique but it hasn't worked it is clear that they have learned from the process.

Equally if we know a pupil has used ChatGPT to do their homework a successful outcome has been reached via a process failure. Celebrate the former and challenge the latter.

As teachers we need to see failure as part of the process that encourages persistence in our students, and that they will learn and grow from each small failure. Learning to overcome failure throughout a student's educational journey leads to a sense of mastery, increased self-confidence and self-efficacy resulting in a virtuous cycle of challenge and learning. So as you walk to your next lesson perhaps consider how you might highlight small failures to build a classroom that embraces risk taking, problem solving and self-regulation.

If you would like to learn more about the role of failure in education, the Psychology in the Classroom podcast (available on most podcast platforms) will be talking to psychologists researching this area to discuss their most recent findings.

Psychology In the Classroom Podcast:
<https://changingstatesofmind.com/podcast>



Marvellous maths masterclass

Year 5 girls from seven primary schools in and around Bath have attended a maths masterclass at Royal High School Bath. The 17 mathematicians representing schools who took part explored binary monsters, pentominoes puzzles, reflection and rotational symmetry and more.

Led by Royal High School Bath's Mathematics staff, the session was set up to raise confidence and achievement in maths for Year 5 girls. The teachers

employed a variety of techniques and resources to ensure the session was fun and engaging, encouraging the pupils to work both in teams and individually to solve maths problems in a variety of real world contexts.

This is the second year Royal High School Bath has run a Maths masterclass for external schools, and the response has been so positive, the school is hoping to make it an annual event.



Pictured: Maths masterclass event activities

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Teaching controversy in schools

Throughout the course of their education children and teenagers will inevitably encounter contentious questions. In a world where wider discussion of these subjects is often defined by populism, polarisation, prejudice and 'alternative facts', teaching these issues in an honest and supportive manner can be challenging. Deputy Head (Academic) at City of London School, Glenn Bezael, considers the importance of teaching controversy in the classroom.

Education in an age of 'fake news' and 'cancel culture'

Barely a week goes by without news reports of schoolteachers and university lecturers falling victim to what Dame Sara Khan has called "freedom-restricting harassment". Ms Khan, as the government's Independent Adviser for Social Cohesion and Resilience, has recently warned of a climate of censorship "antithetical to our democratic way of life" – and this applies to our schools as well.

From a Religious Studies teacher at Batley Grammar School who had to go into hiding in March 2021 following accusations of blasphemy to a UCL lecturer reportedly banned from teaching her course for fear of offending the Chinese government just last month, educational leaders could be forgiven for wishing to protect their institutions from cohesion threats. As Ms Khan concluded, she does not believe that "schools are given adequate support, guidance and training on how to mitigate and manage such incidents."

Controversy, character and critical thinking

And yet schools have a legal duty to promote fundamental British values including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and belief. It is to be hoped, therefore, that they can model such values as they teach the issues of controversy that are shaping our world in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance for diverse viewpoints.

There is no question that young people want to be more informed about contentious news stories – whether it be the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the so-called 'culture wars' dividing many in society. And if pupils aren't being educated on these topics in school, then they are left at the mercy of social media and other influences that may be less than optimal. Rather, the classroom is precisely the place where pupils can feel safe and supported to take risks and explore issues of controversy in terms of evidence, reasoned argument, and critical reflection.

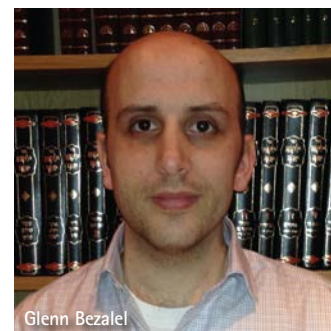
Indeed, such topics not only offer cultural capital for pupils to be ready for life beyond the school gates, but they can also help nurture critical thinking and character values. Developing virtues such as intellectual humility and curiosity should go hand in hand with moral qualities such as civility and kindness. Considering such educational opportunities, it is clear that school leaders and teachers need more support and guidance to ensure a positive learning experience for their pupils when learning about controversy.

The controversy of controversy

Recognising that even the most enthusiastic of our pupils are not simply 'learning machines', any issue of controversy must be seen through a pastoral as well as an academic lens. Sometimes, pupils may find the -topic just too raw and sensitive to be studied in the classroom. For example, it would have been highly obtuse for a teacher to delve into the causes of 9/11 in the aftermath of the terror attack, when time was needed for mourning, healing, and coming together.

A community of understanding

Nevertheless, when the timing is right, teachers must be clear on how to frame the issue of controversy under discussion. Just because a topic is 'behaviourally' controversial in that people hold opposing views, doesn't necessarily mean it should be taught in a non-directive manner. Just as it wouldn't be right for a Physics teacher to give space to 'flat earth' theorists, so too should a History teacher recognise the need



to shut down Holocaust denial. For whilst both claims are factually false, the latter is inevitably bound up with antisemitism and so conflicts with British values and, hopefully, with the school ethos. The late U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan put it best: "You're entitled to your own opinions, but you're not entitled to your own facts."

Rather, as the philosopher Amartya Sen reminds us, "Education is about helping children to develop the ability to reason about new decisions any grown-up person will have to take." And so a key feature of a democratic and liberal education is for viewpoints to be judged on the evidence or reasoned arguments brought forward. Where there are two or more contrary perspectives supported by reason, then we really do have a debate on our hands, and teachers would do well to ensure that such viewpoints are given voice in the classroom. In contrast to the poor quality of debate often witnessed on social media, 'the principle of charity' should be the primary rule for any discussion: each pupil should always assume the best possible interpretation of their opponent's argument.

In promoting listening and empathy, teachers can play a central role in enhancing social cohesion by cultivating a community of understanding, where we aim to learn from one another rather than beat one other. As Paul Ricœur taught so poignantly: "We must have trust in language as a weapon against violence, indeed the best weapon there is against violence."



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Glenn Bezael is also the author of *Teaching Classroom Controversies*, recently published by Routledge. Further information is available at www.routledge.com





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Confronting apprehension: the complexities of training teachers in AI

"Whatever we need to teach our students, we need to first teach our teachers." With AI changing the landscape of education understanding its effective use is essential. Director of Digital Learning at Downe House School, Berkshire, Jane Basnett, considers how training for teachers in AI is crucial to meet the evolving needs of students.

Advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have actually been impacting our classrooms for quite some time, notably through platforms such as Century Tech, Seneca Learn, Quizizz and Quizlet. These tools analyse pupil data and provide a personalised learning path for them. The AI within these tools automatically grades responses and provides fast effective feedback for pupils, allowing them to engage with their teachers immediately on any misconceptions they might have.

It is not unreasonable to assume that some resources will have been created by teachers using AI Language Models (LMs). These LMs (such as ChatGPT) may often be a starting point for teachers from which they develop their lesson plans and even their resources. Leveraging these models, educators can, for example, efficiently generate model essays and adapt them to suit their teaching needs, saving significant time in preparation, and prompting interesting discussions between educator and student about the use of AI. It is worth adding here that the teacher should always cite the provenance of the model essay.

AI has its time and place in education

It perhaps goes without saying that we all (teacher, and student alike) need to understand how to use AI effectively. Training teachers on how to use AI in school is crucial for future education and to meet the evolving needs of our students. Yet, there is a complication to overcome. Whatever we need to teach our students, we need, first, to teach our teachers. It is almost as if we are all in our ECT (Early Career Teacher) years and are learning the skills to deliver a completely new subject from scratch. However, the

boundaries are less clear than for traditional subjects because we don't have the foresight yet to fully comprehend the content.

As educators, we have to grapple with the complexities of AI, including the ethical considerations, the data concerns, the bias and the potential for errors (hallucinations). We must also confront our apprehensions about the changing landscape of education and be open to adopting new approaches. It's a journey of growth and adaptation that requires continuous learning and a willingness to embrace change.

Training teachers in AI is thus crucial. As with all technology, teachers need to feel confident to use AI appropriately. They require technical proficiency in various AI language models as well as an understanding of how to integrate them pedagogically, and critically evaluate their ethical implications. Equally important, they should recognise that, like all tools AI has its time and place – it does not need to be used indiscriminately.

Proceed with caution

As an example, the AI training we offer at Downe House has focused on hands-on experience, whole school and departmental collaboration, and ongoing professional development. It has been key to demonstrate the importance of AI in the workplace and thus for our students. This has helped push the agenda that teachers need adaptable mindsets to keep pace with AI advancements and continually refine their skills. By providing comprehensive training that addresses the important elements of AI knowledge, we aim to effectively leverage AI to personalise learning,

and to prepare our students for their futures.

Teaching students to use AI is undoubtedly a valuable skill, but as with any new tool, there's ongoing discussion on the best approach. From my perspective, it's crucial not to rush the integration of AI into the classroom but instead to move forward with caution, carefully considering the options, engaging in discussion and developing potential use in a much more organic manner. As teachers we have been experimenting with various prompts and language models, including those which empower us to guide our students' learning whilst at the same time offering them the benefits of a personalised tutoring experience.

Taking the time to discuss fully the skill of prompt engineering and the capabilities of AI, we often uncover valuable insights into how to effectively incorporate AI into classroom practice. In addition, we emphasise the importance of ethical considerations in AI implementation, ensuring that our students understand these implications and the responsibilities associated with utilising AI. Our own student AI Team have collaborated with colleagues to create guiding principles for AI use, and these have been shared with all members of our community.

Don't put AI on a pedestal

Although AI can feel like a bit of a minefield, it is important to remember that it is simply another tool in our armoury along with many other technological tools that make up a teacher's kit. As such, we should avoid placing AI on some kind of pedestal as the primary focus. Knowledge and metacognition remain valuable skills that educators



need to deliver. Beyond this, the soft skills of creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration and resilience, which have always been important, are now increasingly vital in the workplace. It is these skills that teachers need to nurture and develop.

In the workplace, AI is already achieving some of the more humdrum aspects of jobs in lightning quick time, which means that there is more time for creativity, iteration, experimentation, exploration and the like. As a school we are prioritising providing opportunities for pupils to develop these essential skills whether through classroom activities, projects or competitions.

Likewise, it is crucial to teach students that relying solely on AI-generated responses is not beneficial to anyone. As a teacher, the output may not reveal too much about a student's learning. Students must share their prompts with teachers to gauge their understanding. Additionally, teachers need assurance that students have critically engaged with the output, addressing ethical concerns like bias, privacy, and fairness. This ensures a comprehensive evaluation of student learning while promoting responsible AI use. Furthermore, students must develop critical thinking skills to assess the reliability of AI-generated content and guard against potential pitfalls like hallucinations. This underscores the ongoing value of learning and knowledge acquisition in an AI-driven world.

Connecting with the workplace

Understanding the importance of AI for our pupils' future is key. If we

can understand its capabilities and appreciate the impact it is having in the workplace in a variety of fields, then we will better recognise and embrace its potential. It is therefore vital that we connect with industry specialists and those who are using AI in the workplace. There is no better way than to hear from these specialists first hand and there are plenty of opportunities for this via news outlets, social media and on-site visits. Keeping our students informed of the role AI has in the workplace and giving them the chance to explore AI applications both inside and outside of the classroom will help them to learn more about AI in the real world while developing their skills.

We must also recognise the limitations and pitfalls of AI and educate students about these issues; this is crucial for maximising its benefits. This education should take place not only in curriculum lessons where AI is being used, but also via dedicated workshops and activities that specifically address the weaknesses and drawbacks of AI. We have involved our student AI team early in the process to review our guidelines, which broach the significant AI issues. These students

have played a pivotal role in disseminating this information with the wider school community. They have even been an integral part of our CPD (Continuing Professional Development) programme demonstrating to educators that AI is an essential part of their futures and of vital importance, that they are aware of its serious limitations.

Transitioning to a 'Guide on the Side'

On a positive note, AI has the potential to be an amazing leveller for pupils. It has the potential to serve as a personal tutor to students interpreting complex questions and concepts for them so that they can access tasks on a fundamental level and gain a deeper understanding. The hackneyed notion of teachers transitioning from the 'sage on the stage' to the 'guide on the side' is no longer an unrealistic expectation as AI can indeed fulfil the role of the 'guide on the side', leaving the educator free to nurture students' holistic and personal development.

The potential for educators to collaborate with AI is significant, creating a potential synergy that fosters opportunities for all students to flourish in the future.

Computing challenge

A Year 11 pupil from Loughborough Grammar School, Leicestershire, has scooped sixth place at the Oxford University Computing Challenge (OUCC).

The OUCC is an invitation event for those who have achieved a top 10% score in the UK Beras Challenge. It is aimed at helping talented computational thinkers develop their skills by giving them tasks to solve with programmed solutions.

As one of 38,427 participants in his age range, Layan J

successfully went through to round one, with 3,155 others. After a combination of blocks-based and text-coding challenges, Layan made it down to the final 20 young computing talents in which he was the only student from the whole of Leicestershire.

After a tough competition, where Layan went head-to-head against some of the country's strongest problem-solving minds, he finished the challenge sixth overall.



Pictured: Layan J

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Cracking the code

Retracing the footsteps of the trailblazing women who cracked unbreakable codes and changed the course of World War II, computer science pupils from years 9,10 and 12 at Loughborough High School, Leicestershire, made a trip to Bletchley Park.

The girls threw themselves into an immersive codebreaking workshop and got hands-on with the legendary Enigma machine,



applying their classroom learning about logic gates and XOR operations to decipher encrypted messages.

Head of Computer Science and Digital Literacy at the Loughborough Schools Foundation, Mrs Houda Benhamouda said: "I took the girls on the trip with the intention for them see the role computer science played during the war but the experience the girls came away with was so much more profound.

"It enabled them to see their role as young girls; how they can help shape the future and be part of technological growth. Computing has long carried a reputation as a male-dominated field, however, Bletchley's legacy reminds us that women's minds have always been essential innovators and difference-makers in STEM."

Pictured: Loughborough High School pupils at Bletchley

New science and tech buildings

Haileybury, Hertfordshire, has celebrated the opening of its new Science and Technology buildings with a special opening ceremony.

Dame Jocelyn Burnell Bell, an astrophysicist who co-authored a Nobel Prize winning paper, gave the opening speech to guests, pupils, alumni and staff including the Master of Haileybury, Martin Collier.

