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# In this issue...



## Minecraft specialist

An Exeter Junior School, Devon, teacher has been named Minecraft Global Mentor.

Computer Science Coordinator Siobhán Morgan was selected to join an inspiring group of over 300 mentors from 70 countries from over 1,200 applications.

The Minecraft Mentor program recognises educators who have committed to teaching with Minecraft: Education Edition, providing feedback and support to others in the community and advocating for game-based learning.

Siobhán, pictured, is keen to promote Minecraft to teachers around the world, inspiring them to build worlds, make lessons, give webinars and promote game-based learning and Minecraft.

"Minecraft is great because it lets you create whatever you can imagine," said Siobhán.

"It is easy to build what may not be possible in real life. What I love about Minecraft is that everyone has different Minecraft knowledge so all the pupils help each other to solve problems and I always learn new things!

"In the Junior School, we use Minecraft across the curriculum, both on iPads and in our computer room. During Roman Week, we explored the baths in Bath and how Exeter was in Roman times.

"Form One pupils explored the Fantastic Mr Fox world to supplement their English lessons. Pupils re-built the pyramids during Egyptian Day, and most recently, pupils in RS collaboratively built synagogues after learning about Judaism this term.

"We also have lunchtime clubs so that all year groups get the opportunity to enjoy Minecraft. During these, we work on challenges from the Minecraft Global and monthly challenges."

## Cover background

## Magical Pathway

The Maintenance team at Shebbear College in North Devon spent every weekend in October and November at school, working in their own time on a secret plan to build a magical Christmas feature for pupils at the end of term.

Full story, and other seasonal news – see pages 36 – 37

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a key lesson from Covid

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# Snow Day? No Way! Snow Days are Over!

Blended learning is a lesson from Covid, suggests  
John Jones, Director of Innovation at RGS Worcester...



Last week, whilst scraping the morning frost from my window screen before school, my mind wandered back to a very memorable few days in late February, 2018. It was when the so-called 'Beast from the East' battered eastern England with ferocious winds, chilling blizzards and sub-zero temperatures, and for many, the school-run became a dangerous and hazardous proposition.

Therefore, schools up and down the country made the difficult decision to announce 'Snow Days' and with it, unleash untold giddy excitement and delight to vast numbers of children, knowing a day of fun and frolicking in the snow awaited them. Indeed, in my previous school, King's Rochester in Kent (which was well and truly bludgeoned by the Beast) the daring souls who managed to brave the conditions and make it to school faced an entire week of limited lessons, nestled in between raucous mass-snowball fights and snow-angel competitions!

Although I look very fondly back on that chilly week, nostalgia and icicles aside, Snow-Days also represented a temporary loss of learning. Although at King's, we were fortunate enough to be able to set online work using Moodle, in all honesty the work was dry and simply did not compare to the lively and stimulating classroom teaching that the pupils were used to. Due to the 1:2:1 iPad programme, we knew

all pupils would be able to access the work at home, but we also knew they were likely to only be partially engaged by it. Particularly when outside, they were witnessing one of the heaviest snowfalls in living memory. However, knowing the storm would soon pass, the temporary dip in standards was deemed to be OK.

In 2020, on the other hand, schools and colleges felt the full force of an entirely different kind of disturbance; the indiscriminate spread of COVID-19. The deadly disease forced governments across the world to make the difficult decision to close down schools in the hope it would help to halt the unrelenting transmission of the virus. But unlike the Beast from the East, which only lasted a few days, the first UK Lockdown continued for four entire months.

With barely any notice, this unprecedented closure forced schools and colleges across the UK to rapidly and heroically develop plans to facilitate different forms of 'remote learning'. For many, this resulted in reverting to online platforms to share worksheets or tasks. Although this was better than nothing, like the work we provided at King's during the Beast from the East storm, it was certainly not a replacement to normal face to face teaching.

Lockdown also highlighted a significant digital divide across the

UK. Schools and colleges where pupils had access to online services were at a distinct advantage. Yet where 'blended-learning' was already part of institutional culture, the challenge of mitigating learning loss was navigated more successfully.

The term 'blended learning' is used frequently within educational circles and clearly means different things to different people. At RGS Worcester, our interpretation has always been the combination of face-to-face instruction with online learning experiences. This meant that both our pupils and teachers were already used to digital workflows, and therefore with some quickfire re-mapping of digital strategy, we were able to deliver a full curriculum remotely. The major difference being the face-to-face instruction was now also an online learning experience as teachers used video conferencing software to deliver lessons alongside our digital platforms.

Now we are happily back at school, albeit not as we once knew it, our blended learning approach has returned to its more familiar format. However, with COVID-19 still causing pupils and teachers to isolate when required, another buzz-word has crept into everyday discourse; 'Hybrid Learning'.

This phrase means that lessons are adapted to the needs of all the different pupils, regardless of their

location. In other words, lessons can be delivered by teachers who are on-site or in isolation, whilst pupils who are isolating, but well enough to learn, can tune into lessons that are taking place at school. The ability to facilitate both 'blended' and 'hybrid' learning models further emphasises the advantages of embedded digital culture.

These experiences have left no doubt that where possible, strategic use of digital technology has helped to mitigate learning loss during the COVID-19 lockdown. Furthermore, the ramifications for the future of teaching and learning could be profound. For example, in their interim report the EdTech Advisory Forum have called for a new National Edtech Strategy and increased support for schools and colleges to adopt digital technology. Indeed, many educational leaders now realise that online learning and digital tools should simply be a part of everyday education, even when COVID-19 is in the past. With vision, investment and collaboration, there is no reason why 'blended learning' should not become a more common feature of the modern classroom. Indeed, consider the incredible opportunity that the 'hybrid' models of in-person and online schooling represent for the continuity of education when physical access to school becomes a challenge.

Great news for learning, less so for our old friend, the unexpected treat of a snow-day.

## Schools unite to offer all-through education

Two of North West London schools are to merge, creating a single school that will educate 800 children from Harrow and surrounding areas.

Having stood as a prep school in the centre of Harrow for more than 120 years, Quainton Hall School will come together with The John Lyon School, a 144-year-old senior day school in Harrow-on-the-Hill to form

a unified 4 - 18 school with attached 2 ½ - 4 nursery. The schools will continue to operate on both sites.

John Lyon and Quainton Hall will both continue to operate as currently for the 2020-21 school year. All pupils will attend school and classes as expected. From September 2021 Quainton Hall and John Lyon will operate as a single school, with each

remaining on their existing sites. John Lyon will continue to be led by Miss Katherine Haynes. Quainton Hall will continue to be led by Mr Simon Ford.

The move to become a single school will represent the most important and significant change that either school has ever seen. The move to unite the schools was led by The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, which has

run Quainton Hall for the past 75 years. The Shrine, based 125 miles away in north Norfolk, approached John Lyon believing a partnership with another established local school, which itself is part of the wider John Lyon's Foundation (John Lyon School, Harrow School and John Lyon's Charity), would be in the best interest of Quainton Hall.

# The end of the ‘Staff Room’ as we know it?

Rose Hardy, Headmistress at Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls, Hertfordshire, discusses the changes in the working environment for teachers brought about by the pandemic.



The last year has certainly witnessed a great deal of change in schools both in terms of learning structure and also general environment. COVID restrictions have also had a dramatic impact on staff and teachers too, changing the traditional working environment in ways many would not have imagined. Probably one of the most notable changes to the working environment for teachers, is the demise of the staff room as a social space for staff to interact outside of the classroom. Some schools have simply removed all soft furnishings and replaced these with easy to clean hard surfaces, with spaced out tables and seating, others have done away with the staff room altogether. These changes have in many cases led to a much colder, more clinical staff room environment, one that many staff would not choose to spend their break time in.

These adjustments are also forcing staff to find new ways of interacting safely and also to reconsider how they spend their downtime – something that many would argue is no bad thing. Staff are choosing to think more creatively about how and where they interact with peers in school, they are consciously spending more time outdoors walking in the fresh air, exercising and interacting at a safe distance with colleagues. It might well be the death of the institution of the classic staff room as we once knew it, but it is encouraging schools to think outside of the box when it comes to creating social spaces that are conducive to a more healthier work ethic.

## Innovative spaces

With staff recognising the benefits of spending more time

outdoors, many schools are considering implementing new facilities such as pop up coffee stations, with innovative kiosks, converted horse boxes and outdoor seating areas specifically designed for teachers. Although this is a consequence of COVID, it is likely that some of these positive changes will continue beyond the pandemic, especially as we move into spring and summer and the warmer weather entices more of us into the great outdoors.

Many schools have also created virtual staff rooms on Teams or Zoom, where teachers can pin up quotes or chat about issues during the school day. Although many will prefer to interact in person, this platform has proved to be a useful tool especially if members of staff or students are remote teaching/learning for a period of time – it provides another channel of communication regardless of location. It is also important to ensure a member of staff takes ownership of virtual socials/interaction because this will only work effectively if it is managed well with clarity and continuity.

Although some would argue that teachers don't come to school to socialise, interaction between teachers and staff regarding pupils, is hugely important. Staff also support and champion each other mentally during the school day and it can be comforting to be able to share experiences, seek advice and gather opinions from other teachers to boost best practice. Traditionally, the staff room has always been a place that teachers can retreat to, whether that is to find peace and tranquillity amidst a busy school day, to create some quiet thinking time, to ponder an

upcoming lesson, to unwind or indeed to catch up with colleagues on a variety of school-related topics. The staff room has very much been the hub of staff engagement and interaction for many years. Losing this space, even if temporarily, will have been daunting for many in the industry.

## Room for change, flexibility and reinvention

It's no secret that some teachers have struggled with loneliness during school closures and also while delivering lessons remotely. This is why having that support network of other teachers as well as the senior leadership team, is vital for staff wellbeing. For school leaders, the impact of loneliness has perhaps been less of an issue, since Heads are keen to be present and visible in school, and leadership teams and office staff tend to have offices close by to each other, face to face interaction is easier and more fluid (even if socially distanced). For teachers in the classroom, working with smaller groups, the reverse is sometimes true.

Looking for alternative ways for teachers to interact has become more important than ever. Lunch times have seen certain changes too, some which are even proving more popular than previous structures. At our school, staff no longer have lunch with children in the dining room, as they once did. They now have a separate staff-only area where they can eat a hot lunch and unwind. Many teachers have said that eating with students every lunch time didn't give them enough quiet space away from the hustle and bustle of a busy school, to reflect and recharge after a busy morning. What this is demonstrating is that there is

room for change, for flexibility and for reinvention of what was once the norm.

Many schools are thinking about how they can capitalise on those positive changes for the future, whether that means creating innovative 'break out' spaces around the school for teachers and staff, or indeed how outdoor spaces can be utilised to best effect. It may be that there are spaces within the school that are not even in use and could be repurposed to benefit the working environment? For example, our school has a huge open terrace on top of the library, which could certainly be developed and used to our advantage. Likewise, in the future, we are considering developing a 'boulevard' style square outside for students and staff to enjoy – the opportunities are endless.

## Rethink and re-energise

Education spaces might never be the same again, that much is probably true. But there is a real buzz of positivity to come out of this and that is reassuring. We now have the exciting opportunity to rethink everything we have ever done, re-energise the school environment and look at how we can create spaces that would engender healthier working practices for staff. Do we need a staff room? Possibly not, or at least not in the traditional sense. But we do need a space for teachers to interact and share knowledge; what form that space takes though, is open for discussion, and that is a rather exciting prospect.

# Truth Decay: how should we respond morally to Trump?

...asks Duncan Byrne, Headmaster of Loughborough Grammar School, Leicestershire...

I have always believed that one of our primary aims as educators is the pursuit of truth. Our desire for our students to acquire a firm moral compass reflects the belief that there is an objective understanding of 'right and wrong'. In addition, our ambition that students acquire knowledge and understanding is concerned with truth. History teachers would say that the quest for truth is one of the jobs of students as they evaluate the reliability of different sources or the relative merits of different historians' accounts. For centuries scientists have made observations and developed theories that gradually bring us closer to the truth about the world in which we live. In contrast, mathematicians, ever contrary, will argue that, whilst there is ambiguity in Biology, Chemistry

and Physics, the only genuine truth exists in the purity of algebra and calculus.

When I was of school age, my access to this truth was carefully curated, by teachers, the BBC, the contents of the local library and by the set of encyclopaedias in the lounge. At the dawn of the Internet age, we were promised a democratisation of knowledge. Whilst I would never claim that the proliferation of information at our fingertips is not a positive for humanity, the ease with which would-be social media broadcasters can acquire an audience has bypassed the quality control that existed through the narrow information channels of my childhood. This has created the phenomenon of 'fake news' that has left us with the critical task

of educating young people about how to distinguish truth from misinformation.