With increasing demand for a workforce skilled in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) as well as awareness of sustainability and sophistication with AI, Haileybury has doubled its science provision with the building of facilities designed to prepare pupils for careers in the modern world.

The buildings also offer a robotics programme that allows

Pictured: Dame Jocelyn Burnell Bell opening the new buildings



pupils to explore cutting-edge developments in autonomous function within robotics and programming. As part of this, the school has launched two Vex Robotics teams and is competing with other schools at regional and national levels.

The science and technology buildings will also benefit the local community, with pupils at Haileybury's partner secondary academy able to utilise and experience the facilities.

Ethical AI-powered text to speech for inclusive, accessible and engaging learning

Advertisorial Feature

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, independent schools are presented with a unique opportunity to leverage cutting-edge educational technology, particularly AI-powered text-to-speech tools, to support international students in their academic pursuits.

International students bring diversity and richness to the fabric of independent schools, but they also face distinct challenges, most notably language barriers. AI-powered text-to-speech technology offers a transformative solution by providing real-time translation of written text into spoken language, thereby facilitating comprehension and accessibility for students whose first language may not be English.

By embracing AI-powered text-to-speech tools, independent schools can enhance inclusivity and

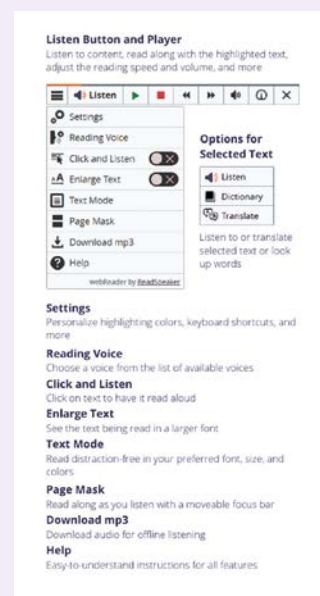
equity within their educational environments. International students should not be hindered in their academic journey due to language disparities. Text-to-speech technology breaks down these barriers, ensuring that all students, regardless of linguistic background, have equal access to educational resources and will succeed.

Integrating AI-powered text-to-speech tools into the curriculum allows independent schools to personalize the learning experience for international students. Every student learns differently, and by offering diverse tools and resources, schools can cater to individual learning preferences and styles. Whether through auditory learning, visual reinforcement, or a combination of both, text-to-speech technology empowers international students to engage

with course materials in a manner that best suits their needs.

Text-to-speech tools enable independent schools to stay at the forefront of educational innovation. In an era marked by rapid technological advancement, schools must embrace digital tools to enhance the learning experience and prepare students for success in an increasingly technology-driven world. By integrating AI-powered text-to-speech capabilities into their educational framework, independent schools demonstrate their commitment to innovation and educational excellence.

In conclusion, AI-powered text-to-speech technology represents a powerful tool for supporting international students in independent schools. By leveraging this technology, schools can foster inclusivity, personalise learning experiences,



and drive innovation in education. It is imperative for independent schools to recognize the potential of AI-powered text-to-speech tools and harness them to empower international students on their educational journey.

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Ten top tips for boarders' wellbeing

What activities can be used to improve the mental health and wellbeing of students within a boarding house? Housemaster of McGill's House at Aldenham School, Hertfordshire, Mike Yeabsley, outlines his top ten tips.

The modern world is characterised by high levels of stress, rapid technological changes, and a continuous search for ways to improve our mental and physical health. Engaging in various social, cultural, and recreational activities is essential for fostering a sense of belonging, reducing stress, and enhancing our overall wellbeing.

Here at McGill's House our staff team is experienced, empathetic, and resourceful and we all work hard to make the experience of boarding in McGill's a positive one. Alongside matron and the resident tutors, I have developed a variety of ways to keep the boarders happy and entertained so here are my top ten tips:

1. Leadership evenings

Leadership Evenings are organised and run by the tutor and all McGill's students in that year group are involved. The tutor organises the theme of the evening and preparations are made during tutor time three weeks prior to the event. The McGillians write invitations which are sent to their parents, they organise and develop the menu, create a quiz, write a speech or presentation; some also prepare a dramatic or musical performance. The students independently run the evening's entertainment with their parents joining and taking part.

The school runs a three-day residential trip to visit the WW1

Battlefields in France and Belgium, and an example of a successful Leadership Evening involves the Year 9 students reporting back on their trip. They present a short speech informing the audience what they have learnt and what their highlights were, including a reflection of the trip. Parents are often genuinely astounded by what they hear! Many students are initially reluctant to speak publicly but on completion they feel a profound sense of pride which significantly benefits their mental health.

These evenings offer an opportunity for the students to develop essential leadership skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and decision-making. They help build self-confidence, team working skills, and resilience demonstrating a growth mindset, which is crucial for future personal and professional success.

Moreover, leadership evenings encourage networking and collaboration between staff, parents, and students, promoting a strong sense of community and support.

2. Charity events

Participating in charity events cultivates empathy, compassion, and a sense of purpose. Engaging in acts of kindness has a positive effect on one's emotional wellbeing and creates a sense of belonging within the community. Such events help teach the importance of teamwork and determination. Charity encourages students to look beyond themselves, appreciate their good fortune and to help those who are less fortunate than themselves.

Since 2014 McGill's has raised over £39,000 which is a real achievement and testament to the kind-hearted and dedicated students. The annual MacMillan Coffee Morning, managed by our matron, is a tremendous fundraiser whilst sponsored runs/swims, car washing, mufti days, pancake sales,

football matches and 24-hour music events have also been a success.

3. Communication

Keeping the community informed and engaged through initiatives like our weekly newsletter, The McGill's Mail, fosters a sense of unity and belonging. Students contribute articles celebrating the success of McGill's. This platform provides an opportunity to share updates, achievements, and upcoming events, promoting engagement and involvement within the house.

Staying connected within the McGill's Community contributes to a sense of purpose and wellbeing. Since the beginning of term, over 90% of the students have been mentioned or have written articles for The McGill's Mail highlighting the enormous contribution every student makes to school life.

4. Music concerts

The students regularly perform in house concerts which brings the whole community together. Parents, teachers, and students watch some fantastic performances by talented individuals or ensemble bands who practise hard during the school week.

These concerts are not only relaxing, but they provide a platform for social interaction and bonding, promoting a sense of belonging and improved mental health. Music enriches the house spirit and is valued by everyone.

The concerts are eagerly anticipated, and the benefits of improved mood and stress reduction are well known. Music has a unique ability to evoke emotions and stimulate the release of endorphins, which can alleviate anxiety and depression; hence improving wellbeing. Moreover, the Concerts are super fun; firm favourites are The McGill's Bell Battalion who perform at the Christmas Concert, The McGill's Vortex, a fantastic rock band and the newly formed McGill's Martlet Male Voice Choir.



Mike Yeabsley

5. Weekend boarders trips

Regular Boarders trips, such as paintballing, go karting, bowling, cinema outings, and larger organised events like rugby matches played at Twickenham, Winter Wonderland or visiting the national fireworks competitions provide opportunities for recreation, relaxation, and socialisation.

These activities help students unwind and bond with their peers reducing stress and promoting a sense of wellbeing. Furthermore these trips expose new experiences encouraging personal growth and cultural awareness. The recent cultural trip to Edinburgh was awe inspiring as we walked in the footsteps of Royalty along the length of the Royal Mile!

6. Cultural societies

The establishment of Cultural Societies like the Chinese Society offers a safe space for community members to connect and share their experiences of living and working abroad. A Chinese Specialist Teacher also offers help with language and provides ideas on British Culture and colloquial sayings that can be hard to interpret for the overseas students.

These cultural societies promote the exchange of ideas, traditions, and values, contributing to personal growth and cultural understanding. They also develop a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation or homesickness.

7. Weekly Awards Assembly

The Friday House Assembly is entirely given over to celebrating success. McGillians sing the school song which encourages a love for the school and a sense of belonging. Academic Awards are handed out and hardworking

students are recognised – Platinum Certificates are celebrated, as are the number of golds collected. Through high expectations and rewards, we are promoting a culture of curiosity and achievement.

McGill's also has a focus on kindness and every week a McGillian is awarded the 'King of Kindness'. Acts of kindness make the world a happier place for everyone. They boost feelings of confidence, reduce stress, and increase optimism. Such acts may also encourage others to repeat the good deeds that they have experienced themselves.

The main award is for McGillian of the Week. Each week a different student is honoured - This recognition boosts self-esteem and motivates every student to improve. Acknowledging and celebrating the accomplishments of community members builds a supportive and inclusive environment, promoting mental health and helps provide a positive mindset leading to personal growth.

8. Saturday morning 5km parkrun

Every Saturday morning at 8.30am all the overseas boarders participate in the Aldenham parkrun. This not only improves physical fitness but also releases endorphins that help alleviate stress and anxiety, while also

promoting self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment.

Those boarders not running, contribute by volunteering at the parkrun event. This fosters social interaction, builds relationships and partnerships within our local community, and cultivates a sense of purpose, all of which are essential for overall well-being. Though the boarders do not relish this event it is part of the weekly routine, and they get a real sense of achievement from participating!

9. Evening boarding activities

Often, after prep we organise, evening activities such as informal BBQs or crêpe making which provides a much-needed break from routine and creates an atmosphere of camaraderie and relaxation.

The boarders mix across year groups promoting social interaction and reducing stress. Furthermore, the process of cooking and eating together fosters a sense of community, which is linked to improved mental health and overall wellbeing. The weekly McGill's Thursday Evening Summer BBQ is a much anticipated event and for the flexi-boarders it provides a relaxing end to a busy week of boarding.

Themed Events, like Burn's Night, Bingo Night, and Race Night, add excitement and novelty,

making the gatherings enjoyable and memorable. We invite the boarding community across the school to join in such events and they help create a sense of inclusion and togetherness in our boarding community.

Etiquette Evenings also offer an opportunity to dress up in formal attire which enhances the sense of occasion, promoting self-esteem and pride. They allow the students to learn about social graces, they help enhance their people skills and it promotes self-confidence. Importantly, these super curricular events encourage students to take time away from their mobile devices, they are relaxing and they help promote emotional wellbeing.

10. Celebrating differences

Cultural meals provide an excellent opportunity to celebrate diversity and learn about different culinary traditions. On the last weekend of the Christmas term, Mrs Yeabsley and I cook a time honoured Turkey Lunch and share our British Christmas Traditions with the overseas boarding community.

Secret Santa and dreadful cracker jokes are a must, lighting the Christmas Pudding with brandy and sharing of gifts make a fantastic Sunday afternoon. The boarders genuinely appreciate homecooked food and it breaks the routine of everyday school meals!

We have celebrated both Nigeria and Ghanaian Independence Day as well as The Chinese Autumn Festival and New Year. These events encourage cultural exchange and nurture understanding among community members, contributing to social cohesion and a sense of belonging. Such events contribute to boarders' emotional wellbeing by fostering feelings of warmth and camaraderie. They can also help alleviate homesickness and create lasting memories.

In conclusion, the health and wellbeing benefits of engaging in various social, cultural, and recreational activities are numerous. These events and initiatives contribute significantly to the overall mental health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. By participating in and organising such activities, we can create supportive, inclusive, and thriving environments that enhance the quality of our lives. This should provide a vision and voice for education in the 21st Century. My Top Ten Tips aim to offer the students a wide variety of opportunities and hopefully makes boarding in McGill's House a fun and worthwhile experience. The ultimate aim is to not only give the students an environment that is 'home from home' but one that will also create memories that I am sure will last a lifetime. Long Live McGill's!

Planning for new boarding house

An application has been submitted for the redevelopment of an old primary school site in Oundle, Northamptonshire, to accommodate a new purpose-built boarding house for Oundle School.

A key part of the School's vision, encapsulated in Project 24, is the creation of a new purpose-built girls' boarding house in the centre of Oundle.

The new boarding house, named McMurray House in memory of David McMurray, the Headmaster who devised and oversaw the introduction of co-education, will accommodate 60 girls aged 13-18 years old who are currently located in New House on the

southwest edge of Oundle. The house will provide boarders with accommodation facilities in the centre of town, enabling girls' boarding to take its place alongside the historic boys' town Houses.

This project will also allow the School to upgrade existing provision by decanting pupils into the existing New House in order to undertake a long-term rolling programme of improvement works to existing boarding Houses.

Oundle School has appointed education specialist architects, GSSArchitecture, to lead the designs of McMurray House.



Pictured: Oundle Boarding House Sketch (GSS Architecture)

The Minibus Management Course free with every minibus from Rivervale

John Peterson, Director of Minibus Services at Rivervale, explains why he has decided to make their Minibus Management Course available to customers, free of charge, with every minibus sold or leased.



John Peterson

The original Minibus Compliance Course was developed by Chris Maynard of Castle Minibus when I was sales director there. It was written with the consultation of Beverley Bell, a former senior traffic commissioner, an ex-traffic police officer and Castle's advanced driving instructors. The course was approved by RoSPA and has been available online since the pandemic stopped face-to-face delivery in early 2020.

Making Minibus Manageable

Our updated Minibus Management Course remains vitally important because there is much more to running a minibus than just purchasing or leasing a vehicle. It is important to us at Rivervale that we are helping our customers not only understand their obligations but have the services to efficiently fulfil them. For instance, it is a legal requirement to run roadworthy vehicles and an essential element of that is safety inspections.

Rivervale complete safety inspections for schools across the UK, but many schools still don't know the DVSA consider them an important part of 'maintaining a roadworthy vehicle' and that the Section 19 Permit application requires evidence these inspections are completed. Some schools might not even know they need, or can apply for, a Section 19 Permit.

It's information like this that is included in the Minibus Management Course which is online and includes videos and quizzes to make it more engaging for the participant. We offer 12 month's access to subscribers so they can return to the content as many times as they need to refresh their knowledge. The course itself is split into 4 parts, all covering different (but often linked) elements of minibus operations.

1. **Legal framework** – Section 19 Permit requirements and restrictions
2. **Vehicles** – required checks and inspections, tyres, and record keeping
3. **Drivers** – training, weights and licences, and payment
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Make your minibuses safer today

To make walk around checks even easier to complete Rivervale has a free dashboard and app, My Minibus Manager, to help. Simply visit myminibusmanager.com and set up an account for your school and then invite your drivers. They can then download the app and complete their checks on their phone (provided they have wifi). Notes and images can be logged to show if there are any issues with the vehicle.