My title 'Truth Decay' is the name of a work published by the Rand Corporation in 2018, exploring the diminishing role of facts and analysis in American public life. This has never been more obvious that during the recent presidential election campaign, emphasising that our task is no longer the mere identification of incorrect information. Instead, we witness a disturbing disrespect for truth that, to me, undermines the foundations of our liberal democracy. In this 'post-truth' world (as several commentators have termed it), where political ideology seems more highly prized than reality, what are our responsibilities as educational leaders? What role should we play in exposing the perpetrators of this intentional spreading of disinformation that foments division and confusion in our society?

I am very conscious of my responsibility for political impartiality, and have thus largely kept Donald Trump out of my assemblies over the past four years. Conscious of the even greater responsibility to expose the sort of bullying behaviour that we would never tolerate in our own institutions, I have 'called out' reprehensible actions in the past. However, in recent months I have felt the need to go further, as he has been seen to undermine our democratic values in a more insidious way. The term 'fake news' was not created by Trump, but it was he who transformed its meaning. Originally fake news constituted misinformation, pranks and conspiracy theories created to amuse and confuse, but Trump early in his presidency re-defined the concept into a simple and effective propaganda tool to describe news that he didn't like.

Perhaps I'm an idealist, but I would like to think that truth is an absolute concept. Importantly, truth is not what we feel. Educated people should consider it their responsibility to seek the truth



through careful analysis and verification of what they read and hear. It is fundamentally dishonest to repeat, as Trump does regularly, an unsubstantiated opinion saying "I heard somebody say that ..." in order to obfuscate and prevent others from obtaining an objective representation of facts. If we wish our pupils to learn discernment and judgement, we therefore have the responsibility to challenge this relativisation of truth at every opportunity.

This has perhaps never been so important than at this moment, with a powerful anti-vax movement threatening our re-emergence from the darkness of Covid. Vaccine-based misinformation is everywhere, whether peddled by Russian sources, referring to the Oxford AstraZeneca research as the 'monkey vaccine', or by right-wing American conspiracy theorists claiming that technology giants will implant computer chips into our bodies to control our thoughts and behaviour. As ludicrous as such claims seem, surveys suggest that enough Britons and Americans will be persuaded by them to refuse vaccination, thereby putting at risk the prospect of herd immunity and a post-Covid world.

The human race has thrived through continuously increasing its understanding of the world in which we live. As school leaders, we must do everything we can to be beacons for truth, so that our pupils can contribute to the future development of our planet and of humanity. Vitality, this requires us now to stick our heads above the parapet. We may be accused of dabbling in politics, but by displaying the confidence and determination to expose those who seek to benefit from ignorance and confusion, we can help to maintain a world for our children where science is respected above superstition.



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# Reflections on a most extraordinary year – and four things we have learnt...

Devin Cassidy – Headmaster Bury Grammar School, Lancashire – takes stock of 2020 and the way ahead...



About a year ago, we began to hear reports from China about a new virus, but few of us, in day schools anyway, took much notice. It was another of China's many problems and in any case, we had seen it all before with SARS and MERS.

By the end of January however, it was becoming clear that this was a significant issue in China and was possibly going to affect us too. We needed to act and indeed, had our complacent approach to the news from China over previous weeks caught us out?

Together with, I expect, many Heads across the country, we formed a school 'COBRA' group to consider the risks and plan. We met daily during February and March and watched as initially the virus hit the shores and then invaded. What was this going to mean for the country and indeed for independent education? Businesses across the land were forced to close and this was surely going to knock on to us. What about the impact of the virus on our school community, some 1200 pupils and 250 staff; how might the virus affect them, some of whom were classed as vulnerable and extremely vulnerable?

During a Governors' meeting in early March, we discussed the possibility of a lockdown which was becoming increasingly likely and I recall promoting the advice from the Independent Schools' Council to stick with tried and tested technology which for BGS consisted of online posting of assignments and homework. Indeed, I fiercely resisted suggestions of video teaching – this was not the time to be compromising our safeguarding culture and video lessons had all sorts of risks attached, or so we thought!

On 20th March we locked down following some emotional assemblies. Tears were shed during the U6th final assembly although they conducted themselves incredibly well and showed what fine young men and women they had turned into. In the back of my mind, I thought all of this was a bit of an overreaction as surely, we would be back after Easter. How wrong I was.

So, the following Monday we began using our tried and tested approach

to online work but in truth it soon became apparent that this would only work as a sticking plaster to a much greater problem. It was certainly no substitute for teaching in the medium to long term, but we were also faced with the issue of access to devices. In households across the country a similar picture was emerging of whole families including parents who were working from home needing access to a limited amount of household hardware; another approach was needed!

In addition to the issues with access, it was also clear that the online submission of work was incredibly cumbersome and time consuming and at risk of becoming an unrealistic expectation for staff to receive, download, mark, scan, upload, record, provide feedback etc.

Time to think a little more creatively! Firstly, we needed to address the staff IT access issue. They were working from home and we felt a real sense of duty to support their work. After all, many of them were in a similar position to our pupils in terms of access to household hardware. So, we purchased each member of staff a Dell 2 in 1 device. This was a massive investment and logistical problem to solve but in true BGS spirit it was just another problem to be resolved. The setting up, distribution and training of staff went incredibly smoothly considering we had to do so face to face (so to speak) whilst keeping people safe at the height of the pandemic in May. This improved online provision and MS Teams video teaching then took place, but the problem remained that the pupils had patchy access to hardware at home.

So, towards the end of the Summer term, we took the decision to become a Microsoft school using Microsoft devices. We communicated with parents and rolled out a programme whereby the parents entered into a partnership with us for the purchase of over one thousand machines. The school purchased the devices whilst the parents signed up to pay £10 per month insurance and warranty – an absolute bargain considering the quality of device they were receiving. We have now rolled the programme out fully and virtually every pupil

from Year 1 – U6th has a device. Much training has been provided to both staff and pupils and much more training is anticipated as our digital strategy accelerates beyond what any of us thought may have been possible. Indeed, it just was not a priority 12 months ago.

So, what have we learnt from our experience over the last 12 months?

Firstly, almost anything is possible with the correct vision, plan, mindset and team. One needs a team around you which has a positive mindset and a determination that we will deliver and defy the odds. School leaders in independent schools were faced with a very worrying situation back in March and throughout the lockdown. The response shown by most illustrates what a dedicated and able sector independent education is, and we should be proud of what was achieved in most cases.

Secondly, positive communication and staying connected with all stakeholders was a crucial part of retaining confidence in the school. Whilst every time you switched on the news you were faced with more doom and gloom emerging from hospitals across the country as well as the looming economic impact, we tried to keep communications upbeat and life affirming, and this was certainly welcomed by a respectable number of parents and staff. Getting this balance right was of course a challenge, we did not want to appear insensitive or as if we were living in a quite different world to the rest of society.

Thirdly, understanding people. What makes them tick, the what's in it for me factor and their fears, uncertainties, and doubts. I work on the assumption that staff are all good people working for the good of the pupils and with the absolute best of intentions for pupils. But there was a good deal of worry among some and the pandemic was having its effect. Of course, when one stands back and takes stock, this was to be expected. Many of them had been working remotely, which is a quite unusual way of working for teachers, most of whom enjoy day to day in person interactions. After several weeks of staying at and working

from home it was taking its toll on a few. So, we took staff welfare and wellbeing very seriously as we needed to take them with us on our journey. Happy, secure staff who felt that work provided a sense of normality were likely to best provide for our pupils and indeed this became a reality and we were enormously grateful for their support throughout.

Fourthly, the importance of prudent fiscal management of schools has never been more important. Knowing when to adjust revenue and to give loyal parents back what you can in addition to adopting a sensitive and understanding approach to those who found themselves in financial difficulty was an essential strategy. But also continuing to work incredibly hard on the admissions function of the school. This approach resulted in an increase in our pupil numbers in September 2020 compared with the same month 12 months previously. Yes, the devices were a huge cost, but one needs to also have good judgement and know when such a cost is necessary and know what other costs to reduce. But had we not, for the years prior to the pandemic, had such a prudent approach, then we would not have had the flexibility to be able to respond so confidently for the good of our pupils' education when the pandemic hit.

We are not out of the pandemic yet and the mindset we are trying to inculcate in our staff is that we need to be learning to live with the virus. Yes, a vaccine is well on its way and we expect things to get back to some normality but for now I want the new normal for us to be living safely with the virus as far as it is possible to do so. I have seen the education sector conduct itself with immense dignity in the face of unprecedented uncertainty from Government. Never again should it be said those who can't teach!

# Time to change what we teach and how we teach it?

If the purpose of education is to prepare pupils to thrive in the future, then the skills need to be developed that will enable them to do that.

That means putting leadership and life skills at the heart of education, not as a bolt-on, or something students are assumed to pick up through osmosis, but as a core, structured part of the curriculum, delivered by experts in human development.

Leadership specialists at Ivy House London are working with education and business to explore exactly how to make this shift.

They have recently published research and insights from changemakers in education and business on

the real opportunities to create meaningful change in the education system.

The paper looks at what human development is, why it matters and how we put this at the heart of education; provide an insight into how to effectively deliver a curriculum that supports both academic and personal growth; and offers inspiration for your own strategy, exploring how this can impact your school culture, teacher training and student support.

The full report is available to download at [www.ivyhouse.co.uk/its-time](http://www.ivyhouse.co.uk/its-time).

Extracts follow:

Over the last 200 years the education system has remained relatively unchanged. But COVID-19 changed everything. Whilst for some, the impact may be seen as a temporary upheaval, for others it's a catalyst for positive change.

The truth is, we were already facing a skills, wellbeing and employment crisis, necessitating a fundamental change in what and how we teach young people, and how we prepare them to thrive in work and life. Here's why:

## Skills crisis

- 40% of employers have difficulty filling entry-level vacancies because applicants lack soft skills
- 29% of Gen Zs believe they have the skills and knowledge they'll need to thrive in work
- 60% of employers said that new graduates were not adequately prepared for the world of work

## Wellbeing crisis

- 88% of students admit to struggling with feelings of anxiety
- One in four students suffer from mental health problems
- 17.9 million working days were lost due to work-related stress in 2019/2020

## Employment crisis

- In June 2020, 522,200 people aged 16-24 claimed unemployment-related benefits
- 4% of 2020 graduates have secured a job, with an average of 93 applicants per role
- 80% of professional roles are still filled with people from 'better off' backgrounds

The report concludes with five key points of change:

**1. Teaching different skills** – The world is changing and we need to change with it. It's no longer enough to send students off with a handful of academic qualifications and an impressive set of extra-curricular achievements. Quite simply, that's not enough to set them up for success in this globally competitive and uncertain world. It's not what's going to make them stand out at interview, set them up for success in the workplace or help them to overcome setbacks and navigate challenges in life. No. We need to develop a core set of leadership and life skills that will be instrumental to their future success. Skills that will enable them to pitch themselves, build effective relationships, give and receive powerful feedback, lead themselves and others.

We need to give students the time and tools to discover their unique character, who they are and how they can play to their strengths. Then we need to give them the skills that will enable them to take that character to the world and thrive. Finally, we need to give them the opportunity to practise these skills in a safe environment.

We need to shift our focus towards developing well-rounded young adults who are ready to take their place in the world; who know themselves and are prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life and who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to thrive in school and beyond.

**2. Starting sooner** – The good news is that we have never known so much about what's needed

to thrive in today's environment of fast-moving change and competition. However, until now the skills and knowledge required have never been available to those who need them most; to those at the start of their journeys. If we are really going to make meaningful change in how we're preparing young people to thrive, this needs to be part of the core curriculum from day one. They need to sit at its heart so we begin developing the whole human being, not just their performance capability.

**3. A more balanced curriculum** – This means finding a better balance between the development of academic and personal knowledge. Overwhelming research suggests that developing critical life skills can be directly attributed to improved cognitive functioning and academic performance – correlating directly to how socially, academically and professionally skilled students will become now and in the future.

**4. Recognising this kind of development requires expertise** – This kind of development is deep and complex. We're talking about human development, mindset shift and behavioural change, all of which require as much specialist expertise as teaching an academic subject. This means, if we are going to do it properly, teaming up with experts in this field and giving passionate, open-to-learning teachers the training they need.

**5. Education and business working together** – We need to break up the hierarchies, bringing schools and organisations closer together to become positive catalysts of change. In this way we will build a golden thread of connectivity between education and business, recognising the critical and shared role both play in the development of future generations.

## Major investment programme as age range grows

Birchfield School, Shropshire, which currently educates boys and girls from ages four to 13, will welcome children up to the age of 16 from September - and will see a major investment programme, including new science and sports facilities.