It is services like the app and by offering the course free with every vehicle we hope to help schools educate all involved with their busses.



Rivervale are committed to helping their customers run safer minibus fleets and meet the conditions of their Section 19 Permits. If you'd like to test your minibus management knowledge take our quick test.

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John Peterson, Director of Minibus Services. Rivervale.

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Next Generation Assessment Conference

Over 200 educators and sector experts gathered at the Alliance Manchester Business School to debate the future of assessment in education, at the second Next Generation Assessment Conference.

Convened by HMC, Edge Foundation, Rethinking Assessment and the University of Manchester, the conference reached a consensus around the need to transform how we measure young people through exams. This follows intensifying calls from politicians, employers, educators, parents and young people that the assessment system needs radical reform.

In November 2021 HMC published the 'Time To Talk' report, based on the responses of 800 teachers in schools across England which found that the majority believed current models of curriculum and assessment not to be fit for purpose. This was followed up in January 2023 with an HMC and Edge hosted conference which explored new ideas, themes and interesting pilots.

Throughout the day, attendees were invited to hear from a line-up of international speakers working in education, business, the arts, culture, data and technology. The message that young people should be allowed to evidence a broad range of knowledge and skills to employers, and that an inclusive and equitable system for all learners was needed was clear.

During the 'Preparing young people to thrive' panel, CEO of UA92, "a deliberately different university founded by the legends of Manchester United – the class of '92", Sara Prowse, told the conference that "no matter your background, you shouldn't be defined by postcode" and our assessment system must reflect that.

Director of Learning & Engagement at The Lowry,

Jennifer Riding, told attendees that we are "missing opportunities to discover strengths and talent" through the current high-stakes approach at GCSE and A Level, calling for more funding right the way through the education stages to end the squeeze on arts and creative opportunities for young people.

The Edge Foundation advocated for a "multimodal assessment system" – one that could include a combination of summative exams, on-screen assessment, projects, presentations, teacher assessed grades, whereby the nature of the subject being assessed drives the method of assessment.

Cassy Taylor, Director of Qualifications Policy and Reform at Qualifications Wales explained that many of the new GCSEs in Wales will use on-screen assessment rather than pen and paper, and students will be able to combine units from "skills for life" and "skills for work" suites, to tailor their own qualifications. She defended their recent PISA scores, saying "Wales prides itself on recognising wider skills and competencies that aren't necessarily captured" by PISA.

Marie Hamilton, the Greater Manchester Lead for Microsoft also told the conference to expect "massive changes coming in", with the dawn of Artificial Intelligence set to transform the nature of digital assessment, having been involved in the early stages of putting the very first PCs into schools.

Director of Education at HMC Kate Howell, said: "This conference is the next phase of HMC's ongoing work looking at the future of the curriculum and new types of assessment. It was wonderful to debate and discuss different approaches from around the world with colleagues working in all aspects of education."



Eight primary 7 students from St Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen have secured drone licences and have been participating in regular flying lessons in order to compete in an Aeronautics competition.

The young pilots competed against nineteen Scottish schools in the Schools Air Race Challenge run by Aerospace Kinross, after qualifying for the competition with their paper aeroplane designs. They were tasked with flying drones around an indoor obstacle course, designed and made by themselves which features landmarks including Ben Nevis, an underworld and a solar system to be navigated.

Besides mastering the drones, pupils have been exploring the principles of flight, engineering, forces and data organisation in physics classes and have welcomed a number of guest speakers to

Pictured (l-r): Erin MacFadyen, Hannah Wilson and Meishana Johnstone take part in the Schools Air Race Challenge

share their experiences, including air ambulance and former Chinook pilot Mr Pete Winn; former RAF Air Traffic Control Officer Mrs Mel Binfield; retired cabin crew manager, Mrs Elizabeth Brown; and former pupil Miss Emily Owen who is a Ground Safety Controller at Heathrow.

The Schools Air Race Challenge first launched in June 2022 and is designed for P6 to S3 students. Of almost 30,000 pilots in the UK, fewer than 5% are female.

Headteacher of St Margaret's School for Girls, Anna Tomlinson, said: "There is still a clear need to address the gender STEM gap which persists today. Initiatives which encourage students to move into STEM studies and careers like the Schools Air Race Challenge, can help nurture interest and ambition in STEM fields and future careers."

Webinar

Delivering a compelling STEM experience: Making STEM content inclusive, accessible and engaging

Tuesday, May 21st at 2:30pm CEST

Join our free webinar, where we will be joined by Koen Malfait and Bert Deneine, professors from the Vives University of Applied Sciences and the STEM Olympiades for Primary and Secondary School Students, as well as Brett Dalton, Head of Educational Services at Moodle.

During this discussion, we will explore:

- Why learning platforms must be more than theoretically usable and go beyond simply ticking boxes for STEM accessibility.
- What tools educators can use to create accessible STEM content, as well as the tools learners need to interact with that content.
- How text to speech extends the reach of learning content – and what additional inclusivity-boosting solutions you can leverage to serve even more STEM users.
- How the Stem Olympiades uses AI-powered voices to make STEM assessments accessible to all.

There will be a live demo and a Q&A session.

Register here:

<https://app.livestorm.co/readspeaker-llc/making-stem-accessible>

Can't make the date? Make sure to register for access to the on-demand recording.

ShuttleID

Despite ongoing investment into developing a top-tier education environment, home-to-school transport is still a common source of parent complaints and staff frustration. ShuttleID is on a mission to help schools revolutionise their school bus experience with simple technology.

ShuttleID is helping schools and transport operators leverage simple technology to improve safety, convenience and satisfaction with school transport. Initially launched on a single school bus to help eradicate ticket fraud, five years on the solution has since exploded in popularity, now improving the experience of over eight million passenger trips annually. The platform is a single system that offers mobile tickets, bookings, payments, reporting, service alerts, parent boarding notifications and live vehicle tracking.

The system has specifically been designed to be driver-friendly.



As it's powered by a driver app utilised on a smartphone or tablet, the system is quick and cost-effective to implement. Students scan their barcoded ticket, which they can have printed or on their phone. The driver app performs nine separate validity checks in less than one second and boarding data becomes automatically available to the school in the ShuttleID Operations Portal.

Saving staff time

Many schools still require pupils to flash a pass at their driver or even sign a paper register on the bus. Neither option gives complete assurance to schools or parents that the job is being done accurately or at all. What's more, the transfer and processing of this data, if any exists, is typically admin intensive. When individual bus tickets are issued each year, term or even daily, this creates an unnecessary amount of admin.

The system proves to be a huge time saver for staff as they no

longer need to manually issue or print bus passes. Frustrated parent emails and calls out of hours are avoided, as vehicle tracking and service alerts keep parents fully informed.

Optionally, payments can also be handled automatically, with card and direct debit payments supported. This allows parents to make bookings around their busy lifestyles, and as the ticket is delivered instantly, helps alleviate any stress whether their child will experience issues when boarding.

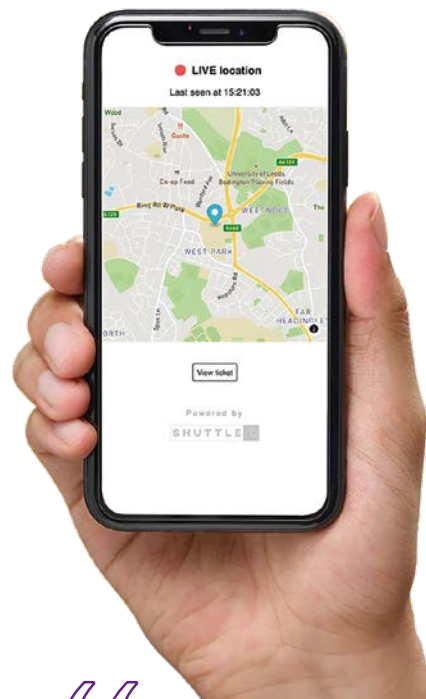
The system is flexible to support schools that either want to take payment automatically at the point of travel or afterwards via existing processes at the end of term.

Saving schools money

Schools not only protect revenue from the prospect of ticket fraud, but by utilising data in ShuttleID, efficiencies are easily identified on their school routes, helping save vast sums on transport bills. It's easier to identify the correct sized vehicle required each day and simple to reshape or amalgamate routes. Moving passengers between routes can be achieved without needing to reissue passes again.

Increasing student admissions

Promoting the benefits of a system like ShuttleID to prospective students and parents could be a key factor in ensuring admission levels are retained and even increased. ShuttleID adds value to the proposition of a school by reassuring parents that travel to school is safe, convenient and reliable.



"If the impact of VAT on fees causes a decline in admissions, independent schools may need to consider casting their net geographically wider. That will only appeal to parents if they have confidence that transport links are safe, convenient and reliable. A small investment in a simple system like ShuttleID could yield a big return in respect of admissions."

Chris Bell
ShuttleID, Director

SHUTTLE ID

0333 344 9868
info@shuttleid.uk
www.shuttleid.uk





Getting the most out of your catering services

With over 34 years' experience in catering for the independent education sector, Connect specialises in fresh, sustainably sourced, delicious food. Our wealth of experience allows us to measure just how well your catering operation is working for you.

There are a few questions we regularly ask to make sure you are getting the most out of your catering services:

- What is the real cost of your catering operation?
- Is it working at maximum efficiency?
- Are you achieving the results you want in both value for money, and levels of satisfaction?

Our approach at Connect: Menu development

- We create tailored solutions for each school we work with. Our talented chef's onsite source the best local and seasonal ingredients in a cost effective and sustainable way.
- When it comes to allergens we have robust policies and procedures in place to ensure that meals are carefully prepared and served.

Fuelling the mind, body & soul

- It is our mission to make the menus vibrant and fun, all meals are cooked from scratch and driven by innovation.
- Throughout the year our teams host themed day menus, 'pop-up' events, tasting tables and chef demonstrations that complement the school curriculum.

Nutrition & wellbeing

- We use our nutritional guidelines to create food that nourishes, nurtures and recognises the strong link between hydration, nutrition and educational performance.
- We encourage healthy choices in early years to create habits and attitudes that will last a lifetime.

Protecting our planet

- Our environmental values are fundamental in everything we do.
- We provide a service that

focuses on sustainable catering, and we are dedicated to creating positive change wherever possible across our operation.

Expert guidance

- We operate an open book policy and maintain tight controls on all associated costs.
- All legislative compliance is adhered to by our fully trained teams.
- We look after your catering services so that you can focus on your core business.

Genuine partnership

- We recognise the value of relationships; our honest approach allows us to form strong partnerships and we become part of the school community.
- We create an environment where individuals can thrive. We invest in our teams, providing them with extensive training and support to deliver a service that we can all be proud of.

What our client's say:

"Just a quick note to say that I thought the lunch today was insanely good! Thanks so much for the efforts you go to, to keep the food standards so high."

Business Development Manager, Independent School, Oxfordshire

"I just wanted to share the amazing African themed lunch we had today celebrating black history week – everyone was talking about how great everything was. Your catering team has been working so hard and we are happy to have them with us!"

Bursar, Independent School, Buckinghamshire

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Profile

In conversation with Emily Codling

Born:

St Bartholomew's, London

Married:

Yes, since 2010

Children:

Two, a girl and a boy

Schools and Universities attended:

Croydon High School,
University of Southampton

First Job:

Lifeguard!

First job in independent education:

Headmistress at Bromley High School

Appointed to current job:

May 2022

Favourite piece of music:

I love Beyonce's Renaissance album!

Favourite food:

Italian

Favourite drink:

Bubbles

Favourite holiday destination:

Devon

Favourite leisure pastime:

Open water swimming

Favourite TV or radio programme/series:

Currently watching The Crown

Suggested epitaph:

Lived a life with meaning

Q You were educated at Croydon High School GDST and are now head at another GDST school, Bromley High School, describing this move as like coming home. How does your experience as a pupil in an all-girls environment influence you as a leader?

A Having received a GDST education myself at Croydon High School, I understand the immeasurable benefits and joy that such an experience can bring. Returning to the GDST has reignited many memories of my time in school and how it has influenced my leadership approach.

I believe in the value of girls' education and aim to cultivate an environment that not only emphasises intellectual growth but also prepares our young women to be leaders of tomorrow. It is essential to encourage our girls to seize every opportunity in the curriculum without fear or prejudice against any stereotype.

Teaching girls from a young age about the importance of supporting one another empowers them to feel confident in taking risks and leading others. This nurturing environment fosters their growth and development.

Q Did you always want to be a teacher? Who or what inspired you into the profession?

A I began my career working as a trainee Accountant in London. However, after taking a sabbatical during which I worked with children in Brasilia, I felt a strong pull toward a profession where I could continue to empower young people. Coming from a family of educators, while I like to think I had a choice, I know that my passion for shaping the next generation stemmed from a central calling.

Q The 1883 founders of Bromley High sought to provide young women with a 'broad and rigorous academic education far beyond the narrow range of female accomplishments intended to prepare young women for the domestic sphere'. Forward 140 years, how would you now summarise your mission in 22 words?

A To empower bright minds to carve out bright futures, using their curiosity, courage and compassion to make the world a better place.

Q Part of the school's anniversary celebrations last year saw the launch of a new strategic development plan, 'Towards 140 and Beyond'. This included the creation of a co-curricular strategy. What have been the key outcomes? Have you seen a rise in participation numbers as a result?

A Our rich and varied co-curricular strategy is an essential part of school life. Not only is it immensely enjoyable, but our girls are also developing key characteristics needed for later life.

By using the SOCS platform to register the girls, we have been able to provide one-to-one mentoring which ensures that the girls' interests are promoted, and every pupil participates in at least two clubs.

Additionally, our girls are building a portfolio of additional qualifications through our co-curricular activities, including the IPQ, Creative Arts Awards, and The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA).

While academic standards are extremely high at Bromley High School, our focus on the active participation of girls in pursuits beyond the classroom allows them to define themselves, whether that be on the playing field or in the art studio.

Q Another goal of your 'Towards 140 and Beyond' initiative was a focus on 'cohesive leadership'. What does this mean in practice?

A Bringing the Junior and Senior leadership teams together has enabled us to operate as one school as we review our practices, solve challenges, and find common objectives.

There have been opportunities for team building to enhance collaboration, peer evaluations of performance, reviews of job roles and how colleagues work together, and the re-establishment of line management so that cohesion is built across the two schools.

We now share the same values, the same strategic development plan, and have the same targets throughout the whole school.

Q Bromley High School is set to embark on two estate developments this year. What key lessons did you learn about managing

Emily Codling has been Head at Bromley High School GDST, Kent, since 2022. She was previously the founder and head of Eden Park High School, a free school in the London Borough of Bromley.



such major projects from your work creating Eden Park High School from scratch?

A Leading extensive building projects can be very rewarding, and bringing previous large-scale estates experience to the table certainly helps. Creating a strong marketing strategy and stakeholder engagement is pivotal to gain community momentum, particularly during those wet days of winter when the mud seems endless, and progress appears minimal from one week to the next.

Keeping key groups of people updated on the project's progress and listening to their input is crucial, as they are the ones who will ultimately use the new facilities and are therefore well-placed to inform the designs. Regular meetings with the contractors are important to streamline reporting, stay on schedule, clarify expectations regarding finish quality, and prevent any unexpected surprises.

Q Another key development for the school this year is the launch of a Middle School. The intention behind this is to help pupil transition from primary to secondary education 'by encompassing bespoke curriculum elements and comprehensive pastoral support'. Is this really new or just a re-focus? Do you feel it particularly pertinent for girls or does it apply equally to boys?

A We already provide a strong offering in girls' education, of which we are immensely proud. We're continually seeking to grow and thrive as a school, staying abreast of the latest innovations. Change is underway, and the concept of a middle school within an all-through school is unprecedented. This is a genuinely distinctive offering that sets us apart as experts in providing a successful transition from junior to senior school in a girls-only environment.

Between the ages of 9 and 13, girls undergo more changes than at any other time in their lives, except before the age of 2, making this provision particularly crucial for them, as their needs are unique at this age. It is at this juncture where support and interventions for girls are most effective in maximising a positive experience during these critical years of their lives.

The investment and emphasis that we are placing on these four years of education will further enhance Bromley High School's outstanding provision in our all-girls setting and promote continuity for our girls in both the quality of education and pastoral care.

Q Whilst Deputy Head at The Ravensbourne School, an academy school also in Bromley, you set up a parent forum. How did it work, and what was a key benefit? Have you plans for similar at Bromley?

A Effective parent partnerships are a central component of a successful school. Parents applied to be part of the group and worked with me at the beginning of the year to create a Terms of Reference and suggested agenda points that we could address throughout the year. Agendas were decided in advance, and parents were able to submit questions to be raised and answered.

Where relevant, specialist staff were invited to the meetings. The best outcome was when the school needed to consult on a change or a new policy. Parents could be part of the decision-making process, and they significantly informed the next steps for the school. We have already introduced focused parent forums at Bromley High School, where we sought parental feedback on key provisions.

Q You have had experience teaching in both the maintained and independent sectors. Have you developed any particularly successful partnerships between the two?

A Providing the opportunity for pupils to collaborate across schools, diversifying their experiences and engaging with local communities, gives our young people leadership opportunities and the chance to forge new relationships.

This year, my Sixth Formers have been working closely with children from Marjorie McClure, a Special School for students with complex needs, to teach them swimming lessons and water safety skills in our school pool. We have also run our SHINE programme, focused on inspiring local primary pupils in STEM, boosting their confidence, and nurturing their STEM skills

through innovative activities.

The SHINE days significantly diverge from a typical school day for several reasons. Within this 'girls-only' setting, there's ample opportunity for collaboration and expression. Activities are designed to encourage dialogue and teamwork, minimising the use of traditional classroom tools. Moreover, our specialised teachers bring passion and resources to each lesson, offering diverse learning environments.

Furthermore, we have organised an aerospace programme for local KS4 and KS5 pupils, featuring enlightening lectures by professionals from over 20 engineering firms. The inaugural event in September 2023 saw representatives from companies like Atkins Global, Airborne Platforms UK, and GKN Aerospace, alongside six local schools and over 150 eager pupils. Attendees benefited from inspiring talks by industry leaders and practical sessions, including hands-on experiences with 3D printing, robotics, and virtual reality in engineering, facilitated by Airborne Platforms UK.

Q You say you believe in 'leadership kindness', yet heads cannot afford to be seen as a soft touch. What's the secret of balance?

A When we were visited by ISI in the summer term of 2023, the Reporting Inspector stated that Bromley High School displayed the strongest set of evidence he had ever seen in his inspecting career for 'Keeping Healthy and Staying Safe'. The reason for this was the kindness shown by our whole community and how this underpins the other areas of this category.

Kindness in leadership is a crucial quality and impacts the overall success of any community, encompassing active listening, showing compassion, strengthening relationships, expressing gratitude, and recognising the responsibilities that colleagues have outside of work.

The secret to balance lies in providing constructive feedback, offering guidance for development rather than criticism. Leading by example ensures that kindness is demonstrated in your actions, setting the tone for how others should behave and embodying the values that I want to see in my school.



A new building project can be a daunting task, especially when initial costs start to spiral and expansion plans are potentially at risk

Derby High School were facing a difficult task. Having outgrown their existing facility as a result of a 40% rise in their school roll, they needed to expand to cater for their growing numbers, but the project needed to come in on budget and with no unexpected costs.

One of our very recent projects is nearing completion. We asked Amy Chapman, Head of Derby High School to share her experience of working with us on their exciting new project.

How did you meet Modulek?

I first met with Modulek, at the Society of Heads Conference, which was held in March 2023 in Cheshire.

The project

We had outgrown our dining hall and were looking for a solution where our whole school community could eat together. It's such an integral part of the school day, it was important we found a solution which could be enjoyed by everyone.

If you are at this stage with a new educational building project contact us today 01202 813121 or visit our website for more information www.modulek.co.uk

Since we have become fully co-educational, we have also expanded our sport offering. As part of this project, we were looking to have new courts and changing facilities, which would also enhance the overall experience for our students.

Can you put into words what the initial conversations meant to you and whether it gave you hope that your project might be able to be rescued?

Yes, it definitely gave us hope. Modulek were very supportive of all our ideas. We had a list of requirements, and they were very quick to propose a solution and help us see how we could expand our facilities quickly.

How did Modulek get your construction project back on track?

They took our ideas, listened to us, responded very quickly and gave us a proposal we knew would be a wonderful addition to our school within our budget. We are very happy and excited to have this new building in the heart of

our school which everyone will benefit from!

Chris Moore became our key contact, who we cannot thank enough! Chris took our ideas and made them into a reality. We are extremely thankful of his support, creativity and professionalism.

It has felt like a partnership throughout the whole project. We have felt listened to, supported and reassured.

How has the construction process been for you and your school?

Throughout the project we have been impressed with how Modulek has always considered the needs of the school. The building work has been planned with this in mind and created minimal disruption to the day to day running of our school.

No request has been too much! We have been delighted how the process has gone. We even integrated the construction within our learning and used it as a real life case study for some students. Our Business students went on a

trip to see the manufacturing of the modular units in the factory in Hull and our Pre-School visited the site and were able to watch the diggers as they created our new car park!

Are the staff and pupils looking forward to moving into their new building?

Yes, we are very excited about moving into our new dining hall. We have been updating students with photographs regularly in assembly and parents have received updates in our weekly newsletter.

Everyone has been able to witness the construction from beginning to end. We are now looking forward to our events in the summer term and being able to invite parents and alumni to enjoy the wonderful new facility.

If you could give any advice to other schools who may be in the situation that you were in, what would it be?

We would recommend speaking to the Modulek team, you will not be disappointed!



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Balancing School Transport Priorities

Can you really have it all?



Gary Lansdown

Gary Lansdown, Head of Business Development from transportation experts StudentSafe, gives us his opinion.

Safer pupils. Less investment. Improved reliability. Happier parents. Increased uptake. Lower emissions. Increased admissions.

It's a long shopping list. But when you review your transport provision, it's likely a number of these will feature. So how do you balance your priorities? Or can you actually have it all?

Strengthening safeguarding

Let's start with the most important requirement – pupil safety.

With end-to-end safeguarding technology, schools and parents can track vehicles and pupils in real-time, providing the ultimate reassurance to everyone involved. If you haven't already got this technology in place, this is likely to be top of your list. And rightly so.

Reducing investment

With many schools subsidising transport, reducing investment is often the next consideration. The cost of operating and managing an in-house minibus fleet has increased significantly over the last two years and recruiting drivers has become near impossible. To make matters worse, Section 19 regulations are under scrutiny yet again, all adding cost, time and hassle you just don't

need. So, can you reduce costs and strengthen safeguarding? The answer is, thankfully, often "yes". By rigorously analysing your current transport provision, significant efficiency opportunities can be found. These savings can more than offset safeguarding investments. To cite an example, we helped a London Prep School save £125,000/year by optimising coach size and route numbers. So schools can improve safety at the same time as actually reducing investment.

Improving reliability and pleasing parents

If your current transport provision is unreliable and subject to delays, it's likely parents aren't happy. Understandably, given they need to be able to rely on the service. But making improvements here needn't increase costs. By using the right operators and setting

expectations appropriately, a service can run seamlessly and meet everyone's needs.

Increasing uptake and reducing emissions

With the government requirement that every school develop a Decarbonisation Plan, transport is a great place to start. Every car removed from the school-run saves a massive 1 million grams of CO₂/year. Increasing uptake of school transport reduces emissions, at the same time as maximising financial efficiency. Another win-win.

Increasing admissions

With possible VAT introductions on the horizon, many schools are increasing efforts to attract new pupils. This is often a focus for our work. Where else could we service to attract more pupils? When implemented appropriately, payback can be significant.

Through a slight route extension, one of our Scottish schools immediately attracted two new pupils. Once again showing priorities can work together hand-in-hand.

So can you really have it all?

The key to any school transport review is identifying what is important to your school. I hope I have been able to show that, when tackled correctly, a number of priorities can be addressed together to great success. It's our belief at StudentSafe that, by listening to your school's specific challenges, considerations and priorities, we can provide a flexible transport solution that works for you.



StudentSafe case studies

To chat to Gary and the team at StudentSafe, or for more information, email hello@studentsafe.com, call 020 3100 0910 or visit www.studentsafe.com

Combatting risks of money laundering

There are growing pressures on school foundations to be absolutely clear on where their money is coming from, and checks required on all fees and donations. Fintech expert, Mike Ward, provides some guidance to help schools protect both finances and reputations.



Mike Ward

Amidst escalating global tensions and evolving regulatory frameworks, independent schools across the UK find themselves navigating a landscape fraught with heightened scrutiny regarding their handling of large money transfers, including donations and tuition payments. These challenges are further exacerbated by concerns of potential VAT levies by prospective government entities, highlighting the need for robust anti-money laundering (AML) frameworks within educational institutions.

Under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, independent schools are obligated to flag any suspicious activity and disclose information relevant to money laundering offences or ongoing investigations. This legal mandate places a focus on maintaining AML frameworks and remaining vigilant against potential illicit financial activities.

The education sector has witnessed a notable increase in multi-term prepayments from international students, alongside an influx of enrolments from overseas. This trend has drawn attention from regulatory bodies and enforcement agencies, who are looking into potential loopholes or vulnerabilities within existing AML mechanisms. Therefore, it's important schools adopt a proactive and transparent approach to compliance, ensuring adherence to both domestic and international standards.

This guidance aims to provide insight into the current landscape and offer strategies for navigating the complexities of anti-money laundering compliance, empowering key staff to safeguard the integrity of their schools and effectively protect against money laundering.

AML risks in independent schools

The independent school sector is seen as a vulnerability in the UK's anti-money laundering framework due to an apparent laxness when verifying any source of funds before accepting fees. This neglect to establish robust processes risks both reputational harm and regulatory penalties.

The National Crime Agency has flagged concerning signs of potential money laundering within independent schools, including third-party payments for school invoices, students hailing from high-risk money laundering jurisdictions, funds originating from non-UK accounts or the child's nationality jurisdiction, and obscured sources of funds via cash deposits.

Indicators of suspicious financial activities

The amount of money laundered globally is estimated to be approximately 3% of Global GDP, or around \$2 trillion. This is clearly a very significant figure, not just in terms of money but also of the societal effects that the criminal efforts to generate these funds incur.

There are quite a few tell-tale signs to be aware of when it comes to suspicion around dirty money. It's important to consider questions like: Is the money coming from a foreign account? Are large amounts of funds being offered in advance? Are the customer's finances not aligned with their actual income? These are just a few examples of the types of analysis that should be undertaken. It's important to be vigilant and get to the bottom of anything of concern. One of the best ways of addressing this is through utilising Source of Funds (SOF) and Source of Wealth (SOW) checks.

Importance of SOF and SOW checks

Combating money laundering risks in independent schools relies on prevention such as sufficient SOF and SOW checks. A SOF check verifies where the money to pay for things is coming from – in this case the payment of school fees, while a SOW check provides information on a customer's financial position and how they acquired their wealth.

These checks play an important role in scrutinising the origins of funds used for transactions, such as school fee payments. By verifying the legitimacy of funds and tracing their origins, SOF and SOW checks serve as a crucial deterrent against the infiltration of illicit funds into the educational sector. Ensuring thorough documentation and verification processes is imperative to fortifying the sector's financial integrity and upholding regulatory compliance standards.

How SOF checks work

Conducting a SOF check necessitates individuals providing comprehensive financial data and documentation, enabling an accurate tracing of fund origins, particularly in transactions such as school fee payments, to ensure they are untainted by criminal activities.

However, the scrutiny doesn't end with identifying the originating financial institution, except in cases where financing like a mortgage is involved. Instead, a deeper dive is important. Relying solely on matching the client's name to the bank account is insufficient. The check must encompass meticulous documentation of key details such as the precise amount, currency, and specifics of the remitting account, including the bank, account number, sort code, and the name on the account. Equally crucial is discerning where the funds originated from.

The information pertaining to the origins of the funds should be substantive, providing unequivocal evidence of the source or rationale for acquiring the funds. Whether derived from salary, gifts, or other legitimate means, clarity on the source of funds is paramount to ensure compliance with anti-money laundering regulations and to mitigate the risk of accidentally facilitating illicit financial activities.