The school has become part of the St Philips Education group, which also owns St Dominic's Grammar School in Brewood, and co-owner of the group, Gary Hartland, said pupils, parents and staff could look forward to a bright future.

He said: "We are delighted to be providing a sound financial platform for the Headmistress and her staff to continue offering excellent education across academic, sporting and so many other areas of school life. We are passionate about providing the very best facilities for pupils, and will be undertaking a major improvement programme, with the initial investment being in the region of £500,000".

From September 2021, Birchfield School will welcome pupils in Year 9 - building upon its reputation for educating boys and girls from four to 13, and will offer a three-year GCSE programme for pupils up to the age of 16.

Headmistress, Sarah Morris, pictured, said the senior part of the school would be housed in the traditional setting of the main school house, with modern facilities combined with impressive outdoor sporting facilities. "We will see



investment in so many areas of school life, adding to our already highly-respected educational provision, and allowing our pupils the opportunity to stay on with us at the school they love so much for their ongoing education".

The school will continue to prepare pupils for 11+ entrance to the grammar schools, as well as offering tailored learning for Common Entrance and Scholarship to senior schools at 13+, where pupils have been awarded 41 scholarships in the last three years alone.

Mrs Morris added that as part of the school's development, parents would see new minibus routes on offer. Plans are being progressed to prioritise all areas of the school site right from the pre-prep department to developing state-of-the-art science facilities as well as significant investment in the sporting facilities.

## Boarders cycle for Foodbank

Late last term, residents of Parker's, West Buckland School's Sixth Form boarding house, cycled the distance from Land's End to John O'Groats to raise money for the Northern Devon Foodbank.

When James Conlon, one of the Parker's house parents, put the idea to the boarders, they were enthusiastic about helping local people in need and every Sixth Form boarder completed at least ten miles on the bike in a Covid-safe, socially distanced way. Most of the boarders did double, treble or in some cases four times that amount.

When the boarders decided to do this challenge, the school hoped



to raise £200, so everyone is delighted to have raised over £1000 (including Gift Aid) and money is still coming in.

*Pictured: Headmaster Phillip Stapleton pedals away*

## Why deploy Aura Air across your school?

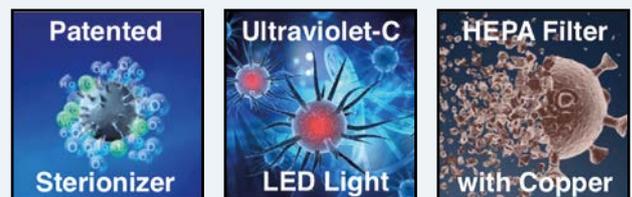
Reacts instantly to critical air conditions

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Compact and easy to install

Perfect size for classrooms

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Sterionizer	99.9651%
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"The air filtration system not only provides a significant line of defence against Covid but also dramatically reduces the impact of the polluted air that we are inevitably exposed to as an urban school."

Simon Gould, Headmaster of Hurlingham Prep School (43 units deployed to date)

# Staff Wellbeing – a Lead Indicator for School Performance



Never has a year been educationally more demanding. Cancelled exams, teaching in bubbles, staggered bells, an ever-shifting timetable, one-way systems, parents in online lessons, the endless uploading of digital resources, hand sanitiser, masks and ever-open windows.

Research by Deloitte in January 2020 demonstrated a 17 percent rise in the prevalence of poor mental health in the preceding three years with a total cost to the UK economy of around £45 billion. And that was before the arrival of a tiny RNA virus on our shores, wreaking havoc to life as we knew it.

*A report by Dr Sarah Hattam, founder of Concilio Health...*

Whilst the coronavirus pandemic is predominantly a physical health problem it has sown the seeds of a mental health tsunami. The education sector is no exception. As with all tsunamis, their effects are indiscriminate. Both student and staff mental health are up for grabs as Covid-19 collateral. It has long been proven that teacher morale has a direct correlation with pupil mental health and achievement. We know that resilient staff can support and buffer the secondary effects of the pandemic for students. But how can schools also support their staff effectively in these challenging times?

As one school leader recently told us: “Staff wellbeing has never been more important. It’s no longer a nice-to-have. Wellbeing has taken centre stage as an absolute essential for the effective functioning of the whole school.”

So, if, in the words of Albert Einstein “In the midst of crisis lies a great opportunity”, what lessons does the pandemic teach us?

## 1. Recognise staff wellbeing as the lead indicator for overall school performance

Research published by the Economist during the pandemic demonstrates that one fifth of teachers leave the job within their first two years and one third leave within five years. Teacher burnout is a commonly cited cause (Roloff and Brown 2011). These are important findings but we can’t afford to wait for these

lag indicators to emerge. If we do, we’ve missed the point. Schools that are prepared to invest in the measurement and tracking of staff wellbeing and listen deeply to their people will have invaluable lead indicator data from which to identify priorities for action.

## 2. We must move beyond physical safety to ensure psychological safety

The pandemic has thrown into sharp relief our duty of care to both students and staff. But that doesn’t end with physical health and safety measures to ensure Covid-secure school buildings. The psychological toll associated with confronting the current climate of uncertainty is significant.

Every school is a delicately balanced ecosystem, upon which successful learning interactions depend. Staff wellbeing is a key determinant which plays a pivotal role in the flourishing of the whole. Over-intensive pressure on any part of an ecosystem will have detrimental effects. At a human resources level the negative impacts of such pressure include staff under-performance, physical and mental illness and short and long-term sickness absence.

Every school has implemented multiple measures to prevent the spread of the virus. We now need similar pre-emptive measures that ensure not just physical but psychological safety for the staff.

Mr James Lockwood Headmaster of Woodhouse School writes:

*“The consequences of the Covid-19 have been, and continue to be, significant and far-reaching and we live in a world of continued uncertainty. There has never been a more important time to look after, support and invest in the most important asset in any organisation, its people.”*

*Dr Sarah Hattam of Concilio Health provided Woodhouse Grove with the evidence, expertise and support to improve staff health and productivity and this work gave the School a platform on which to integrate wellbeing throughout the School and embed it in its culture. Concilio Health has a proven track record in bringing a data driven approach and applying the latest health research to directly improve performance in the workplace and their understanding of how the education sector was crucial to the success of the project.”*

## 3. Recognise the F word

One of the secondary pandemic effects is a pervasive sense of fatigue which, if not managed may lead to staff burnout. Burnout is a term originally derived by the space industry to describe a rocket that has burnt through its fuel supply and one of the cardinal symptoms of burnout is emotional exhaustion. This exhaustion overwhelms our most highly developed brain area, the pre-frontal cortex and has negative impacts on creativity, logic, decision-making and collaboration. We lose focus, find it difficult to concentrate and productivity takes a nose-dive.

The solution is not to work longer and harder.

Neuroscience clearly demonstrates that ongoing stress also causes shrinkage of the brain’s short-term memory area, the hippocampus. Such a defensive state leads to cognitive overload, reduced mental agility and negative thinking.

Even before the pandemic, our research in schools demonstrated an epidemic of sleep deprivation and a persistent overspill of work-related stress into home life.

If we are to avoid teacher burnout as a secondary pandemic effect, we need school leaders who are prepared to look at systemic ways of working to reduce fatigue, maximise teacher wellbeing, role model best practice and lead by example.



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NATIONWIDE SUPPLIERS OF PEUGEOT (RECOMMENDED), FORD & VAUXHALL

# Pupils join global study to advance biomedical research



A pioneering study of genetics using fruit flies is being undertaken by pupils at Haileybury, Hertfordshire, alongside scientists at Stanford University and the University of Oxford, contributing to efforts to find cures for human diseases including pancreatic cancer and diabetes.

A-level and IB pupils will work collaboratively with their own teachers and world-leading scientists at Stanford, in California in the United States, and at Oxford on Stan-X – an open-ended science programme based on experimental biology. The ultimate goal of the research is to introduce students and their teachers to genuine, unscripted experimental science.

At Haileybury, seven sixth form pupils will work with staff, who have created a purpose-built laboratory, and are using high-tech microscopes to identify phenotypic markers in *Drosophila melanogaster*

(otherwise known as fruit flies), such as curly wings, stubble hair or white eyes.

Fruit flies are considered a model organism, and humans and fruit flies share many mechanisms that are crucial for development and survival. The aim of the research is to use fruit flies to understand the genetic processes that drive human diseases, with the results obtained at Haileybury providing new tools and insights to a global community of researchers investigating diseases like diabetes and cancer.

In prior Stan-X partnerships, research findings co-authored by pupils and instructors have been published in peer-reviewed science journals, and presented at international meetings. Similar outcomes are anticipated from the Stan-X partnership with Haileybury.

Martin Collier (pictured above left), the Master at Haileybury, said: "We are very proud to have been invited to be involved in this project and to be the only school in Europe

offering Stan-X. It is very exciting indeed to be involved in a project that so significantly enhances our pupils' scientific understanding. We are hopeful that our new Science Centre will be completed in two years' time. It is an ambitious project, and ground-breaking, in that integral to the project will be a standalone facility for scientific and technological research.

"Stan-X is the first of many advanced research projects that will be undertaken at Haileybury by our pupils over the course of the coming years."

Stan-X is the brainchild of Stanford professor Seung Kim, who wanted to introduce more investigative science rather than the predictable experiments carried out in school labs across the world. The course originated at Phillips Exeter Academy, in New Hampshire in the US, nine years ago. Haileybury is offering it as an academic enrichment option with seven sessions a week.



Pupils work at Fly Stations, using a Fly Pad and a very fine paint brush to sort and file the flies who are put to sleep with carbon dioxide which is pumped into their chamber. A glow-in-the-dark protein helps establish where an injected chunk of DNA has 'landed'.

The process involves a series of 'crosses' which act as checkpoints throughout the breeding programme. Pupils will experience the highs and lows of the science experiment, allowing them to see science in its purest form. The findings are then sent to Stanford University research associate Lutz Kockel to verify them.

"Fine droplets can remain airborne for several hours in still air... cases of transmission from people more than 2m apart have occurred, in enclosed spaces with poor ventilation, and typically with extended exposure to an infected person of more than 30 minutes".

(IDC Report - Oct 5, 2020).

## Airborne contagion – the hidden risk

Simply turning on the air conditioning or a fan heater or installing a "powerful air filter" in the corner of the room may actually do more harm than good, suggests Paul Kasler...

The correct choice and positioning of air filter systems should not just reduce the risk of airborne contagion from the coronavirus, but also other viruses, as well as reducing bacterial infections, mould, pollen and gaseous pollutants from vehicles as well as indoor contaminants.

### Judicious Positioning - Big is not necessarily beautiful

The primary goal of any filter system must be to remove the contaminants at source. You also don't want to churn up the air with a powerful corner-based Filter unit. Larger droplets that would normally harmlessly fall to the floor may be recirculated into the air and the smaller droplets may be concentrated together in an air vortex and directed back into peoples' faces.

### Will my new Filter System actually destroy the Virus?

#### Medical grade HEPA Filters

HEPA filters simply catch the virus, they do not destroy it. That is why the HEPA filters on modern aircrafts need to be regularly serviced. The new approach is to impregnate the HEPA filter in Zinc Oxide or Copper to not just capture but also destroy viruses. "No virus could be

recovered off of copper after 4 hours, while the virus could be recovered after 24 hours on cardboard, and up to 72 hours on stainless steel and plastic", states a recent study in the New England Journal of Medicine.

#### UV-C

Ultraviolet light in the C-band is a proven technology for cleaning surgical equipment and now considered one method of destroying the virus. Just make sure the emitted light is well screened from view, as it can damage the skin and is particularly dangerous to the eyes.

#### Beware traditional Ionisers

Traditional Ionisers produce Ozone which is known to damage the lungs. Any unit producing above 50-70ppb (parts per billion) of Ozone is considered dangerous to human health as stated by COMEAP and the EPA. We have only identified one Ioniser that produces significantly lower levels of Ozone – the Sterionizer – which is specified at producing less than 5ppb.

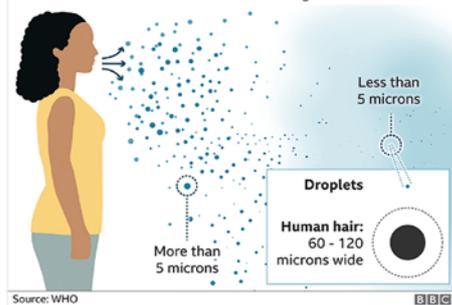
#### The Future of Air Filter Technology

The next generation of Smart Air Filters is already here – a filter system that will instantly warn

### The difference between droplet and airborne transmission

**Droplet transmission**  
Coughs and sneezes can spread droplets of saliva and mucus

**Airborne transmission**  
Tiny particles, possibly produced by talking, are suspended in the air for longer and travel further



you and work harder if a specific level of gas or particle is detected at a dangerous level - that can be taught a specific person's allergies and as a consequence react in a more fine-tuned manner. The latest Smart Filters can capture the air quality readings in your property every 10 seconds over many months. Maybe we'll soon see a new standard requiring the monitoring and maintaining of recommended levels of air quality throughout every School in the UK?