Streamlining technology checks

While manual processes exist for conducting SOF checks, they often prove resource-intensive for both schools and fee payers. Leveraging technological solutions like Open Banking, AI, and machine learning can streamline and enhance the efficiency of these checks.

Open Banking, for instance, gathers essential information from fee payers' accounts to determine the source of funds, providing transparency and aiding in the identification of riskier customers. By integrating Open Banking into SOF checks, schools can directly access real-time financial data from fee payers' bank accounts, enabling them to verify the source of funds more efficiently and accurately. Ultimately, automation and digitisation of SOF checks help schools meet compliance standards more effectively while also minimising the risk of human error.

Protecting independent schools from the risks of money laundering requires a proactive and multi-faceted approach. Understanding vulnerabilities, implementing robust checks, and leveraging technology are crucial steps. Prioritising thorough SOF and SOW checks are essential for mitigating risks. By doing so, schools can safeguard both their finances and reputations.

Mike Ward is Executive Chairman of Armalytix (www.armalytix.com). He previously worked in equity sales for Bank of America, Deutsche Bank, and Nomura, co-founding Armalytix after a 20-year banking career where he witnessed poor processes that could enable money laundering through the financial system.



The value of mentoring at Sixth Form level

What are the benefits of mentoring versus tutoring when students reach the Sixth Form? Richard Willis, Head of Sixth Form at Heathfield School, Berkshire explains the approach being taken at the school.



Richard Willis

Sixth Form heralds a big change for all students, with greater independence alongside increased responsibilities.

Heathfield has a proud tradition of offering a student-centred approach, encouraging and supporting each individual to pursue and develop their unique passions, interests and abilities. Due to the intentionally small size of the student population, we have been given the greatest gift in education – time. With a staff/student ratio of 1:4, we can dedicate a huge amount of time to each student. So then the question becomes, how and what should we do with that time?

Tutoring in the Sixth Form, can sometimes revolve around registering reluctant teenagers who may feel they have outgrown school, and dislike being treated in the same way as they were in their younger years. They are discerning and value their time. One reason students may be tempted to leave our setting is because of the draw of a more independent and co-ed experience, along with the freedoms of coming and going that college can offer. As such we have focused on creating a programme students recognise as adding value to their Sixth Form experience, something beneficial and advantageous.

Currently, there is discussion around the value of GCSEs, with some independent schools moving away from them. I agree that they aren't necessarily the best preparation for A levels, and some students don't necessarily arrive in Year 12, ready for that next challenge. Yes, subject teachers work hard to instil good habits, teach useful academic skills and foster academic engagement, but priorities at GCSE lie elsewhere. So there is a huge opportunity for tutoring to be impactful and positive.

Instead of tutoring, I prefer mentoring to describe the process we offer at Heathfield. Mentoring provides a longer-term impact, a relationship that enables the student to develop the attributes we identified as essential for next steps. Tutoring is more about imparting knowledge. Mentoring holds that individual relationship at its core, and across the timespan of Sixth Form, different priorities are focused on.

When we started designing the programme, we began with the crucially important question – what do we want our students to be when they leave Sixth Form? Passionate, selfless, independent and confident, ready to succeed, whatever their next steps are.

Initially, it is about challenging students to form the work habits required for A level success – reviewing work, note-taking and utilising study periods. Some students require assistance and support adapting from the regimented structures of GCSE, into being independent and taking the initiative at A level. Tutoring can do this, but the more individual based approach of mentoring, allows for the differences between each A level course – success in History looks different to success in Maths. Mentoring allows for a more personal approach.

Unlike tutoring, which tends to be 'one-size-fits-all', the benefits of mentoring can be amplified as there isn't a cut off time for discussions. Conversations can be revisited to continue guidance and records are kept and assiduously followed up. Some students move to the next phase of the programme immediately, whilst others receive further guidance on core academic skills for an extended period of time.

Other key aspects we cover through mentoring, are standard Sixth Form requirements: revision and research methods, discussion of future plans, and interview practice. There are some natural events in the Sixth Form cycle that

dictate discussions at certain times, but the benefit of mentoring is it can pivot or potentially revisit past topics, depending on what would be most beneficial to the individual.

We treat all our Sixth Formers as young adults, capable of phenomenal outcomes in all areas of school life and beyond, but also provide that extra guidance we all need sometimes. They enjoy being heard, and getting the recognition and support they need to develop the attributes required for success in their next steps.

Because it is a different approach to tutoring, students have welcomed it. Comments from the Sixth Form regarding their mentors, demonstrate the effective mentoring relationships fostered by their teachers, and its success so far – 'He just knows us', and 'It was essential for me to adapt to my A levels'.

Successful mentoring takes time, energy, perseverance and significant expertise from the mentors. More than anything it is a shift in mind-set. I believe mentoring adds to a positive, holistic Sixth Form experience, pre-empting issues that can arise later, and helps students achieve their best possible self.

Crafting their own challenge

Pupils from Dauntsey's School, Wiltshire, have forged their own 101-mile canal challenge after adverse conditions altered the course of the 2024 Devizes and Westminster Canoe Race.

Each year seven pairs of Lower Sixth pupils are entered into the race. Unprecedented amounts of rainfall resulted in conditions on the canal and river being deemed too unsafe for less experienced paddlers to continue beyond

Newbury, Berkshire, leading to around half of the registered junior crews withdrawing from the race at this point.

Keen to complete their challenge and earn their sponsorship money, the 2024 crews decided to create their own race which would see them complete over 100 miles on the canal over a three-day period. On Good Friday, the seven boats completed the 34.5 miles to Newbury, they then

camped overnight in Newbury before returning to Devizes and completing the same stretch on the Saturday. After another night in a tent on Saturday the paddlers set off from Pewsey on Sunday morning and paddled to Bathampton, giving them a total distance of 101 miles.

To date, the crews have raised over £2,000 for the school charity, Guide Dogs.



Some of Dauntsey's paddlers



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Nurturing the next generation of ecologists

How can schools and educators inspire pupils to make an impact on the world around them? What are the barriers, and how can greater exposure be given to ecology-related careers? Managing Director at BSC Education, Jenn Harris, discusses.



Jenn Harris

According to gov.uk over 80% of young people are eager to take action to help the environment and this may come as no surprise, after all, they are the future custodians of our planet. As educators, it is our role to engage with young learners and to inspire them to protect the natural world around them. This means developing a sound understanding of ecology, as well as providing a platform for meaningful discussion and open dialogue, in a way that helps young people to make informed decisions and to build confidence around taking future action.

Much classroom-based learning is centred around equipping young people with the right skills for future careers. Many of those careers, revolving around preserving our natural world, are in emerging fields. On that basis, it is important that we foster an educational environment where these future roles are discussed and where the right skillsets are nurtured. It's impossible to overstress the importance of 21st Century skills in supporting young learners to analyse complex environmental problems and identify creative solutions. The previous overfocus on IQ (Intelligence Quotient) is shifting, as we make space for both EQ (Emotional Quotient) and CQ (Cultural Quotient). From an educational perspective, it is key that we place increased emphasis on how learners interact with one another when advocating change, the language they use and the consideration they show to others. Promoting this kind of learning environment will furnish young people with the ability to work collaboratively while allowing space for numerous perspectives to be heard, but in a non-judgemental way.

Empowering changemakers

Ultimately, we need to be teaching young people the skills to explore and question the role we play as humans in ecology, as well as how

we are connected to other living things. Skills that empower learners as changemakers and future leaders are a growth mindset, flexibility, adaptability, and empathy. Yet educators must also nurture passion, focus and resilience to develop well-rounded learners who are equipped to deal with an ever-changing world. But how can we ensure that ecological learning has a direct and meaningful impact on the everyday lives of students in the real world?

The UN Sustainable Development Goals are a great starting point as they provide a solid foundation within which to learn, action and implement change. For educators, this can be developed further in a meaningful way by bridging the gap between employers and organisations. For example, it can be useful to reflect on real life scenarios where employers are acting on climate change and also where they have seen successes and failures. After completing the necessary due diligence around safeguarding and quality checks, educators can invite relevant businesses and environmental organisations into the classroom to deliver talks and workshops to students. Leading practical sessions in an alternative workshop setting can also be inspiring for learners.

Having access to hands-on experience and offering 'live learning', not just theoretical in-class traditional teaching, or watching videos about foreign countries and cultures students don't recognise, helps them to feel more connected to both the issues and the solutions, whether at home or further afield. Likewise, balancing philanthropic projects with activities that deliver immediate results such as local litter picks, and those that take longer such as planting and sowing seeds, helps students to recognise both short term and long-term environmental planning. At our colleges, we have found that delivering immersive

lessons such as poster presentations on creating sustainable cities, as well as visits to local botanical gardens, or collecting and donating to food banks really helps to inspire conversation and gives our students positive experiences where they can make a real difference. It also fosters teamwork helping young people to hone their collaboration, negotiation and leadership skills.

A wider sense of shared responsibility

By engaging in hands-on projects like this, young people quickly learn that environmental problems cannot be solved by one country alone; this requires a global approach delivered with passion and intent. Similarly, offering local and international projects (perhaps making links with schools and communities in other countries), provides opportunities for compare/contrast activities, while building bridges and creating international friendships based on shared values. Schools that take this a step further and embed these kinds of interactive projects into their curriculum will also create a wider sense of shared responsibility amongst their student community as well as building a stronger connection to local surroundings and the planet as a whole.

Careers education for younger learners has been given greater emphasis in schools over recent years, but how can educators ensure that learning inspires them to consider a future career in the environmental or outdoor sector, especially when many of these careers did not exist in their parent's generation? Promoting and providing exposure to diverse career pathways, field trips, guest lectures and mentor programmes are all important aspects of careers education. Being inspired by someone who is actively engaged in the environmental sector will always be the best way to gain early engagement. Educators need to focus on the value and impact of

these careers and how meaningful and fulfilling the work can be - as well as consider the opportunity to travel, explore and work in a wide range of settings with diverse groups of people. Ecology is also a sector that embraces a varied skill set and not simply traditional qualifications.

Solving the world's biggest issues

For educators there are several barriers to supporting the next generation of young ecologists. The need for schools to constantly adapt and flex to change in order to ensure teaching expertise is relevant and fit for purpose means continual CPD is vital. Like any other subject, ecology-based subjects need to be taught by teachers who are themselves passionate, curious and welcoming of environmental debate. The curriculum also needs to keep up with rapid change to ensure that young learners leave school with the skills they need to be successful in today's world. The challenge, of course, is how to achieve this within budget constraints, and this is where both technology and industry can support.

We are soon to launch our own Future Ecologists programme across our colleges where our students will have the opportunity to learn directly from ecology experts in a practical setting. Having the opportunity to put real life scenarios into practice and helping young people to make the connection between class-based learning and the real world is ever more crucial. There is a greater belief amongst Millennials and Gen Z that future education will directly empower people to solve the world's biggest issues, including the climate crisis, environmental and corporate sustainability, and human rights. With that in mind, and as a global society, schools and educators have a duty to lead by example, to encourage curiosity, and to help young people find their voice in a crowded world that needs our protection.

Sustainable future

Sustainability has been a key topic in many industries over the past few years – but how can schools move beyond just improving recycling practices? Sustainability and Energy Officer at Woodhouse Grove School, Yorkshire, Michelle Howard, shares how some clever investment and simple changes have had a huge impact on the school's educational environment.



In 2022, as part of the school's commitment to environmental responsibility and sustainability, Woodhouse Grove recruited for a new role of Sustainability and Energy Officer. This role would take on responsibility for all areas of energy, waste and water across the school sites and residential properties.

Tasked with the remit of reducing the school's carbon footprint and promoting energy efficiency and sustainability awareness to staff and pupils, as the new Sustainability and Energy Officer, one of the first moves was to install 546 solar panels on the school's sports hall roof. This now accounts for 11% of the school's energy annually – with a 30% decrease seen over summer months. This has had a significant

impact, not only on the school's carbon footprint, but also on its energy bills – not bad for Yorkshire sunshine! Following the success of the main school solar array, two smaller arrays have now also been implemented, at other sites in the grounds – both with equally impressive results. A further 54 solar panels will be added to the junior school sports hall roof over the Easter holidays.

Other changes made around the school include the introduction of a new BMS (Building Management Systems) heating system, an online tool for improved control and visibility. This has resulted in a 31% reduction in gas consumption over the course of the year. A cover has been installed over the school swimming pool to reduce heat loss and evaporation; the savings this will make in gas and electricity charges should mean that it will effectively pay for itself within 18 months. Single glazed windows have been replaced with double glazing and a dual ported EV charging pedestal has been installed, another step in decarbonising the estate.



And, of course, the basics have also been covered. The school has quadrupled the volume of waste sent for recycling. A student-led Eco Committee help distribute recycling bins to classrooms and kitchen staff have improved the segregation of waste.

Investment in Woodhouse Grove's grounds has also seen them becoming more diverse, with hundreds of trees planted through the Woodland Trust scheme, dedicated no-mow areas for wildflowers to grow and a new willow coppice that will be used for weaving and producing cricket bats in future years. The catering team even use wild garlic, grown on the school grounds.

And there are plans to do more. As well as the bigger changes we are making around the school site, educating staff and pupils about the small things they can do around school to save energy is a key part of my job. As the saying goes, 'We don't need a handful of people doing zero waste perfectly. We need millions of people doing it imperfectly'. The Carbon Trust estimates that most businesses can reduce their energy spend by 10% by taking some simple efficiency measures. It is up to all of us to find that 10% and Woodhouse Grove is taking this responsibility seriously. Just imagine if every school in the country could reduce by 10% – what that would mean for emissions.



Eco Fest

Hazlegrove Prep School, Somerset, has launched its Eco Fest, a week-long exploration of sustainable living practices.

The festival programme included talks from the Young People's Trust for the Environment (YPTE) and hands-on Eco workshops delivered by Green Up Your Act to teach the children how to limit their ecological footprint.

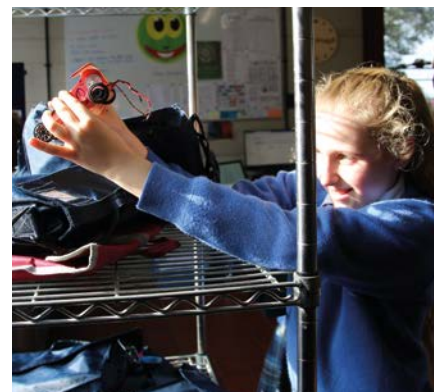
The children had a varied week of activities including creating solar

panels, wind turbines, a recycled fashion show, sheep shearing, upcycling as well as a full school Swap-Shop.

Working in conjunction with a regenerative food and farming business, Higher Farm, the festival also saw the launch of a new kitchen garden initiative that will roll out to other schools. In order to raise funds, the farmers from Higher Farm, brothers Matteo and Giacomo Grasso and colleague Basil Gibson, are set to run three

marathons in just three days barefoot along the Jurassic Coast.

The school also welcomed environmentalist Ben Goldsmith as patron. Head, Mr Edward Benbow said: "We are lucky to have Ben Goldsmith, as our patron this year and as well as supporting his Iris Project charity which helps young individuals in finding solutions to the climate and ecological crisis, we will also be supporting the Young People's Trust for the Environment."



Pictured: Creating solar panels

Helping schools serve up serious savings

Rupert Weber, Head of Education at apetito, examines how independent schools can protect themselves from VAT increases by making savings in the kitchen.



Rupert Weber

“Poll after poll shows that the Labour Party will likely form the next government and with Labour policy to introduce value-added tax on independent school fees, it’s no surprise that Independent Schools are concerned with how this would impact their pupils, parents and themselves.

“The party is proposing charging 20 per cent value-added tax on private school fees and imposing business rates on the sector within its first year of government. With more than 600,000 children being educated at Independent Schools, it’s estimated that the tax would raise £1.7 billion annually.

“We know that many Independent Schools have been vocal in raising their worries around the impact this will have on schools and pupils alike, with many expressing concerns that schools will be forced to shut their doors or raise fees, pricing some parents out of being able to afford to give their children a private education.

“In fact, it is estimated that if the full cost increases were passed onto parents, average school fees could rise by up to £3,000 a year, with those at the most expensive schools facing increases of up to £10,000 a year¹.

“The shadow of VAT on fees has led to many Headteachers, Bursars and Governors closely reviewing and scrutinising their operational costs, examining where efficiencies can be made. We know Bursars in particular

will be thinking about the implications of these VAT changes and how schools can minimise their exposure.

“One area where schools can make significant savings is in catering, which is typically the school’s second largest cost after staff. Until recently, schools have opted for contract caterers or a complex in-house service and attempts to save money typically resulted in a decline in quality. But now, apetito’s revolutionary school catering model is gaining huge popularity by helping schools achieve immediate savings of 15–20% on their catering with zero compromise on quality.

“Opting for apetito’s premium pre-prepared catering model helps schools deliver the control and flexibility of in-house catering, combined with complete simplicity that can’t be achieved in traditional in-house kitchens. Yet guaranteeing the delivery of nutritious, high-quality meals.

“We’re already serving over 10,000 pupils daily, whilst delivering significant cost savings and increasing meal uptake. We know that schools want reduced costs and increased efficiency in the kitchen – without loss of quality. And we help schools achieve that by giving them full control of their menus and staff, whilst delivering exceptional meals, a service that is easily adapted to suit bespoke needs and demonstrates value for schools prioritising quality, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness.

“Unlike traditional kitchen setups that demand a team of skilled chefs and kitchen staff to source ingredients and prepare meals from scratch for pupils with increasingly diverse dietary requirements, our catering system eliminates much of this costly and labour-intensive work. In fact, our pre-prepared system typically requires 50% less staff and completely removes the requirement for skilled cooks and chefs, which delivers significant cost savings.

“Schools partnering with us have found their food waste significantly reduced because our pre-prepared meals and portion guidance mean schools are easily able to cook and serve meals to their pupils’ exact needs.

“Another advantage of our system, which we’ve found is very attractive to schools is that our model needs far less kitchen space and equipment. Before moving to apetito, many of our partners were facing significant costs to refurbish their kitchens, which budgets did not allow for. Many other partners did not have a kitchen at all, requiring them to rely on hot food from nearby sites, resulting in poor food quality. apetito enables schools to cook on-site, improving food quality and uptake, with less kitchen space and costs when compared to any other catering system.

“One school we’ve launched in the last 6 months were quoted £320,000 to refurbish their

ageing traditional in-house kitchen. By partnering with apetito, they were able to save £250,000 on redesigning their new kitchen around the apetito system.

“Every day on this site, three kitchen assistants serve over 400 meals a day, with no chef required. In fact, the school’s hot meal uptake has grown by 300% since implementing apetito six months ago and the school has been able to facilitate this growth without the need for additional kitchen staff. The management and kitchen staff have loved how simple it has been to serve hundreds of students a day, whilst the pupils are enjoying tucking into a wide variety of delicious meals.

“Given the potential impact of Labour’s VAT policy, we know how important it is that schools are able to make savings without compromising on quality, to ensure their fees can remain competitive. We are really proud of our service because we know it is making a real difference to schools – helping schools to give them full control of catering, great quality meals, all whilst reducing cost and efficiencies.”

For more information visit: <https://apetito.link/ISM2024>

¹ <https://www.schoolguide.co.uk/blog/vat-on-school-fees-everything-parents-need-to-know>



Box Hill School, Surrey, has appointed Ms Hayley Robinson as its first female head, effective immediately.

Ms Robinson, has been serving as Acting Headmistress at Box Hill School since January 2024. She has previously been Deputy Head

Pastoral at The Royal School in Haslemere and Head of Personalised Learning and Academic Enrichment at Reigate Grammar School, both in Surrey.

Ms Robinson assumes the mantle from Mr Lowde, who departed to pursue his interests in artificial intelligence (AI).



DLD College London, has announced the appointment of James Kidd as their new Principal, effective September.

With a career in education of nearly

20 years, James is the current Senior Vice Principal at DLD.

He has previously held leadership roles at DLD and at St John's School Leatherhead, where he left as Assistant Head when he moved to DLD in 2020.



Claire Petrie has been announced as the new Head of Kimbolton Prep School,

Cambridgeshire, from September. Succeeding Philip Foley, who has led the school for the past nine years, Claire joins from Wellingborough Prep School, Northamptonshire, where she has

served as Deputy Head for seven years.

With over a decade of leadership experience in the private sector, Claire's teaching background also spans Mathematics, Physical Education and Games.

Claire is currently pursuing a Masters in Education and Leadership Management.



St George's Junior School, Weybridge, Surrey has announced the appointment of Dan

Jameson as its new Headmaster from the beginning of the Summer Term 2025. Dan has been Head of Garden House Boys' School in

Chelsea for four years.

Prior to his role at Garden House, Dan was Assistant Head at Kensington Prep School. In addition to these roles, he has taught in both state and independent schools, and across single sex and co-educational settings.



Alex Battison has been appointed the next Head, of Wellington School, Somerset. He will

replace Eugene du Toit who, after five years at the helm, is moving to Haileybury School in September.

Alex has been Senior Deputy Head Lord Wandsworth College in Hampshire since 2018. Prior to Lord Wandsworth, Alex was Assistant Head at Wells Cathedral School, Somerset, and previously Director of Learning and Innovation, as well as Assistant Houseparent and Head of Sports Science at Hurstpierpoint College, Sussex.

Chair of Educational Futures as part of Harvard University's Human Flourishing Programme, Alex is also

a Fellow of The Royal Society of Arts, and a Global Ambassador for HundrED.

Alex has a BSc (Hons) and PGCE from the University of Wales, Cardiff, a Masters from Oxford University in Learning and Teaching and is currently working towards the latter stages of his Doctorate in Leadership, Learning and Policy at Bristol University.

He will be taking up his position in September 2024 along with his wife Pippa (a teacher, previously a Housemistress at Hurstpierpoint and Wells Cathedral School) and they have three sons: Charlie (6), Freddie (4) and Jack (2).

Heads Hunted

Among the upcoming head and principal appointments:

Lincoln Minster Prep School	Lincolnshire
Moulsford Pre-Prep School	Oxfordshire
Myddelton College	Denbighshire
Kew Green Prep School Nursery	Surrey
Wimbledon High Junior School	London
Halycon International School	London
OneSchool Global Kenley Campus	Surrey
St Christopher's, Hampstead	London
Nottingham High Infant and Junior School	Nottinghamshire

If you would like mention made of your upcoming head or principal appointment for which applications are sought please let us know – there is no charge for a listing.

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Historic performance



Benenden School, Kent, as made history twice – not only being the first school to ever perform at the London Coliseum, but also putting on the first ever production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat on the iconic Coliseum stage, all as part of the school's centenary celebrations.

Students were no doubt encouraged by the presence of Roger Watson, the show's original producer, who was in the audience. This was alongside a message written by Sir Tim Rice, which featured in the production's programme.

Pictured: Joseph at the Coliseum

This once-in-a-generation performance was made possible by Benenden's partnership with the English National Opera, allowing the production to go ahead in a venue usually not available to schools. Benenden's partnership with ENO extends beyond the Coliseum performance, however, as Benenden continues to partner with the organisation to deliver opera workshops in partner prep and primary schools – in an initiative aimed at introducing new audiences to opera.

Festival of Music and Drama



Winterfold School, Worcestershire, has recently participated in the Dudley Festival of Music and Drama. The festival, steeped in tradition and drawing participants from the surrounding area, provided a valuable platform for students to showcase their talents and passion for the arts.

Despite the stiff competition, Winterfold School students achieved a number of winning

Pictured: The Winterfold festival choir

trophies, alongside numerous runner-up positions.

Notable achievements include the Festival Choir securing 1st place in the choir section, as well as individual triumphs such as Georgia L's 1st place in the Grade 4 to 5 string class, and Jemima C's success in the Grade 1 strings category. Dominic G and Harry H also earned 1st place in their respective sections.

'Made in Dagenham'



St Edmund's College, Hertfordshire, is celebrating the successful conclusion of its sold-out musical production, 'Made in Dagenham', which ran over four nights in the lead up to Easter.

Featuring a cast of 46 pupils, the show was inspired by true events

Pictured: Pupils in 'Made n Dagenham'

and the hit movie of the same name. Set against the backdrop of the 1968 Ford sewing machinists strike in Dagenham, the production showcased the resilience and determination of the women who fought for equal pay and recognition.

Treasure Island - 41 years apart



In 1983, Alistair Lyttle, then aged 12, played the part of Dr Livesey in a production of Treasure Island at West House School, West Midlands. Little could he have imagined that 41 years later he would be standing on the same stage, introducing this year's school production in the role of Headmaster.

Mr Lyttle recalling the thrill of taking part in this production said: "I remember I was particularly proud of the fact that, although first night nerves got the better of me and I couldn't pronounce the word 'remarkable', I had the wherewithal to replace it with the word 'amazing' and I was extremely pleased with my improvising skills!"

"I can also recall the hilarity of the moment when Ben Gunn burst onto the stage and got his wig caught in the foliage – classic schoolboy humour.

Pictured: Alistair Lyttle (far right) 1983 / Headmaster, Alistair Lyttle 2024 with Hassan / Treasure Island, cast of 2024



"The excitement of taking part in school productions are joyful memories that stay with me, and I know they helped me to develop skills that went far beyond my acting abilities, which were mediocre at best."

Mr Lyttle who has been Headmaster at West House School since 2004, having 'returned home' to join the teaching staff in 1996, did offer the 2024 version of Dr Livesey, Hassan (Year 6), some acting tips but, after watching the performances from all the cast, felt that Hassan had done a much better job in the part.

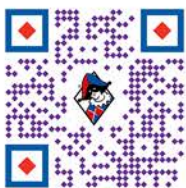
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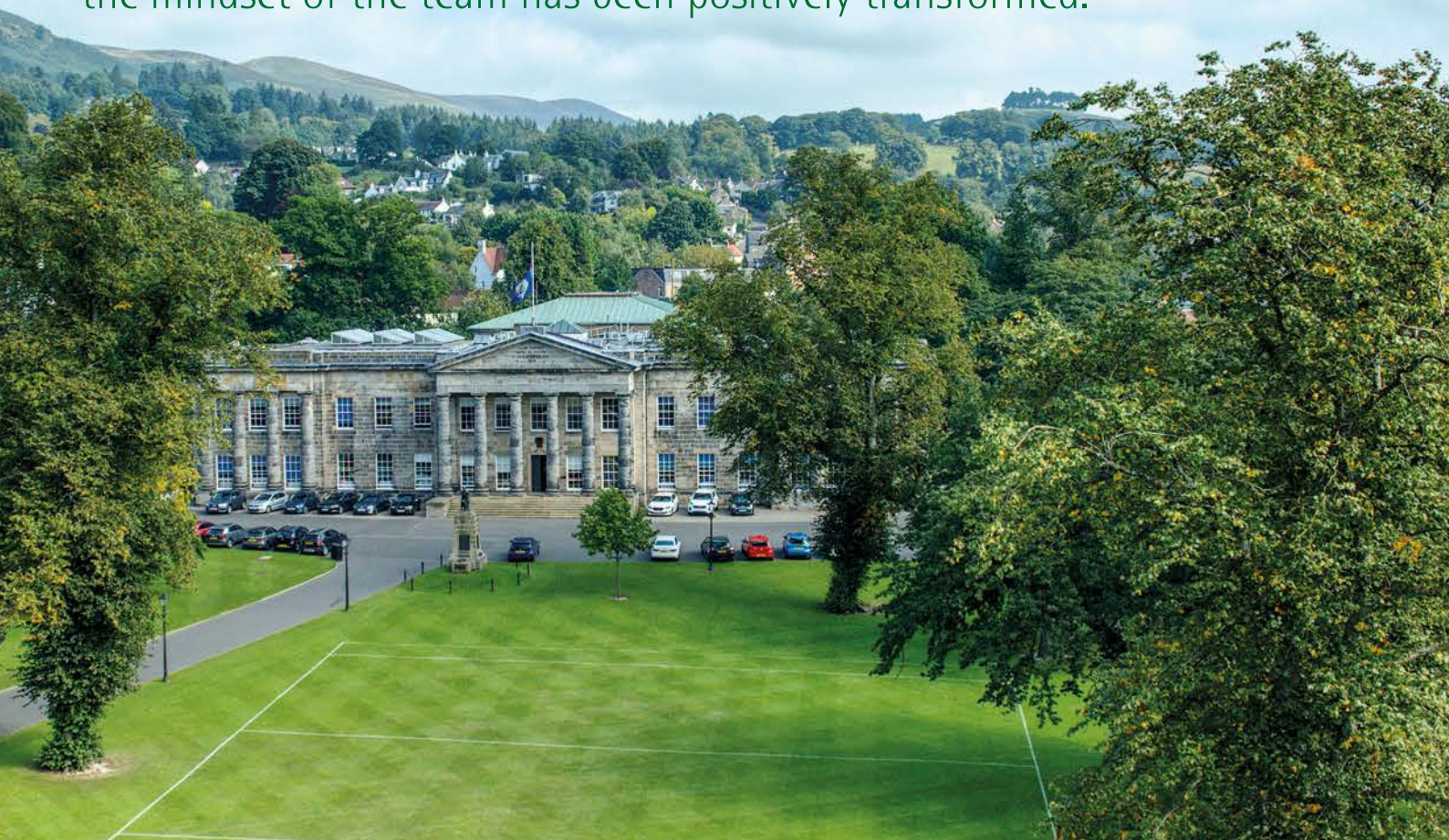


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Turf Tank brings mental health boost to Dollar Academy Grounds Team

Initial marking for athletics and other sports used to be a source of anxiety and stress at Dollar Academy, but since using the Turf Tank One, the mindset of the team has been positively transformed.