Paul Kasler is the Managing Director of Aura Air UK Limited – the UK Distributor of the all-in-one Air Monitoring, Filtering and Disinfection system of the same name. Paul has over 40 years of experience in the Engineering & Technology sectors. He can be contacted on 020 8420 4234 or emailed on pk@aura-air.co.uk. The Aura Air website is www.aurasmartair.co.uk



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*Always thinking ahead*

# Tributes to head Richard Marshall

The tenth headmaster of Ashville College, Yorkshire, Richard Marshall, died late last term at the age of 48. He had been suffering from cancer.

Leading the tributes Jamie Search, Chair of Governors, described Mr Marshall as an “outstanding leader who has been tragically taken from us far too early”, whilst Elspeth Fisher, Ashville College Acting Head, said it was “an incredibly sad day for Ashville College and the wider Ashville family”, and Ian Brown, President of the Ashvillian Society, added “we will remember the many ways Richard positively impacted on so many Ashville lives”.

On joining three years ago from Bury Grammar School for Boys where he had been its Head for four years, Mr Marshall described Ashville as “truly unique”, and a “successful day and boarding school with a global identity and perspective”.

He looked forward “to building on the successes of previous Headmasters and leading the school in its exciting next stage of development”.

His three young children, Ethan, Emily and Harry, became Ashville pupils the same day he became its Headmaster, with his wife,

Kym, joining the teaching staff. Today she holds the role of Deputy Head of Prep School (Academic).

Highlights of Mr Marshall’s Ashville headship saw record numbers of pupils on the school register, the launch of Ashville International Kindergarten and Nursery in Lantau Island, Hong Kong, and Ashville winning accreditation to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), an international association that works to establish and maintain high standards within education.

His love of basketball led him to introducing it to Ashville’s sports curriculum and appointing Voise Winters, a former National Basketball Association (NBA) player, as the College’s first basketball coach.

Mr Search said: “Richard joined Ashville following a rigorous interview process and was the unanimous choice of the Governing Body. That decision proved to be the right one as from the outset he fully immersed himself in Ashville life and focused on the education of our pupils.

“He brought a drive and determination to improve all aspects of Ashville. As a scientist he loved technology and data and the level

of detail he delved into was immense, for the betterment of every pupil. He had a good deal of business acumen that is vital for any modern school head and worked tirelessly to maximise the use of every pound.

Improving the facilities at Ashville was always on his mind and he oversaw the refurbishment of our Sixth Form Centre, two boys boarding houses and the first phase of the Dining Room expansion and upgrade project.

“All here at Ashville are absolutely devastated and we will continue to support Kym and the children in any way we can.”

Mr Marshall was a graduate of University of Birmingham (First in Biochemistry) and had an MSc in Science Communication from Imperial College London.

He described himself as “loving technology” and was an advocate of using technology in the classroom to improve pupil outcomes.

A basketball fanatic, he represented England in the sport as a schoolboy at Under 15, 19 and 23 age levels, whilst also playing for the British University England team and was captain of his university first team.

A service celebrating Mr Marshall’s life will be held at a later date.

Advertorial Feature

## THE OPAL Programme at Hull Collegiate School

Head teacher Antje Kell

Our OPAL journey over the past 18 months has been utterly transformational for everyone involved.

Our playtimes now are unrecognisably better.

Transformation has been enabled by the unparalleled drive and enthusiasm from key groups within our school community: ‘The HCS Opal Team’, providing strategic leadership. The ‘break time supervisors’, now with the much more relevant title of ‘play leaders’, cheerfully and willingly putting their new playwork theory and knowledge into practice. The backing and support of our parent body, site team, DT department, cleaning team and excellent leadership, guidance and CPD from our OPAL Mentor Ingrid.

Celebrating nature and spending time in the fresh air, is crucial to our children’s mental health and wellbeing and in today’s world and the Covid-19 crisis, its importance is only magnified.

We know that the road to improvement is never without difficulty, but now we don’t have any children looking forward to playtimes being over. Having seen the tremendous benefits to the happiness and wellness of our children we are committed to continually improving the quality of our play offer and aiming for the highest-level award at our accreditation with OPAL.

We recommend the journey unreservedly!

## Improving Playtimes through the OPAL Primary Programme

Michael Follett

I reviewed the websites of 13 of the UK’s leading independent prep schools. The most common word used to describe a core school value was ‘happy’. Second came ‘nurture, confidence, self-reliance, independence and creativity’ and thirdly ‘curiosity, team-working and resilience’.

80% of schools included pictures of children playing. In contrast, only one school made any significant statements about play, stating: ‘*Playtime is a valuable opportunity for personal development, and we do what we can to encourage fun and laughter outside whenever possible.*’

Playtimes take up 1.4 years of a primary school child’s life, yet most schools have no vision, values, policy, training or coherent plan for what good quality play in their school should look like or be improved.

The OPAL Primary Programme treats play as a curricular area and has provided support to improve playtimes for thousands of children to; 500 UK state primary schools, two education boards in Canada, international schools in Poland, France and Spain and even an independent prep school in the UK!

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## League tables are for football, not life choices

The GSA annual conference is a highlight of the year for many Heads. Entertaining, informative and useful, it's a chance to get together with colleagues and friends who understand the issues you face on a day to day basis and can sympathise and offer support and camaraderie, writes Neil Walker, Headmaster of Westfield School, Newcastle upon Tyne....

This year's event was no different but, being online, was concentrated, time-wise, in order to cram in as much benefit as possible in a shorter time. Despite this, the essentials were still as evident as possible and we started with a wonderful social evening with plenty of reminiscences (of which few could be published and certainly no names!) and a real eye-opener to the other side of headship for new members and, of course, our incoming chief exec.

Conference is always Janus-like, looking both backwards and forwards, and this year was no different. Covid references kept popping up as the impact of the epidemic was dissected and thoughts arose about how our offering will change.

In terms of thoughtful and inspiring sessions, I particularly enjoyed both GSA President Jane Prescott and GDST CEO Cheryl Giovannoni who each noted the great success in dealing with the pandemic in countries with female leaders e.g. Taiwan, New Zealand, Iceland, Denmark. Success strategies echoed in GSA schools are leaders being clear, collaborative, honest, showing respect to young people and not being afraid to show love and kindness; indeed, empathy is now being role-modeled as a strength rather than a weakness. Cheryl ended with an inspiring quote

from Kamilla Harris: "Dream with ambition, lead with conviction and see yourself in a way that others may not see simply because they haven't seen it before."

Looking towards the future, we saw a vision of pupils being prepared for more flexible working patterns and a new shape of working. The creativity and resilience shown by both girls and teachers was lauded and praise was given to flexibility of prefect leadership teams who have got on with things rather than moaning; for example, in my own school the Head Girl has started a podcast and our media prefect is creating a TikTok channel to inspire and encourage the younger girls. We cannot really call this generation snowflakes anymore, given the way that they are coping with the pandemic.

As a member of the GSA/HMC joint Universities Committee, I was very interested in hearing Nick Hillman from HEPI. As you would expect, PQA – post qualification application – was mentioned. The change was described as moving from a slow, careful courtship to speed-dating. For us, the biggest change will be a massive reduction in the importance of the personal statement, school reference and wider interests, as more emphasis is placed on the raw exam results which, we should remember, are only accurate to +/- 1

grade (25-30% would be changed if re-marked by a different senior examiner). My top three takeaways as advice for my girls applying to university were:

TOP does not always mean BEST – league tables are for football, not life choices.

Think past the local university – it may be cheaper but residential students tend to get better degrees, get more out of their learning and a much richer experience so accommodation is as important to consider as the course.

Don't wait until Freshers to consider the student societies – do they match your interests?

In the afternoon we saw the confidence and poise of two GSA Sixth Formers from Benenden School interviewing Mishal Husain. They epitomized what is good about the next generation of girls' school leavers. The messages that I have passed on to my school through assemblies are that, as a young woman, the starting point has to be to believe in yourself as a day to day reality. Too many people worry about how they come across in a presentation or an interview but confidence is so abstract. Don't worry about your voice, worry about the content. Think about clarity and diction – if people can follow what you're saying the pitch doesn't matter. Most importantly, own and



believe in the content of what you are saying. Nobody else is focusing on your mistakes – people are self-centred and focusing on themselves.

The best session of the conference for me was given by Donald Steel, Vice President of Kenyon International Emergency Services. Perfectly described as "Fascinating, slightly horrifying but incredibly useful" I have already re-written our school emergency communications folder following his talk. Donald spoke about our society's cultural memes demanding that any crisis has a 'hero' and 'a villain'. Heroes communicate swiftly and are visible and accurate; becoming the villain is very easy, people equate silence with guilt. You can manage a situation immaculately, but still take a reputational hit because of poor communication. Donald suggested using the communication timetable of 15 – 30 – 60 – 90 minutes. If you have your first communications for any crisis prepared in advance, you can cope with the first hour while preparing specific responses to the exact situation. As 'people' people we in education know how important it is to put your students first. It's the same in crisis communications; everything has to be about the pupils and any other victims and how you are supporting them. At the same time as letting us know he was available to contact if needed, Donald showed us how actions really do speak louder than words by announcing with great humour that, in the event of a problem, his complaints department is unfortunately shut for refurbishment until 2029. It's a line I've been tempted to borrow subsequently.

Overall, another resounding success from the GSA team who have been so proactive over the last nine months, organising monthly Head to Head video calls etc. Having said all that, I can't wait to actually get back to face-to-face conferencing. Roll on Manchester 2021.

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# World Leaders with empathy 'are a positive example'

Leaders who embody empathy and collaborative working have been a positive example to the entire world during the pandemic, said Girls' Schools Association President Jane Prescott as she opened the online GSA Annual Conference towards the end of last term.



Mrs Prescott, Headmistress of Portsmouth High School GDST, said: "As headteacher of a girls' school, educating tomorrow's leaders, it has been of great interest to me to see the leadership qualities shown by the leaders of countries many have deemed successful in coping with the Covid crisis. We live in times of rapid change, but some of the positive examples that have been cited at various times include countries as diverse as Norway, Germany, New Zealand and Taiwan. In the case of Norway, I vividly recall their Prime Minister Erna Solberg speaking directly to children and answering their questions about the pandemic. As headteachers we know how valuable it can be to canvass pupil opinion and reassure young people with straightforward, honest answers. Taiwan's President, Tsai Ing-wen, was decisive in introducing measures that prevented a full lockdown, and New Zealand's prime minister, Jacinda Ahern, used Facebook to check in with people."

She praised leaders who make tough decisions for long-term gain

rather than immediate acclaim. "What is interesting to me are leaders who embody empathy and collaborative working, and yet have made tough, considered decisions for long-term gain rather than immediate acclaim. That's the kind of risk-taking we mustn't underestimate, and it seems to me that it's also the kind of leadership in which good headteachers excel."

"During this pandemic, GSA Heads have shared best practice, we have shared our concerns and our triumphs with one another, finding ourselves in unprecedented circumstances, forced to make quick decisions but always with the long term welfare of the children in our schools at the centre.

"When my tenure as President of the Girls' School Association started last January, I could not have imagined the phenomenal challenge of the last eight months. I talked of a global connectivity – little did I know that we would be united by a pandemic and that the very methods of networking would become stronger. I had no

idea we would become so used to talking online, learning virtually and speaking to each other so much more often than we did before March. The change has been seismic; it has also been swift.

Heads are under tremendous pressure to manage the daily challenges of running a school in a time of Covid, and yet what I have observed this year are countless acts of generosity and selflessness as school leaders, staff and students themselves have reached out to those in greater difficulty, providing practical support with everything from shared teaching and learning resources to food parcels."

Mrs Prescott spoke about the positive aspects of the increased use of technology:

"Even the greatest technophobe has had to embrace a new way of working and, as a result, pupils have honed their skills in presentation and communication. When they encounter online meetings in their future workplaces, they will be well-versed in the etiquette of virtual calls.

"Children today are not the 'snowflake' generation. They are, in fact, ever resourceful given the right environment and the right support; the kind of support typically given by teachers and other professionals for whom schools are the hub of communication. What this pandemic has shown is that young people are more resilient than they have been given credit for previously. They have suffered family bereavement, been unable to comfort each other, and been denied the ability to visit elderly relatives. Yes, there are rising mental health issues to concern us all, and we must not underestimate them. However, we must also give credit where credit is due. The overwhelming majority of students I see have coped admirably with the rollercoaster of cancelled examinations and what we have seen in many schools is an ability to adapt and change as the fluctuating health and safety rules dictate.