Situated in the town of Dollar, Central Scotland, the co-educational day and boarding school occupies a 70-acre site at the base of the Ochil Hills. It is there Head of Grounds, John Vaughan-Davis, and his team strive to provide the best surfaces possible for the 1300 children aged 5-18.

A significant part of that task is pitch presentation and line marking. Previously, the job of initial line marking for athletics, in particular, brought a lot of stress to the team, creating a negative environment to work in. But with the Turf Tank robot at their disposal, that's all changed.

"I think the mental health of our team has improved because of the Turf Tank," John begins. "Historically, leading up to athletics marking, initial rugby marking, and football initial markings, there's always been a bit of anxiety, a bit of stress, and it was a really, really anxious environment to be around.

"Now that we've got the Turf Tank, it's completely changed the team's mindset. It's gone from being tense to just relaxed and having faith and trust in the Turf Tank. It just eased everyone's concerns. It's made a much better working environment for all of us, leading up to those points by removing an added stress and taking it away.

"So mental health is probably one of the biggest benefits that I'm not sure people talk about enough."

As well as benefitting the existing team, John has also seen an impact when recruiting. In his experience, the use of innovative technology has interested potential candidates and should be used as a tool to attract people into the industry.

By attracting new staff and boosting the morale of the existing team, the Turf Tank is helping John achieve his goals for the site and add finishes like school logos and numbers on rugby pitches, which they couldn't do without the robot.

"Having pride in what we do reflects across the whole school, and that's very much at the core of our working process," John explains.

"We want to try and produce the best pitches that we can in the conditions we are given, and the Turf Tank certainly helps us present the pitches in the best way possible.

"We can't do a lot of the things that the Turf Tank does by hand. For example, the numbers that we did today, the school badge or a lacrosse pitch at short notice that



John Vaughan-Davis

we can now do within 20 minutes. We've marked small football pitches for charity days and other events that we couldn't have done without the Turf Tank.

"So for us to produce the best pitches we can is one thing, but being able to do things on short notice is another thing that we keep on having to do. The Turf Tank takes all the pressure off of that element of it, but also knowing that when we do put it out, it's going to do a 100% job.

"It is correct every single time we put that machine out, it's spot on. Regardless of the event, it is always, always 100% right."



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🕒 0:23:56

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💧 5.74 L

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💧 0.7 L

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The Big Help Out – get involved

In tribute to His Majesty The King's public service, The Big Help Out, which launched last year, encourages people to try volunteering for themselves and join the work being undertaken to support their local areas. The aim of The Big Help Out was to use volunteering to bring communities together and create a lasting volunteering legacy from the Coronation weekend.

More than 7 million people took part. This year, with backing from King Charles III, it is growing from a single day to a long weekend on 7-9 June. With Friday now a part of the event, schools are ideally placed to host their very own volunteering days, from big school clean-ups to helping their children become volunteer reading mentors.

Teachers are now being invited to download Big Help Out assemblies and help their students volunteer on The Big Help Out weekend. All resources are available at thebighelpout.org.uk/schools

His Majesty King Charles III, is keen for pupils to be involved, saying: "This year, The Big Help Out is particularly keen to invite schools and businesses to be a part of this special moment," he says. "Young people's energy and enthusiasm can be enormously valuable... So, if you are able, I can only encourage you to support The Big Help Out once more, thereby helping to build the kinder, closer communities of which we can all be so proud."

At Belhaven Hill, East Lothian, the whole school was involved in Big Help Out 2023.

Each year group engaged in a different volunteering activity; from a Belhaven Bay beach clean, cooking and freezing meatball pasta bake for a Relay for Life Dunbar fundraising event, to a cake and coffee morning at a local care home.

Headmaster Olly Langton said: "I loved the idea of The Big Help Out from the beginning. It is just a great opportunity to embed with every child, member of staff and

member of the local community that we are all part of a bigger whole.

"The Big Help Out gives us an opportunity to be helpful and useful, but it also allows us to stop focusing on ourselves and to focus on others. The reality is that the more time we have focusing on ourselves, the more introverted we become, the more prone to poor mental health we are. Being able to say at the end of the day that you've helped someone else is a positive and powerful thing and that is something that we have to repeatedly teach to the children."

Support

The support and encouragement of a range of organisations are on hand including the National Citizens Service (NCS), the Confederation of School Trusts and VotesforSchool.

Opportunities already include:

- Become volunteer reading mentors with Bookmark Reading
- #IWill is asking older students to start their own social action campaigns
- Schools will be creating small teams of children befrienders and visiting their local care homes through the Linking Network
- Guide Dogs are looking for volunteer inclusion champions
- National Trust is asking schools to join their Wild Isle Campaign by monitoring local wildlife as part of a national register

- And schools are being encouraged to lead their own special events on the day whether that's litter picks or mentoring, to community gardening, supporting local foodbanks or helping monitor local wildlife

Pupil wellbeing

Research shows that volunteering has the potential to enhance wellbeing. Young volunteers have reported meeting new people and feeling less isolated because of their volunteering¹. A longitudinal study² of data from nearly 70,000 UK participants found that compared to people who didn't volunteer, those who did were more satisfied with their lives and rated their overall health as better. Other research has shown that altruistic behaviour can activate the reward centre of our brains and reduce stress levels.

Volunteering at an early age brings lasting benefits. Youngsters who first get involved in volunteering under the age of 10 are more than twice as likely to form a "habit of service" than if they start aged 16-18 years, making Big Help Out an investment in local communities for years to come.

Helping others, gaining new skills and connecting with local communities and environments also align with a range of curriculum areas such as PHSE, citizenship, RE, geography and careers education.

Get involved:

www.thebighelpout.org.uk/schools



1 NCVO, Time Well Spent – a national survey on the volunteer experience, www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/time-well-spent-national-survey-volunteer-experience/volunteer-impacts

2 Lawton, R.N., Gramatki, I., Watt, W. et al. Does Volunteering Make Us Happier, or Are Happier People More Likely to Volunteer? Addressing the Problem of Reverse Causality When Estimating the Wellbeing Impacts of Volunteering, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10902-020-00242-8>

Heartfelt support

It was codename red for Old Hall School, Shropshire, which turned scarlet, ruby and crimson for a day to mark National Heart Week. An initiative very important to ten-year-old pupil Hattie who had open heart surgery at the Evelina Children's Hospital when she was just a baby, and where she continues to be looked after.

The children at Old Hall decided they were all red-y for some

Pictured: Hattie with a cheque of raised funds for Tiny Tickers

fundraising fun to support charities which provide much needed research and training to save the lives of babies and children suffering with congenital heart defects. They also wanted to raise awareness of the British Heart Foundation's support for research at the hospital and for Tiny Tickers – a national but smaller charity which carries out much needed sonographer training for congenital heart conditions and fundraises

for pulse oximeters to be placed in NHS Trusts throughout the country.

Head at Old Hall School Mrs Anna Karacan said the children were so enthusiastic when it was suggested that they do something at school to mark National Heart Week.

"We do a number of fundraising initiatives each year, but it was very obvious very quickly this was quite special to the children, particularly those in year five."



Why sustainable school transport matters

In the world of independent school transportation, the journey matters as much as the destination. Zeelo, a pioneering force in home-to-school solutions, are revolutionising the way students travel to and from school whilst helping staff reach sustainability goals and reduce administration time and subsidies via optimisation.

Zeelo are driving school transport change, one journey at a time. With a focus on efficiency, sustainability, and affordability, Zeelo's solutions empower independent schools to offer optimised home to school services that parents can trust - in 2023 parents rated their Zeelo journeys 4.39/5 (from 8,558 Ratings). Through innovative software and managed services, Zeelo enhances bus occupancy, lowers costs, reduces emissions, and bolsters opportunities for admissions and student recruitment.

"Timetable improvements and splitting routes were immediately effective, and much better for our students - Swiftly handled and implemented seamlessly."

**Finance Manager,
All Hallows School**

Zeelo's home to school services are completely carbon-neutral. Yet we recognise this is neither the limit to our responsibility nor ambitions; Zeelo is also passionately committed to having a fully Net Zero-emission fleet in the United Kingdom by 2030 and have already supported organisations like Dwight School London to make the switch to fully electric, emissions-free vehicles.

Zeelo introduce UK's first 100% Electric Home to School with Dwight School London

"We place innovation and sustainability at the heart of our school's mission, vision and values. We are thrilled and immensely proud to be the first school in the whole of the United Kingdom to add this electric vehicle to our fleet of school buses and our whole community is excited by this new initiative."

**Head of School,
Dwight School London**

The recent acquisition of Education transport specialist, Kura, further solidifies Zeelo's position as the UK-market-leading provider of school run services. Together, they boast the largest virtual bus operation in the UK, serving over 220 clients and 40,000 daily riders.

Bringing together the operations, technology and customer success teams provides benefits for existing and new customers, with sharing of best practice and experiences allowing the combined companies to identify and swiftly implement improvements to further support student safeguarding, and parent

and staff experience on the school run.

As part of the acquisition, Zeelo customers can now use a dedicated school trips team - providing safe, reliable and cost-effective transport for sports fixtures and educational visits.

With state-of-the-art tracking systems ensuring punctuality and enhancing safeguarding, Zeelo is transforming rides into measurable, actionable opportunities. In a recent survey 62.72% of parents asked, Strongly Agreed or Agreed with the statement: "If the school removed the service, I or my child/children would not be able to get to school".

Geography plays a crucial role in determining a school's student population. Availability of public transport and congestion due to low-occupancy car use can be a significant hurdle for schools to attract students beyond their immediate vicinity.

Zeelo's innovative approach to expanding potential admissions for independent schools is transforming the landscape of independent education. By addressing transportation barriers, and harnessing postcode data (of both existing, new and potential students) Zeelo is enabling schools to reach a more diverse student population, enhance their admissions and recruitment efforts, and stay competitive in an ever-evolving landscape.

Zeelo took over the management of City of London Freemans' school bus service

We analysed Col's transport program in great detail. Zeelo's

transport experts observed that 33% of the school bus users were travelling long distances to use the school bus. The current routes were only reaching 70% of the school's new starters, and when analysing the pickup search data, we identified that several locations where parents' interest was high were not served by the current network. We also identified four unpopular & unused stops that could be removed to make the routes more time-efficient without impacting convenience for students and parents.

Zeelo optimisation leads to savings of £5,000+ per month and drives increased catchment to generate an additional £50k in revenue

Zeelo analysed the stop requests and pick-up stop search from our ticketing platform to identify new opportunities to optimise and grow the school bus service: recommended three new stops to replace unpopular ones and increase catchment by 48 students. Merging two routes saved £5,720/month, whilst opening two new routes with an increased catchment of 166 students. Zeelo's leading technology platform also enabled COL Freemans' to offer a wide range of booking options to parents and students, letting new families benefit from the school bus service.

"Great company, providing a safe, secure service for my child going to and from school. Easy to navigate booking and any issues are quickly resolved"

City of London Freemans' Parent



Visit www.zeelo.co/education to find out more.

Sport summit

Over 300 young women from state and independent schools across the south and west of England have attended a special sport summit to hear a series of presentations and to take part in masterclasses led by figures from the world of sport.

The Powerhouse Pupil: School Sport Summit 2024 in partnership with Bryanston School, Dorset was organised to help girls and young women take full advantage of the exciting new opportunities for women in sport.

“Sport offers a wide range of professional careers for women, not just as players but also in a myriad of operational and commercial roles,” says Mollie Kmita who co-founded the Powerhouse Project

with her twin sister Rosie. Both have become respected sports broadcasters following successful professional football careers. “Gold medal success at the Olympics and the exciting achievements of the Lionesses have certainly shifted the dial,” continues Mollie. “Such developments have also added further impetus to the remarkable growth in women’s sport, which is expected to generate a staggering \$1billion in revenue this year alone.”

However, as Rosie points out, the sad fact is that two-thirds of girls at school will quit sport during puberty due to social pressures, gender stereotypes, body confidence issues and a lack of self-belief. “We want to change that statistic and ensure the girls of today are truly empowered and have absolutely every opportunity to develop the skills, inner strength and leadership qualities to succeed in the wonderful world of sport.

Other speakers at the Sport Summit included Ivi Casagrande, a former professional footballer who is now a high-performance coach and sports scientist; Edel McCann, an experienced women’s health and



Pictured: Rory McCann, Bryanston’s Director of Sport welcomes the hundreds of pupils attending the Powerhouse Pupil Sport Summit

sports physiotherapist and Clinical Lead at Leto Woman in London, a centre of excellence for women’s health physiotherapy; and Kylee Parsons, the Assistant Academy Director for FC Norsjælland Girls, a professional Danish football team.

Director of Sport at Bryanston, Rory McCann, said: “This is a wonderful and pivotal time for women in sport, but it’s important to show the next generation of players, coaches and organisers that they now have excellent role models and a growing and supportive community to help them follow their dreams and fulfil their career aspirations. Such targeted support simply wasn’t around in years gone

by. The high number of attendees from schools all over the region is really encouraging... and, following the success of this inaugural event, we are hoping the Summit can become a regular annual fixture in the diary.”

Pupils from schools in Dorset, Hampshire, Bristol and Petersfield attended the event. Great care was taken to encourage open discussions and teamwork involving pupils from the different schools and to provide plenty of opportunities for the young women to raise questions regarding their own personal aspirations or any areas of sensitivity and concern.



Pictured: Rosie Kmita from the Powerhouse Project supporting pupils at a special Masterclass held at the recent Sports Summit hosted by Bryanston

Inaugural Hockey and Rugby 7s Tournament

More than 200 pupils from schools across the country travelled to Perthshire and Kinross to take part in Morrison’s Academy’s inaugural U18s Hockey and Rugby7s Tournament.

The school hosted the new event at its Dallerie Playing Fields where six hockey teams and 16 rugby teams competed in a series of group games for the chance to bring home a trophy.

A number of spectators turned out to cheer on the squads from Morrison’s Academy, George Heriot’s School, Edinburgh; St Columba’s School, Inverclyde; High School of Dundee, Angus; Strathallan School, Perthshire and Kinross; The Glasgow Academy, Kinross; The Glasgow Academy, Hutchesons’ Grammar School, Glasgow; Dollar Academy, Clackmannanshire; Robert Gordon’s College, Aberdeen; St Aloysius’ College, Glasgow; and Queen Victoria School, Perthshire and Kinross.

Donated by the Blackie Family, the Dallerie Cup for Rugby went to Dollar Academy and was presented by Morrison’s Academy parent and tournament referee,



Mike Blackie. The Dallerie Cup for Hockey, which was donated by the Lee Family, was also awarded to Dollar Academy and presented by Jenny Lee, PE Teacher and Hockey Coach at Morrison’s Academy.

Eco-friendly medals were presented to the winners and runners up – Strathallan School in the rugby tournament and St Aloysius’ College in the hockey tournament.



Pictured: The U18’s Hockey and Rugby 7s tournament

School swimming pools

School swimming pools are an important asset for any educational institution, providing students with a safe and fun way to exercise and learn important water safety skills. However, over time, pools can deteriorate, leading to leaks and unsightly stains.

If you are considering refurbishing your swimming pool, fibreglass is worth considering. We have over 35 years of experience within the swimming pool lining industry with over 700 pool linings. Our clients include Schools, Leisure centres, Lidos & Councils.

Fibreglass pool linings are a popular choice for many school swimming pools due to their durability, ease of maintenance, and long lifespan. Unlike other types of liners fibreglass is constructed from raw materials applied on site, creating a seamless and watertight finish once cured. Being applied on-site the fibreglass lining moulds itself to any shape or configuration.

This means you don't have to worry about leaks, so it is especially suitable for tiled pools. When comparing refurbishment costs all existing fittings can be utilised whilst some other applications may require a change of fittings.

In addition, fibreglass pool linings are very low maintenance. This means that school staff and maintenance crews will spend less time and money maintaining the pool, and more time focusing on student safety and education.

We can offer a bespoke design service for your school/college crest. Lane lines and bespoke printed mosaic tile bands around the waterline. These are

incorporated within the fibreglass system.

Another advantage of fibreglass pool liners is their long lifespan. They can last up to 20 years with proper care, which is longer than other types of liners. This means that schools won't have to worry about replacing their pool liner for a long time, saving money in the long run that can be allocated to other important areas of the school.

Overall, if you're considering refurbishment of your school swimming pool, fibreglass is worth considering. With its durability, low maintenance, and long lifespan, it's a smart investment that will provide your



students with years of safe and enjoyable swimming experiences.

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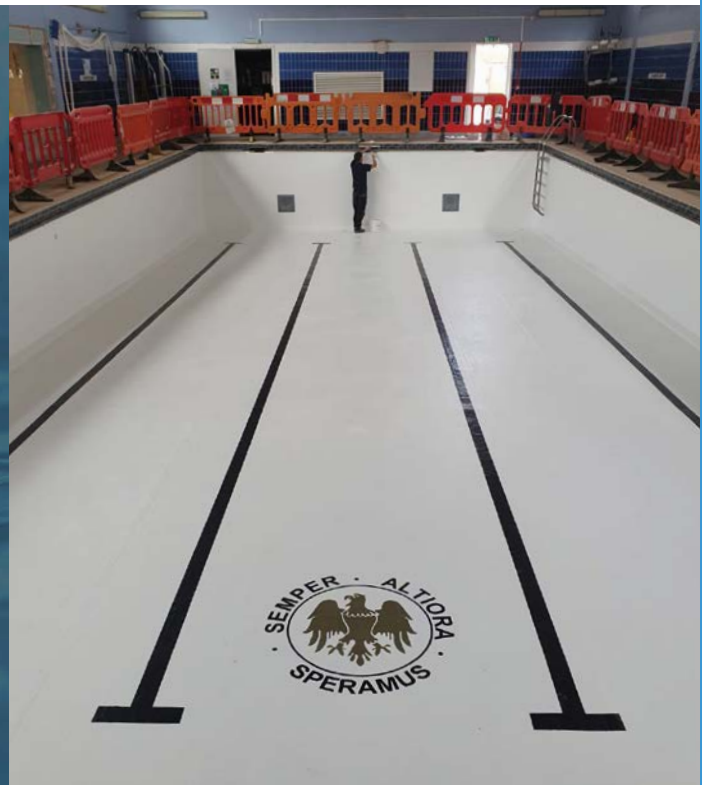
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Girls' Flag Football Tournament

The launch of the Chicago Bears' Greater Manchester Girls' Flag Football Tournament has taken place at Bolton School, Lancashire.

Over one hundred Year 9 and Year 10 girls from eight local secondary schools were in attendance. The Chicago Bears' Greater Manchester Girls' Flag Football League begins this month.

The pupils from All Hallows Roman Catholic High School, Irlam and Cadishead Academy, Moorside High School, Mount

Carmel Roman Catholic High School, Oasis Academy Oldham, Trinity Church of England High School, Wright Robinson College and Bolton School Girls' Division were introduced to the sport by GB, Salford Scorpions and Manchester Titans coaches. Through a presentation and eight skills sessions, the girls learnt the basics of flag football – a non-contact version of American football and a new Olympic sport for 2028 – and were inspired to get involved with the sport and to join a team.



Pictured: Playing flag football

Manchester City partnership

Rossall School, Lancashire, has signed a UK-first partnership with Premier League champions Manchester City. It will see two members of City's Football Education coaching team work permanently at the school.

Pupils at the school were surprised with a video from City players John Stones, Rodri and Rico Lewis screened in an assembly.

Children of all footballing abilities will be taught City's philosophy, alongside tailored training to nurture and elevate their skillset. They will also be offered trips to the Etihad Campus.

Open to ages 11-19, the programme launches in September 2024.



Pictured (l to r): Kaka Wongsiriluk (Rossall School student), Tom Russell (MCFC Coach), Campbell Reid (Rossall School student), Maya Hansen (Rossall School student), Bailey Whalley (MCFC Coach), Tim Charles (Rossall School student)

Photo credit: Anthony Farran; Rossall School

Cricket success

The 2024 cricket season for Taunton School, Somerset, has scored early success as a Year 8 student becomes the youngest selected for an elite women's training squad and the girls' team picks up a county trophy.

Megan, a sports scholarship student has been awarded a place on the Somerset Emerging Players Programme. At 12-years-old she has become the youngest player

by four years to join the county cricket pathway.

The news comes as the school's U15 girls team celebrate winning the county Lady Taverners indoor cricket final.

Alongside the girls' successes, five other Taunton School players went through months of rigorous training before joining the Somerset County U15 side on a tour to Sri Lanka in February.



Pictured: Taunton School Girls' Cricket Team

ISAA Basketball

The boys basketball team from ACS International, Egham, Surrey, have returned to the UK unbeaten and secured a gold medal in the ISAA (International Schools Athletic Association) Division 2 tournament in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. As a result, the team have been promoted and will now compete in Division 1 in the next academic year.

Alongside the success of the boys

team, the girls team from ACS Egham also achieved a bronze medal at the ISAA Division 1 basketball tournament in Athens.

On top of the team success, five students from the school, Amena, Sofia, Stefano, Rajiv and Max were also individually named in the All-Star Selection due to their outstanding effort and performance throughout the tournament.

Pictured: The winning ACS International School Egham's boys basketball team






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The Independent Schools Magazine is read by decision-makers – Governors, Heads, Bursars, Departmental Managers – and reflects news, ideas, influences, and opinions in the independent education sector. A personal printed copy is mailed to heads and other key personnel in fee-paying independent schools plus opinion formers in governments, political parties and educational associations. It is also available as a free eMagazine and online.

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Independent sector perceptions: opening the doors to the media

In a recent BBC programme, 'The State We're In', documentary maker Darren McGarvey, visited Gordonstoun, Moray, to find out how private education gives its pupils the advantage before travelling across the country to state schools charged with educating the rest of the UK's children. Gordonstoun Head of Senior School, Simon Cane-Hardy, examines whether the independent educational offering at the school was accurately portrayed and provides some thoughts on levelling up between sectors.



Simon Cane-Hardy

When Darren McGarvey said, "Gordonstoun is not a school, it's a village where everyone from the Principal to the cafeteria staff are all pulling in the same direction, and that is whatever direction is best for the child," it was clear that he understood us.

I visited Gordonstoun for the first time as I attended a second-round interview. My wife and I had travelled up from South-West England and despite the stormy day, we met a community so close and friendly that simply describing it as a school was insufficient. As we were toured around the school, every student said 'hello' and asked us something to the effect of how we were, and why were we visiting? I've worked in excellent schools

but this school felt very different. Indeed, McGarvey's use of 'village' really works.

I joined Gordonstoun as Head of Senior School in September 2023 so I wasn't there when Darren McGarvey filmed at the school for 'The State We're In' a few months earlier. Agreeing to be involved in this BBC show was a risk; it would have been easy for the producers to have sought, and played on, stereotypes and common perceptions of Gordonstoun and the independent sector more broadly. However, everyone involved in the filming speaks of a positive, enjoyable experience. Darren McGarvey was genuinely interested in what Gordonstoun has to offer and the experience of our students.

It too would have been easy for this documentary to avoid the normality of Gordonstoun and our sector and, instead, focus on our newer buildings, such as the recent opening of our low carbon classrooms or even the school's yacht, Ocean Spirit. Instead, the focus shifted from the facilities, because that's not what makes Gordonstoun, or any school, special. It was the ethos, people and unique curriculum that caught McGarvey's attention.

McGarvey states the top 7% of society get access to independent schools. Of course, our education is expensive and more accessible to the better off. However, a third of Gordonstoun's students receive fees assistance. A strong programme of bursarial support has been a feature of our school since its foundation by Kurt Hahn in 1934 and this continues today.

McGarvey said, "My time at Gordonstoun has been an immersive and, at times, overpowering experience challenging my preconceptions about independent schools, the type of people who go there and the attitudes that they hold."

It is significant that he picked up on the immersive nature of Gordonstoun after spending just a couple of days here, something which has struck me in my short time at the school.

This immersion is a consequence of being full boarding but also Gordonstoun's focus on character education - our students' education outside of the classroom is given equal weight to what happens inside the classroom. "The State We're In" demonstrated some of our 'broader curriculum' and its

benefits. For instance, Gordonstoun has nine community and rescue services, including its own fire service, that focus on supporting the local community. It is a wonderful feature of our school and something the students fully relish.

The purpose of Darren McGarvey's programme was to ask the question: "How can the attainment gap between the wealthiest and the poorest children be narrowed?" and he posed the question of whether we need to 'level' up education, so more students get equal opportunities to reach their full potential.

Gordonstoun can offer its students a range of activities and experiences that are simply not available to most children in our country. However, our Moray Badge, first set up by Kurt Hahn in 1937 to encourage students to take part in various outdoor challenges, is a good example of something others could replicate more affordably.

This scheme is rooted in service to the community and whether it's litter picking, working with local charities or spending time with the elderly, activities such as these are free and something that can be adopted in any part of the country. So, perhaps the 'levelling up' that McGarvey calls for, starts with building closer ties with our communities to foster a renewed sense of purpose, compassion and pride for our children. Only, by going beyond our classrooms, can we lay the foundations to provide students with a 'character education', giving them the best chance to be the best version of themselves.

Capturing the essence of nature



In celebration of National Science Week, the Biology Department from Pocklington School, East Yorkshire has held a school photography competition, aptly titled 'Nature'.

The competition was divided into four categories: Lower School, Middle School, Sixth Form and Staff, allowing individuals to showcase their unique perspectives of nature through

the lens of their cameras. A panel of judges from Pocklington Camera Club lent their expertise to award a winner and two runners-up for each category.

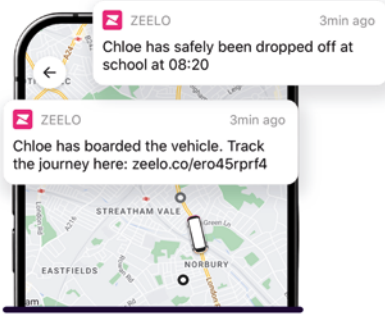
Pupils, parents and staff were welcomed to an exhibition in the School Library to celebrate all the entries. All category winners were awarded a £25 Amazon voucher and runners-up received Easter eggs.

Pictured: Lower School Category Winner and Runners-up Credit: Pocklington School



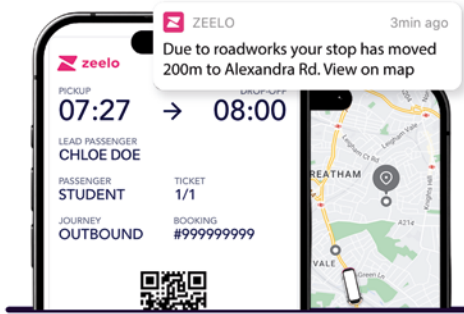
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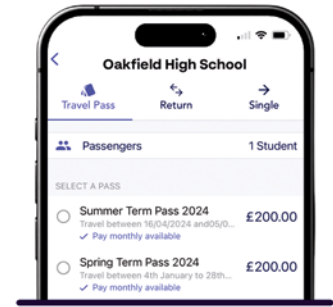
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