"We should praise the actions of our school-aged children who are experiencing the worst global crisis in most people's memory."



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# Historic schools to merge

The Governors of Durham School and the Chapter of Durham Cathedral have announced that Durham School and The Chorister School are planning to merge and operate under one single Foundation, to be known as the Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation.

This proposed merger will bring together two historic schools which have a shared heritage stretching back over 600 years in the City of Durham. The new

Foundation will operate as a whole from September 2021.

The Foundation will be located on the current sites of both schools. As a recognition of the history of all three schools, the Pre-Prep will be known as "Bow School", the Prep as "The Chorister School" and the Senior school as "Durham School". Together they will all form part of the new Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation.

The Principal of the Durham Cathedral School Foundation

will be Kieran McLaughlin, who will continue as the Head of Durham School. The Headmistress of the Prep school will be Sally Harrod, the current Headmistress of Bow School. Ian Wicks, the current Headmaster of The Chorister School has announced his intention to fully support the process until September 2021, when he will step down.

Durham School is one of the oldest schools in England, dating back to 1414. It educates boys and

girls aged 3-18 years old.

The Chorister School has been established at Durham Cathedral for over 600 years and sits in the magnificence of The College, part of the cathedral complex at the heart of the Durham UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is a day and boarding prep school for boys and girls from 3 – 13 years. The school is home to the girl and boy choristers of Durham Cathedral, as well as welcoming children from Durham and beyond.

## Teachers' Pension Scheme – Decisions need to be made...

...says Neil Barton, Head of Business Development (Trustee Solutions) at Broadstone T: 07904 492921 W: [www.broadstone.co.uk](http://www.broadstone.co.uk)

### The return of some kind of normality?

2021 is here and with it comes a new optimism following the dark days of 2020. The widespread roll-out of the Coronavirus vaccine is well underway, and it is hoped that some semblance of our former 'normality' will begin to emerge in the first half of the year.

### The clock is ticking

So whilst it is seemingly very positive on the Covid-19 front, many schools in the independent education sector are still grappling with a number of challenges, the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS)

remaining front and centre in their thoughts. The Government is currently working on the 2020 actuarial valuation of the TPS – the headline results of which will be announced at some point in 2022.

Following the 43% employer contribution increase in September 2019, it is widely believed that the cost for independent schools that remain in the TPS will increase again as a result of the latest valuation – the effective date of the increase being April 2023. So if schools want to take action to mitigate the expected additional

costs they now have around two years to do so – the clock is ticking down to April 2023.

### Start planning, now!

A number of schools have already left the TPS, and some are currently consulting (or about to consult) with staff regarding a potential TPS exit. But many are still biding their time and awaiting the outcome of the valuation process. Our advice is to plan ahead as consultation can be time-consuming. Schools that want to exit should do so in 2021 if possible, or at least run the consultation process in 2021

and reach early agreement upon a planned 2022 exit date.

In the meantime, independent schools should take advantage of the 'phased withdrawal' option available from spring this year. Phased withdrawal allows schools to stop offering the TPS to new staff members, whilst allowing existing staff to remain, even if just as a temporary measure ahead of full exit. For schools planning to remain in the TPS, then over time exposure to the TPS will decline as staff who are in the scheme leave and are replaced by those who are unable to join it.

## Heads Hunted

### Among the upcoming head and principal appointments:

Ashville College  
Holmwood House School  
Lady Barn House School  
Millfield Prep School  
St. Andrew's Prep School

Yorkshire  
Essex  
Cheshire  
Somerset  
Sussex

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.

News items, contributions, comments and suggestions are always welcomed by the editor.

Please email to:  
[mail@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk](mailto:mail@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk)

## Bus pull



Last term Yarrells School, Dorset, raised over £700 for Children in Need. The children took part in the online 'Duck Race', ran a paper aeroplane competition, paid to 'Soak

the Teacher' and the staff did a sponsored bus pull (pictured).

The school also made a Poppy donation to the Royal British Legion, totalling £376.

# Managing the supply chain and catering operations in a pandemic

The current pandemic is challenging the long-established norm for catering teams within all educational establishments. Many schools - both boarding and day - are seeing this time as an opportunity to innovate and trial new ideas in the way food is sourced and delivered. Some will already have a good infrastructure in place to make necessary organisational changes and cost savings whilst meeting the new demands and becoming Covid compliant. Hayden Hibbert, Director of Client Relations at allmanhall, the independently owned food procurement specialist, gives his advice, specifically for boarding schools, at this time. Previously Head of Catering for an independent school group with 2 boarding houses, Hayden is well placed to offer practical suggestions...



Whilst the challenges that the new compliance regulations faced by boarding school catering teams are generally common, their methods of meeting these challenges have varied greatly, as each are influenced and restricted by varied capacities and capabilities of staffing, infrastructure, equipment, budgets and production. All boarding schools have had to adapt to simpler menu offers, as restrictions have resulted in a move to fully plated service, and a temporary closure of areas where pupils congregate with multiple touch points such as salad bars and self-service buffets. Most have also had to manage with reduced levels of staffing as individuals self-isolate, and all have seen a predictable increase in cleaning and PPE costs. One advantage of the new normal is that by operating a restricted fully served menu, food costs and wastage has been much easier to control.

Arguably, boarding schools with 'House feeding' have found it easier to operate distanced 'pods', whereas central dining facilities have often extended service times (sometimes impacting the core curriculum timetable), to allow separated and reduced numbers of pupils through. Some schools are adopting a 'click and collect' solution via an App, where meals are ordered in advance and then distributed to collection points. Others have split dining areas across multiple locations, thus allowing the same number of pupils to be fed in the same time frame, requiring detailed planning and complex logistical choreography. A few schools have adopted a 'cohort' shift system for the kitchen teams, ensuring that two teams work

alternate shifts, and do not come into contact with each other.

The management of the supply chain is another particularly important area requiring attention. Elements of the supply chain have been under extreme pressure as a result of the pandemic. Certain foods have become hard to source, and the shortages of PPE in the early days of the first lockdown was well reported in the media.

Communication with your suppliers is critical. It is important to consider that some changes to delivery days and delivery frequency may be enacted. As inventories are not normally stockpiled it is also important to identify and communicate anticipated volume changes, which should include menu changes and any new product lines that may be required. Remember, inventory management systems use historic purchase data to help forecast future demand, so it is easy to see how significant changes may lead to impaired service performance if not communicated effectively. Communicate, and be ready to show some understanding to suppliers, in these challenging times, when changes may be unavoidable.

Implementing a software support platform can lead to significant cost savings. An independent benchmark of the current pricing from existing suppliers, compared like for like with others by an independent procurement supplier can result in savings with very little effort, and is a good exercise in due diligence. Very quickly, it will become clear that a fully managed procurement solution as provided by allmanhall is an essential service rather than an overhead.

It is worth checking if suppliers are reputable with Covid compliant practices in place. You may also consider consolidating the number of suppliers. You can take simple steps like considering buying in cases, to reduce touch points. A procurement supplier, like allmanhall, will be in constant dialogue with these suppliers over availability of products and the need for changes in delivery procedures. They can offer advice and communicate any adjustments to you, plus secure cost savings mitigate risk.

The very real risk of a Covid outbreak has affected some schools' catering teams, resulting in kitchen closures, and a sudden urgent requirement to buy in pre-prepared and ready to eat foods, at a massive cost. Scenario planning, flexibility on menus and output, good communications with pupils, parents, suppliers, procurement experts and staff, and the ability to adapt proactively are all qualities which will help boarding school caterers to cope with the ever changing 'new normal'.



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For more day to day practical advice from allmanhall, this blog is written for independent education caterers: <https://allmanhall.co.uk/blog/operational-compliance-considerations-for-school-caterers-during-a-pandemic>



# Profile

In conversation with Lara Pechard

**Born:** 1976

**Married?**

Hopefully soon! The postponed big day will actually happen in July 2021. We have two children Joshua, (4) and Joseph (1)

**Schools and University Attended:**

Anglo-European, University of Southampton, Sorbonne, Institute of Education

**First job:**

Washing cars (first ever job)

**First management job:**

Head of Sixth Form, Portsmouth Grammar School, 2006

**First job in education:**

Teacher of History, Portsmouth Grammar School, 2000

**Appointed to current job:**

Jan 2020

**Favourite piece of music:**

Tough one... Distant sun or Throw your arms around me by Crowded House

**Favourite food:**

Italian

**Favourite drink:**

Champagne

**Favourite holiday destination:**

Hatteras Island, North Carolina

**Favourite leisure pastime:**

Trekking or cycling

**Favourite TV or radio programme/series:**

The West Wing

**Suggested epitaph:**

Still so young to travel so far, old enough to know who you are...

**Q** You joined St. Margaret's just as it was starting the evolution from all-girls to co-ed, a process which means boys will be welcomed in all age groups from next year (2022). It is always a challenge to take over the reins, but what has been the most interesting extra dimension that this transition has presented to you in your new job?

**A** *It has been a fast-paced first year, and joining as new Head just a couple of months behind the first nationwide lockdown, means that the initial induction phase was not quite as I had envisaged! That along with taking over the reins while transitioning to co-ed has certainly had its challenges but it has also had its opportunities too. The need to quickly get to grips with systems and processes, to get under the skin of the culture and ethos of the School and to build relationships with the staff and pupils had to happen in a different way and much faster than it might have done under traditional circumstances. That has proven to be a positive aspect and I have been very lucky to have such a committed and supportive team around me. Probably the most interesting dimension to this new start though, has to be that my own son was actually the first boy to join the school in January 2020 - so managing that transition alongside my professional role has been an exciting journey!*

**Q** St. Margaret's was co-ed when founded in 1749 as a school for orphaned children of clergymen in London. 150 years later the boys had moved out to Canterbury and the girls to your current site near Bushey. Now it's turned full circle back to co-ed. Is this a trend you expect to continue throughout the independent sector? Is single-sex something for the 20th century but probably not the 21st?

**A** *My schooling and my work experience prior to joining St Margaret's were all co-ed; it has shaped my thinking about good schools in our country today. The world is co-ed, men and women live and work together, that is the reality. I'm passionate about encouraging a sense of team around careers and academic interests too, regardless of age or gender. Whether you are a budding medic, designer or an aspiring historian there should be a programme that works for you as an individual and one that you have the ability to shape. From a lifestyle perspective, we've had positive feedback from many parents who are delighted that we are considering their whole family - it can be tricky to be in two places at once if you have a boy and a girl in different schools and that is just*

*from a logistics perspective. Parents lead busy lives and this is not always fit for purpose today. Being co-ed has also been warmly received by our pupils too, who are keen to be part of a modern progressive school that is relevant to them and their future.*

**Q** St. Margaret's pupils come from over 30 countries and speak over 50 languages. A Student Diversity Group was set up recently and is led by pupils. How is this dovetailing with your own approach to diversity?

**A** *This is something I am hugely passionate about. Talking more about the challenges students may face and listening to views on how we can improve as a school, takes courage and honesty. Yet it's vital that we lean more into the conversations that are happening in school so that we can try to better understand the views within our school community and to ensure we are listening to all voices, opening conversations with all pupils, alumni, parents and staff, if we are to become a genuinely diverse population. We need to create real change here even if that means starting conversations that are uncomfortable for some. Talking about diversity and inclusion in a way that demonstrates empathy, love and respect but also acknowledges the limits of our knowledge and experience, might encourage more to speak up about the challenges they face. This is not about token gestures, it's about change for good and the only way we can do that is to talk and to listen. It has been such a joy to see the diverse community at St Margaret's come together and to see first hand how positive, creative and kind this can be. As a dual passport carrier and having studied the IB as a child, I am delighted that we are open and welcoming to all. As Obama commented in a recent interview, the younger generation don't notice 'differences', and for me this is very apparent at St Margaret's and something we are keen to continue to embrace and nurture.*

**Q** St. Margaret's pupils are encouraged to "learn to understand compassion and empathy and the importance of not only being part of a community but how vital it is to give back to it." How does the need for kindness show through in your philosophy of headship?

**A** *It cuts through absolutely everything I do. Having started in January 2020 as mentioned, COVID has been the landscape of my first year of Headship. This has invalidated schools like St Margaret's and also our approach to learning - a huge part of this is about kindness. The prioritising of kindness has*

# Lara Pechard has been Head of St. Margaret's School, Hertfordshire, since January last year. She was previously Principal Deputy Head at Norwich School.

*been such a strong and positive outcome of this year, against all odds but again our pupils seem to expect this philosophy. I try to maintain high levels of thoughtfulness wherever possible too, I am not sure I always succeed but it is always my ultimate goal.*

**Q** It has been said that one cannot lead until one knows how to serve. Is that your experience?

**A** Absolutely. Walking the walk, earning the stripes and working for others helps to create empathy and to really understand the importance of communication. This is something that our pupils have seen in abundance amidst the current crisis, learning to appreciate those around them and also to give back to their local community in times of need. Earlier this year during the lockdown, as part of our VE Day celebrations in May, our pupils wrote letters of kindness to those elderly vulnerable members of the community who were in care homes who were unable to have visits from their loved ones. They also received letters in return and really enjoyed learning about their experiences and hearing real accounts and stories from the War. It really helped our students to think about their own lives and how fortunate they are.

**Q** Pastoral care is high on the agenda in schools, both for pupils and staff. Have you noticed an increased need for mental health support due to Covid-19? If yes, what steps have you taken to provide it?

**A** Yes definitely. We conducted daily tutor contact in lockdown and the counselling support we had on offer at that time has continued to date and our Heads of Year have been busier than ever. Since then, we have also set up a range of wellbeing sessions including yoga and mindfulness for staff and pupils. For some pupils, one to one support around mental wellbeing has been significant at this time. For staff, it has been a year like no other and we have to keep supporting and giving back - we've introduced a wellbeing day for every member of staff. This is simply a day off to do whatever they please; this has been very well received. It is of course a drop in the ocean when you consider the year teachers have had and the speed with which they have had to adapt, but it has at least been a gesture that shows we appreciate everything they do and that this special 'time off' is very much needed.

**Q** Unemployment amongst the 18-24 age group is spiralling up. The old mantra of 'you can be whatever you want to be' now has a discouragingly hollow, dated ring to it. How are you helping your sixth formers navigate towards their post-school options?

**A** No one can argue that sixth form students across the country are facing an extraordinary situation, especially in light of the recent extra exam measures. For the longer term, students are also anxious about what will university look like for them come next October, the impact on the economy and what careers opportunities will be at the end of this whole crisis. We are giving them lots of university and career advice. Sharing stories of how past leavers are finding different pathways during this time should excite students. Whilst plenty of leavers will head off to university as planned, many are also considering the plethora of great gap year opportunities available. I have been impressed by those in my school who have been resourceful and amongst other plans, have secured apprenticeships for TK Maxx or places on the Level 3 Harris Pilot Course, to name a few.

Schools don't have a crystal ball, we cannot see into the future and so discussion around the economy and careers advice for the future is a learning curve for all, but we have to have these conversations openly and honestly, talk to students about how they are feeling and how this pandemic is impacting them right now. They will have questions about their future and we should be prepared to jump on board that potential 'rollercoaster' with them. Showing them the different paths that you can take and that our alumni have taken, and the creative gap years that have come out of this year. All of this is helping our year 13s at the moment. Trying to prepare them for every eventuality without adding to the pressure!

**Q** How do you know what really goes on in the classroom? Are you a believer in pupil reviews of staff?

**A** I am a great believer in pupil feedback and I try to ask little and often about what they would like to see more of. Well considered and well handled pupil reviews can be very astute and can provide much food for thought in the plight to continually improve engagement in learning. Our pupils are the audience, the recipients of the insight and knowledge we give them, anything we can do to enrich that experience is time well spent.

**Q** You read Modern History, Politics & Economics at University, three subjects which have great relevance and resonance in today's pandemic-stricken, economically-stressed, politically-divided world. Why did you choose that course? Had you always intended to be a history teacher? Is it important that heads keep teaching?

**A** I'd love to give you some idealised answer here! The truth is, I did the IB (International Baccalaureate) and I still struggled to narrow my subjects down. For me, it was always History first though. I knew I would be a History teacher at the age of just nine years - we had free choice to choose a project we wanted to write about and I chose Historical figures. I can remember writing about Brunel! Any decision about being a History teacher was confirmed by three significant teachers/forces at my school and university. Once again emphasising the impact that great teachers can have on your future life choices.

**Q** You helped set up a village school in Cambodia as part of a United World Schools charity team. What did that experience teach you? Did it affect your outlook on education in the UK?

**A** It was an amazing time. I learned about the basic need and enjoyment that comes from education, and just how profound that can be. I learned how to sing Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes in Khmer and that sleeping in a hammock can actually be very comfortable. The whole experience made me appreciate the importance of the teacher in society and it also reminded me about the strength that comes from friendship when times are tough. Something that will resonate with many people right now.

**Q** You have climbed Mount Kilimanjaro and walked the famous GR20 through Corsica, two considerable physical challenges. Can you describe the buzz you felt upon completion? How did it compare to the buzz of your academic and professional success?

**A** I can remember being struck by an emotional wave about two days later after Kilimanjaro and the GR20. It was only when flying over Kilimanjaro that I recognised what I had actually achieved and how insignificant I am compared to its colossal size and magnificent beauty. — Continued >

# Profile In conversation with Lara Pechard (continued)

Much like any professional success, that sense of satisfaction often hits you when you are least expecting it. It is the same in my professional career, I was recognised with an award from the mental health charity Mind, in 2019, an accolade for commitment to improving mental health literacy amongst both pupils and staff in school. Yet at the time, all I wanted to do was to create a kinder environment for the whole school

community, I didn't think beyond that. I think you just keep moving along, doing your best and then these moments of realisation just pop up and take you by surprise.

**Q** You are now a year into your first headship, and staff development is high on your agenda. If a deputy head asked you today for your verdict on taking the

hot-seat, what would you say? Has the reality proved different to your expectation when you were a Deputy?

**A** 100% take the plunge! COVID has definitely made this a different reality to any expectation I might have previously had, but the rewards are amazing. I wouldn't change it for the world.

## How have the events of 2019/20 shaped the future for school minibus management in 2021?

Chris Maynard, Managing Director of Castle Minibus gives his opinion on the DVSA's growing interest in school minibuses and advises on what schools can do to be ready for a return to normal activities in 2021.

When asked what I thought this year would bring for schools where vehicles were concerned my first and biggest concern is the increasing focus on safety, legality, and compliance that I think will come with the expected return to normal now there are several vaccines on offer for COVID-19.

Keeping schools open and safe has been a hotly contested topic throughout 2020 and we are not out of the maelstrom yet, as I write this it has been announced that schools will remain closed after the Christmas break.

Nothing has proved more important in 2020 than the safety of staff and pupils where COVID-19 is concerned, and it has rightly been the priority within the education sector. But, pre-COVID the DVSA's spotlight was slowly, but definitely, turning to the safety and legal aspects of running minibuses. Increasing reports of vehicles being impounded, roadside minibus spot checks and the enquiry into abuses of the Section 19 Permit for commercial gain highlighted the worryingly low level of understanding schools have when it comes to operating their vehicles legally and safely.

There are some simple steps schools can take to put in place and evidence a minibus safety system

As the vaccines bring a return to normal and school trips and sporting fixtures become an important part of the school calendar again I strongly advise schools take some simple steps to stay as safe as possible and start to evidence their minibus safety system for the sake of their drivers and pupils, the DVSA, and their reputations.

**1. Minibuses are not just large cars. Drivers need education, practical training, and visual reminders of the size of the vehicles they are driving.**

In December 2019 several children were injured when their school bus crashed into a railway bridge in Wessex, this was a professional driver on a well-known route. Non-professional drivers, like your teachers, need continual support and training. They are not driving cars. Schools need to ensure that their drivers have the right licence for the weight of the vehicle they are driving, and evidence that their drivers receive continuous training; MiDAS or similar every 4 years, regular risk assessments, licence and eyesight checks.

**2. Ensure your drivers understand the importance of regularly checking vehicles and these checks are recorded and managed.**

It is easy to overlook or underestimate the

importance of daily vehicle checks before the minibuses are used, especially if you have multiple drivers. Identification of defects or dangers and the management of these will protect the drivers, the passengers and prevent incidents and breakdowns on the road.

Evidence that problems were identified and remedied make up a huge part of a safety system. Download the free app and dashboard STRIDA that teachers can use to make these daily checks on their phones.

**3. Plan the maintenance of your vehicles**

A Section 19 Permit requires 6-month planning of not only regular services and MOTs but also 10-week safety inspections. These safety inspections are required, regardless of mileage, so should still be completed if your minibus is not being used during COVID. Evidence of planning and records of services, inspections and repairs for vehicles is vital.

**4. Appoint someone who will take responsibility for minibus management**

Running a minibus is more than just buying the vehicle and managing who has the keys and arranges services and MOTs. Those wishing to operate a minibus commercially under an Operator's Licence must appoint a Transport Manager. Under a Section 19 Permit there is no requirement for this professional position, but I recommend schools appoint a named person to understand and manage the minibuses, a Section 19 Permit does have legal requirements. Certifying a member of staff by sending them on a course such as the Minibus Compliance Course will enable them to understand what is required under a Section 19 Permit and advise their school accordingly.

Now is the time, before a full return to normal activity, to look at the gaps in your minibus processes and safety systems and make the changes. When we were consulting with ROSPA on creating the Minibus Compliance Course their inspector commented: "the single biggest risk a school faces is taking children out on the public highway".

Our insurance partner broker also appreciates the value of educated minibus management. James Brown and Sons (Somerset) Ltd recognise that a Castle Minibus client is less likely to have an incident because of Castle Minibus' high safety standards, especially if they have completed Castle's

online Minibus Compliance Course (MCC). James Brown and Sons Ltd have negotiated insurance rates that reflect the reduced risk that holders of the MCC represent.

We all have high hopes for 2021, schools, businesses, teachers, and pupils alike. I just hope that concern for safety within schools will finally permeate into minibus management and that schools will take the necessary safety steps before they are forced to – as the result of an incident or by the DVSA.



### HOW CAN YOU EVIDENCE A MINIBUS SAFETY SYSTEM?

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- 2** Document daily & weekly minibus checks. Keep evidence of any remedial work on your vehicles  
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- 3** Plan 10-week safety inspections, services and MOTs at least 6 months in advance. File copies of all reports, repairs & works  
Castle work with two national partners that come and complete your 10-week safety inspections onsite, so you don't have to worry about drop-off/pick-up

**The best thing you can do is appoint a member of staff or team as responsible for your minibus management and train them in minibus safety & compliance**

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## BBC Young Chorister of the Year

A Bedford School pupil has won BBC Young Chorister of the Year.

Alexander Olleson appeared on BBC One TV having impressed the judges and battled his way to the final a week before.

The 14-year-old, who joined Bedford School last September on a music scholarship, has been singing for years, joining his local parish church choir at the age of seven.



He later moved to be a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford, where he sang with the world-renowned choir for five years. He now sings in the Chapel Choir at Bedford School.

Alexander said his years of singing experience gave him the confidence to put in a good performance.

He said: "It was quite nerve-racking at the final but I wasn't as nervous as I might have been. Having been a chorister I am used to performing live in front of lots of people."

Alexander said although he loves soloing in the choir, it is the team spirit and camaraderie of singing together that he really enjoys. "Singing as a soloist is something I have done for years as a chorister but when you are in a choir you feel as if you are singing as one body," he said. "You have that

team spirit, if one of you has a howler and hits a wrong note, the rest of the team can correct it. I think that's what really makes the music so special, because you are all acting as one."

Jonathan Sanders, Bedford School's Director of Music, who leads the Chapel Choir where Alexander sings as one of 35 boys from eight different year groups, said: "I was delighted to hear that Alexander had won the competition. He is at a transitional moment in his education, having enjoyed the amazing opportunity of having been a cathedral chorister, and is now embarking on his senior schooling. Winning the competition will give him some amazing opportunities to work with professional musicians, both singers and instrumentalists, which will provide him good insights into the world of professional music-making."

## Screen debuts

Students at ACS International School, Surrey, have created an uplifting prom-themed film as an innovative way to continue, and evolve, the school's performing arts programme despite COVID-19 restrictions. Created to a professional standard with help from industry experts, the film is due to be screened at the Everyman Theatre in Esher, this month (January).

Recognising the importance of the performing arts, and as a way to ensure this year's students were able to showcase and develop their drama skills, the film was created as an alternative to the school's annual musical production which was not able to take place due to COVID-19. The film was created by 25 High School students, aged 14-18, taking Drama at ACS Cobham and was managed by Georgia Sidell,

High School Drama Teacher.

To support students in the creation of the film, ACS's drama department brought in industry professionals Bethan Leyshon from BBC Wales as a scriptwriter and award-winning production company, Slick Showreels, whose crew included a full team of cameramen to capture the film, a sound team and director of photography.

Over the course of six weeks, starting in September, students chose the uplifting theme of prom and worked together to create a script, choreograph dances, rehearse and act and film the production. Bethan Leyshon, who spent three weeks getting to know students, worked with them to develop a script that embedded their own experiences and anecdotes.

## The show goes on

The Kilgraston School, Perthshire Saint Cecilia Concert is an annual showcase of pupils' musical talent held on the anniversary of the death, in 230AD, of the patron saint of music and musicians. But 2020 proved to be an even greater challenge than usual to ensure that the show could go on.

"To adhere to current Covid restrictions, we were limited to group humming, solo singing behind screens and wind and brass

recording their parts separately," said Jason McAuley, Director of Music, "Despite pupils not being able to play in the Chapel in full groups together though, they came up with something extraordinary."

Junior Strings, Chamber Choir Clarsach Ensemble, String Quartet and newly formed St Cecilia Ensemble performed a selection of traditional, pop, classical and show music. Additionally, talented young soloists performed, socially-

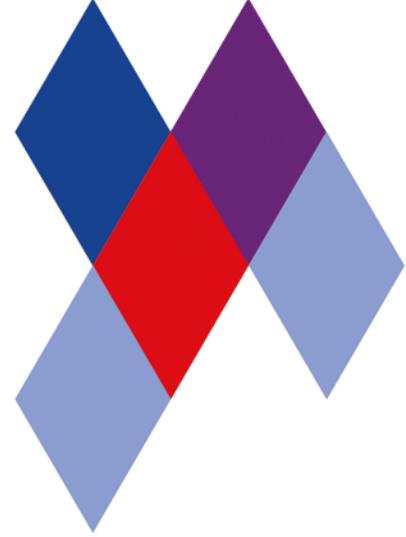
distanced Vivaldi, Saint-Saens and music from Schindler's List and Frozen.

"Individual rehearsals and recordings took place from October Half Term," explains McAuley, "It was an enormous challenge but the girls rose admirably to the occasion and it just proves that you have to be resilient and flexible in life and that there is usually a way through a problem."



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## Show first performed after plague

A rarely-performed play which was first staged in London after an 18-month plague 400 years ago has been brought back to the stage by Glenalmond College, Perthshire.

The show - which was seen by a live audience - is *Epicene*, the 1609 Renaissance comedy by Ben Jonson, which caught the eye of Glenalmond's Director of Theatre, Liz Moss.

The play was originally performed after a long period when London theatres were closed due to the plague, so the timing of its

Glenalmond revival chimes keenly with the present day.

Online auditions for the play started during remote learning in June 2020, when pupils from all year groups were assessed for the parts via Google Meet interviews with Mrs Moss.

The pupils' enthusiasm to take part in a play when they returned to school after the summer spurred Mrs Moss's determination to make it work, and so during the summer holidays she began the meticulous task of adapting the play to ensure it could be performed to meet

COVID safety requirements.

"We also wanted to adapt the play to make sure the production was really pacy and fun and absolutely relevant," said Mrs Moss.

"We've created a surreal world, blending a Renaissance aesthetic with a 1980s New Romantic look and sound. Both genres, though centuries apart, explored androgyny, so it seems to work! The electropop music and graphic neon makeup put a fun spin on the Jacobean text.

"The script, acting and backstage ways of working have all been adapted to meet social distancing constraints such as strict limits on the number of performers on the stage at any one time and to ensure our COVID-safe year group bubbles were kept physically distanced at all times."

Glenalmond's Artist in Residence, Christopher Moss, produced a stunning set for the play, working late into the night and through the weekends to recreate a London street of the period meticulously.

## Singing sensation handed two top music awards

A teenage singing sensation from Shropshire has landed two top music awards and will now train with some of the industry's leading experts.

Kizzy Lumley-Edwards, who attends Ellesmere College as a Music Scholar, is one of just eight people who will have bespoke training and performances alongside renowned acapella choirs VOCES8 and Apollo5.

The 17-year-old has also been handed the Robinson Award of up to £1,000 towards music education as part of the Future Talent Awards.

Tony Coupe, Director of Music at the College, said he was thrilled for Kizzy and her awards are well deserved.

He said: "This is marvellous news for Kizzy and the Arts Department at Ellesmere College too.

"Kizzy is looking to go on and train as a professional singer following her A levels. We are absolutely delighted that she is realising her ambition and being recognised by the industry's leading performers.

"She is a very talented all round musician and as well as performing, Kizzy shows great potential as a composer".



# Case Study: Milton Abbey School

password partner



## School Profile

Milton Abbey School is a small co-educational boarding school for students aged 13+ located in beautiful Dorset countryside. The school's motto is 'learn differently' and it offers an outstanding range of both traditional and vocational qualifications in order to nurture each pupil's natural strengths and talents. This personalised approach, along with the school's strong pastoral support, has led to an exceptional track record of enabling young people to achieve. It was awarded BTEC School of the Year 2019.



## FACT FILE

### Tests Used:

- Password Pupil English CEFR A2 – C1
- Approximately 30 tests conducted annually

### Purpose:

- Admissions exams (English) for EAL pupils

### Groups Assessed:

- Entry to Yr 9+

### Test Takers:

- A wide variety of nationalities from more than 20 countries, with no predominant language group



## Why we chose Password

*"We chose Password as we required a convenient EAL assessment tool we could administer ourselves, which could be used online for our international applicants. We also wanted a test that could be used for a wide range of ages and levels of English ability, with a fresh set of questions presented each time to avoid 'coaching'."*

## What Password helps us achieve

*"I wanted our admissions team to be able to invigilate the students over video-call. Combining this with Password, a member of Milton Abbey staff is there to talk the student through each step of the assessment. As well as ensuring the assessment is completed fairly, this aligns with the very personal approach we take."*

## Benefits of using Password Pupil tests

*"As a small school, we have the flexibility to buy the number of tests we need, rather than being tied to a larger contract. It couldn't have been an easier transition from our previous assessment provider and the individuals involved at Password were brilliant."*

**About the contributor:** Claire Low is Head of Admissions at Milton Abbey School where she is a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team.



**To find out more about Password Pupil tests:** get in touch with our Head of Schools' Partnerships, Dr. Helen Wood [helen.wood@englishlanguagetesting.co.uk](mailto:helen.wood@englishlanguagetesting.co.uk) or see our website [www.englishlanguagetesting.co.uk](http://www.englishlanguagetesting.co.uk)

# New working week

New plans have been unveiled at Pocklington School, Yorkshire, to support the School's strategic goal of further improving academic performance, increasing pupils' independence and meeting the needs of modern family life.

Led by Headmaster Toby Seth and endorsed by Chair of Governors Tim Stephenson, the plans focus around a new 'working week' which will see pupils spending more time in academic lessons across a five day week, Monday to Friday, with Saturdays reserved for sports fixtures and a new boarders' weekend programme.

School Governors have given their unanimous approval for the plans, which were developed after extensive consultations with parents, pupils, prospective parents and staff.

Key features include a restructure of the current timetable to provide longer lessons, allowing for more in-depth study in line

with the development of the Schools 'Values and Virtues', plus a small extension to term dates to facilitate additional teaching time. This will result in an increase of two weeks teaching time across the academic year for Pocklington School pupils, and an increase of six days teaching time for Prep School pupils.

Additional subjects will be included in the curriculum for Middle School and Sixth Form, including a new BTEC Business course. The School's vital co-curricular programme will be enhanced during the week and at weekends, with a wider variety of sporting options being made available.

For the School's vibrant boarding community, an improved and more varied weekend activity programme will be on offer, and all pupils will receive a bespoke 'tutor programme' designed to support students' pastoral care. Extra time will also be made



available for staff training before the start of the Autumn term.

In addition, the new plans will create a synchronised Prep and Senior School timetable that allows for additional use of the Foundation's excellent shared facilities such as the Tom Stoppard Theatre, its sports pitches and swimming pool.

Toby Seth, Headmaster said: "Our new working week will improve our overall educational product and experience for generations of Pocklington students to come. They will benefit from

longer lessons during the week, giving them the time to develop independent thinking, consider problems in more depth and undertake practical work on a more frequent basis. Our enhanced sporting and co-curricular programmes will give students the opportunity to develop new interests, follow their passions and learn vital new skills to take with them when they leave school. In addition to this, we are determined to give our students the time to be able to relax and spend time with their families, plus pursue any outside interests".

Pictured: Toby Seth, Headmaster, with Sixth Form students



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Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic pupils

## Run for the Heart Foundation

Following the death of a great teacher, dear colleague and friend, Mr Mark Pordage, The Royal School, Surrey, community pulled together to raise money for The British Heart Foundation. The school wanted to do its bit to support others affected by heart disease and fund research.

During the course of 2019/20, The Royal School raised £3,800, which was handed over to the charity last month (December). Hannah Miller, Community Fundraising Manager for the BHF, said: "We're so grateful to all the students and staff at The Royal School in Haslemere. Their incredible energy and enthusiasm is helping beat heartbreak for good, and we would like to thank them for raising such an incredible amount."

A huge amount of effort and organisation went into raising such a fantastic amount of money, at both the Prep and Senior School. Prep School Head, Mrs Kerrie Daunter, pictured, ran a half



marathon and pupils throughout both schools led several events including the Prep 5-8 disco, Just Dance, cake sales, a Christmas Star competition, mufti days, The Head Boy and Girl Charity Dinner and the Year 11 Holly Ball. Wider community contributions came from the Retiring Collection at the Carol Service in 2019 and generous donations from the Christmas Fair.

# Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) and Independent Schools – Spring 2021

## 2020 – another ‘annus horribilis’

If you cast your mind back twelve months, then the world was a very different place. It was pretty much ‘business as usual’ in the UK and very few people could have predicted the massive impact that Covid-19 would have had upon our lives.

So, if we think back to January 2020, many independent schools were actively debating whether to leave the TPS due to the 40% increase in employer contributions effective from September 2019. For many schools this had already proved to have serious and sometimes even potentially disastrous financial consequences. Unfortunately, far worse was yet to come.

## Independent schools on the brink

The financial implications of Covid-19 in the independent education sector have been widespread – the almost immediate reduction in fee income (due to discounts given to parents whose children have had to be taught virtually) hit many schools very hard. Pupil numbers are generally down, and even though most schools have reopened for business since September, can many parents still afford the cost of private education? And for those schools that offer boarding facilities, how long will it be before the international pupils begin to return?

Sadly, a number of schools have already confirmed that they will be closing. It was recently stated by the Chief Executive of the ISC (Independent Schools Council) that 24 ISC schools and 20 non-ISC schools have already, or will be doing so shortly, shut their doors in 2020 permanently and many more are considering mergers or other solutions in a bid to remain afloat.

## TPS top of the agenda again

With so many schools in financial difficulty it's no surprise that the TPS has very quickly become a red hot topic again for many governing bodies. The latest valuation of the TPS by the Government Actuaries Department has commenced and, whilst the outcome won't be known until at least early 2022, the net result is likely to be another increase to the employer contribution from April 2023.

It is now understood that as at 14th December 2020 a total of 207 independent schools have left the TPS (or given notice that they will be doing so shortly) since early 2019 – this was confirmed via a Freedom of Information request to the Department for Education from Broadstone. Many more are expected to follow during 2021.

## What should schools be doing now?

We have seen a marked increase in the number of enquiries received



in respect of the TPS with many schools now looking to accelerate their plans to consult with staff upon a proposed exit. However, schools do need to be realistic about their timescales for exit as this is not a process that can be concluded overnight by any means. There are also many factors that need to be thoroughly considered before a consultation is announced.

- **Staff morale** – many governing bodies have been delighted with the response from teaching staff with regard to how quickly they have adapted to the ‘new normal’ of teaching during a global pandemic. Is now therefore the right time to propose the removal of the TPS? Historically it is an important and highly valued part of the remuneration package. What effect will this have on morale?
- **TPS replacement** – schools will need to propose a suitable alternative to the TPS, including replacing the protection benefits (life cover, etc.) that come with TPS membership for staff.
- **Phased withdrawal** – the Government has announced that independent schools can from spring 2021 request phased withdrawal from the TPS. This effectively allows a school to discontinue offering the TPS to new members of staff (a replacement DC scheme will need to be provided instead) but existing staff can remain in the TPS. This will help some schools where the turnover of teaching staff is relatively high to reduce their TPS costs over time. We are currently awaiting further details from Government on how phased withdrawal will work.
- **Consultation process** – for all but the smallest of schools, a comprehensive consultation with affected staff will need to be undertaken. The consultation process itself can easily account for a whole term from start to finish – and generally no less than 60 calendar days.
- **Notice periods** – the withdrawal of the TPS is a contractual change in employment terms. If certain senior staff have long notice periods then currently TPS exit for the entire teaching population can only be achieved when notice has concluded for all staff. The provisions of phased withdrawal may change this, but we are currently awaiting confirmation on this.

At the time of writing (December 2020) we believe that any schools considering full TPS exit should realistically be aiming for late 2021. This will apply to all but the very smallest of independent schools who could still potentially achieve TPS exit by September 2021.



by Neil Barton, Head of Business Development (Trustee Solutions) at Broadstone  
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# New 'progressive' school opens

Sussex is now home to the UK's first Reggio Emilia inspired, enquiry-based learning Future School.

Set up by head Hayley Peacock, Atelier 21 Future School offers what is described as a 'revolutionary response' to school for children aged 0-14 years and expects to open to 14-16 year olds from 2023.

The school is based in the renovated grade 2 listed 18th century Broadfield House, Crawley.

The school re-imagines the school day with academic workshops taught in groups of 10, cross curricular project-based learning for real world experience and self-directed studies on research projects.

The most popular school day at Atelier 21 is Wild Friday! The one day a week where the whole learning community of children and adults go out to places of natural beauty in the forest or on the beach for outdoor learning and exploration. They also take part in purposeful 'Adventure Days' – from rock climbing to Forest School, crabbing to wild swimming, raft building, kayaking, surfing and lots more.

The whole school community operates their own school business to learn the principles of entrepreneurship and participates in democratic school groups to make decisions on various aspects

of running the school. It also has a strong focus on supporting the children's well-being through teaching mindfulness, yoga, creativity and encouraging individual expression - every day is a non-school uniform one and all the teachers are known by their first names.

Hayley Peacock said: Atelier 21's revolutionary approach enables high levels of self-directed learning, facilitates student agency and fosters innovation, curiosity and creativity. We care about entrepreneurship and personal growth to help children and young people succeed and compete in the changing 21st century. Self-starting



pupils who love to work on real world challenges, be active and have a driving seat in their learning will thrive here. At Atelier 21 we don't just deliver the National Curriculum but a whole lot more, including learning HOW to think rather than WHAT to think!"

## Boarding activities expanded

Leweston School, Dorset, added an exciting new element to the boarders' after-school and weekend activity programme last term with yoga and body combat sessions offered in each Boarding House. The classes have proved very popular with the students and are a great opportunity to unwind!

The sessions have been led by Leweston's new GAP Assistant, Zoe Sing, who has a BSC in Food with Nutrition. As well as running health and fitness sessions, Zoe has been providing nutrition and wellbeing advice to the students and has put together informative displays across the Houses. The displays are designed to make a positive impact on boarders' mental health, with information about sleep and the benefits of a healthy diet and exercise programme.

Zoe's classes are the first step in a wider health and well-being programme and she is working alongside Leweston's Director of Boarding, Beth Simkins-Smith, to deliver well-woman and well-man clinics to boarders. These will focus on some of these topics in more depth and provide an opportunity for students to explore their physical and mental health.

## Q&A with Hayley Peacock:

**Q:** How many children are on the roll in the first term, and how are they spread through the years? Which schools have they been recruited from? Why has Crawley been chosen as the site for the first such school in the UK?

**A:** There are 50 children currently on roll. These are distributed across the following: Reception Class for 4-5 year olds, a Primary Class for 6-9 year olds, and an Upper class (Senior Primary/ Early Secondary) for 9-12 years. Our school will eventually cater for pupils up to 16 years and deliver the iGCSE programme. The children have been recruited from the local area of East and West Sussex. In particular the three Little Barn Owls nurseries that the school owns in Horsham act as a feeder into Reception.

The school site has been chosen for its stunning 19th century building set in a perfect location by a lake, opposite K2 sports centre and Tilgate park with 100 acres of forest and every sporting facility imaginable just across the road. It is a great location for London commuters, being only a 3 minute drive from Three Bridges station and close to the A23 and M23.

**Q:** When do you expect to hear whether or not you have the necessary permissions to run through until 16 and iGCSEs?

**A:** We will be registering to deliver GCSEs and education from 14-16 years in 2021 and expect the process to take 6 months.

**Q:** You focus on Reggio Emilia – but do any of the staff come from 'traditional' independent schools?

**A:** Some of the core teaching staff at Atelier 21 Future School are qualified teachers who have worked in a range of both independent and state schools – prep/primary and senior/secondary school level. They bring with them key understanding of the National Curriculum which much of our curriculum is based on – delivered though in a cross curricular and more learner centred style with an emphasis on developing 21st Century skills and independent learning.

**Q:** What evidence is there from other Reggio Emilia schools throughout the world that the pupils go on to achieve academic and career success equal to or better than 'traditional' independent schools?

**A:** The Reggio Emilia philosophy is based on a set of values to ensure a 'well lived life,' with the belief that respect for learning starts from right from birth. Learning starts at a very young age and the process of learning never stops. The principles of our practice are for high academic rigour to meet the National curriculum learning objectives, but with more progressive elements added. Children develop intrinsic motivation, self-reflection skills, character and other qualities that are just as important as a fantastic set of grades, to enable

them to compete and thrive in the 21st Century. They do this by working on real-world projects that teach for action, many that they have to plan and execute largely independently, so that pupils grow up with an evolved sense of self, an understanding of how to contribute positively to the world (not just be another great consumer) and they have had much experience in self-managing their learning which leads to high levels of self-motivation, self-regulation, team working skills, intrinsic confidence and a growth mindset.

**Q:** It takes a lot of financial backing to weather start up costs and the period until numbers get up to speed – so who are the backers?

**A:** The school is backed by me supported by the success of my award winning nursery chain, Little Barn Owls which won Nursery of the year in 2015/2016 and has also won local business of the year awards. Little Barn Owls group is a 2020 finalist for UK Nursery Group of The Year – winners to be announced in February;

The financial backing from the nurseries is a safety net so that the new school can grow organically over time with no rush to get children in all at once. Having said that, the school is already full for next year due to its innovative and unique approach and the nurseries' reputation in the area.



# Promoting Good Nutrition in Schools



When it comes to planning tasty and well-balanced meals in schools, it is important to first consider the nutritional needs of children at various ages, as well as the common nutritional concerns that children can experience during their years at school. Children require a balance of macronutrients (carbohydrate, protein, and fat) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) to help them thrive and ensure their nutritional intake enables them to keep up with key periods of growth.

## Principles of Good Nutrition in School-aged Children

Planning balanced meals for children at school will help to support this period of rapid growth and give children the energy they need to set their learning off on the right foot. If growing children do not get enough variety in their diet, they can experience the effects of nutrient deficiencies or faltered growth.

A practical way to help schools to focus on good dietary habits in their settings is to consider the nutritional pattern set out in the government's Eatwell Guide. This familiar public health nutrition model shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group. For example, sharing the well-known and evidence-based nutrition message that most of us would benefit from eating more fruit and vegetables,

more wholegrain foods, and more sustainably sourced oily fish (or alternative omega-3 source for vegetarians).

## Practical Recommendations for Healthy School Meals

Key findings from the UK National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS), a continuous Rolling Programme designed to assess the dietary habits and nutritional status of the general adult and child population in the UK, provide us with the latest insights into the diets eaten by children in the UK.

The key findings suggest children, on average, are not eating enough fruit and vegetables, fibre, or oily fish; and are generally consuming too much added sugar and higher than the recommended levels of saturated fat. By making small, but meaningful, changes to the food we provide for children, we can begin to close the gap between

what the typical diet of a child looks like, and how evidence shows us it should look.

Practical, evidence-based guidance, provided by the School Food Standards, outlines menu planning considerations to help you meet the nutritional needs of children at their lunchtime meal. For example, vary your fruit and vegetable offerings, ensuring different options, colour, and texture are a primary focus. Ensure to include an oily fish option at least once every three weeks and avoid providing purely cheese-based options for vegetarian children. Desserts, particularly those based on at least 50% fruit, are appropriate after a lunchtime meal and these higher sugar foods should not be demonised. However, sweets and cakes should not be routinely provided between meals. For those with special



educational needs, personalised meal plans should be put in place to ensure nutritional intake through individual accepted foods.

## Providing Good Nutrition at Lunchtime

apetito have an extensive product range and a team of dedicated staff who can support you with planning menus including for those needing special diets, sharing our approach to sustainability, and implementing our systems and services.

To find out how apetito can support your school, please visit [www.apetito.co.uk/school-meal-services](http://www.apetito.co.uk/school-meal-services)

# An International Outlook for



David Bond

British schools have an international reputation for outstanding quality, development of well-rounded pupils and pastoral care. Demand from non-UK markets has fuelled overseas expansion over the past two decades. In addition, how pandemics are dealt with in the UK today and in due course may affect future desire for overseas boarding in the UK, stimulating further demand for British education to be delivered overseas and available locally.



Paul Westbrook



Rishi Soni

However, expanding overseas is challenging for any business, and schools are no exception; therefore insights from those who are involved in this sector can be invaluable. In this article, lawyer David Bond discusses some of the issues and asks Paul Westbrook, Chief Executive of Brighton College International Schools (BCIS), and Rishi Soni, Commercial Director of BCIS, to share their own experiences behind Brighton College's international expansion...

## The rationale for international expansion

The first step for any British school considering overseas expansion must be to ask itself why, what benefits will it realise. When asked about Brighton College's own reasons for expanding, Paul Westbrook identified the following three key drivers that will resonate with many schools:

Educational progression	Philanthropy	Protecting the family
<p>"International expansion plays a key part in progressing our education which underpins the future of Brighton College and its family of schools. It supports investment in more educationalists who can focus on improvement and innovation. It also provides new opportunities for staff, who increasingly see experience beyond the UK as rewarding in itself, equipping them to better engage with pupils who view themselves as global citizens.</p> <p>"We have found a means to part sponsor our commitment to educational innovation and increase even further Brighton College's reputation as the family to join. Brighton already tops the list of many applicants who are seeking a stimulating, kind and inclusive culture and a brand that will stand them in good stead for career progression, but offering international options as part of a wider career path was something we felt would also be very attractive".</p>	<p>Many schools possess a strong sense of philanthropy, and desire to create an environment where any child can benefit from its education, irrespective of their parental circumstances.</p> <p>In the UK, fee paying parents have funded state education through taxes and are also funding their children's independent education. To rely on them to further support bursaries seems inequitable.</p> <p>In the absence of a substantial endowment, British schools may not want to tax existing fee payers further. The additional income stream from helping to provide valuable education in a number of locations around the world greatly increases a school's ability to support its existing philanthropic objectives and satisfy the UK's charitable requirement of public benefit.</p>	<p>A stand-alone British day or day/boarding school is heavily dependent on both their local catchment area and their own ability to generate thought leadership.</p> <p>Dependency on a local market and what can become a UK-centric educational initiative increases commercial risk and is at odds with a mission to help pupils develop within the current global perspective.</p> <p>"Brighton College saw merit in widening the pool of those who are responsible for thought leadership, to incorporate educationalists in different territories, embrace the perspective of other cultures and examine best practice in other geographies.</p> <p>In addition, reducing the dependency on the local catchment area around a school mitigates the impact of local adverse economic events."</p>

## What markets should be targeted – active vs reactive strategies

Once a British school decides to expand overseas, it can be a daunting process to determine the location of that first international school. Most schools would like to say their expansion followed a strategic plan but, in reality, initial expansion is rarely so strategic. Schools typically take advantage of an opportunity that presents itself. That is not necessarily problematic provided the outcome benefits the school and the new market it serves.

Brighton College's entry to the overseas market coincided with the desire of an overseas group to incorporate a quality school within its residential developments. As the properties were not necessarily for sale but for longer term investment, the need for ongoing quality education existed.

Paul Westbrook notes, "We understood our partner's agenda and recognised the overlap

with our own agenda: a clear reason for providing long term premium education to a particular neighbourhood. This first school was very successful: within four years, there were more pupils in that school than there were in our school here in the UK."

The success of that first school generated local interest in opening further schools within the region. This was not part of an aggressive strategy for expansion. "It was", Paul conceded, "a great compliment and endorsement of our education by both local and expatriate parents and also a clear indication that our partner enjoyed its collaboration with Brighton College. That second school was followed by a third, all backed by the one partner. I think this demonstrates our suitability as a partner and our commitment not just to education but to a specific geography and the pupils within it. It also supported our contention that having a close network of schools in an area supports our brand and provides the local heads with an immediate peer group to

complement their peer group in the UK, with whom they can discuss local market opportunities and any local concerns that may arise."

As with many British schools, the Far East is a natural market and following the success of its first international schools in the Middle East, Brighton College has expanded into Thailand and Singapore.

In some sectors and in some segments of the educational market, the aim may be to open multiple sites as quickly as possible. In contrast, Rishi Soni describes Brighton College's strategy as "not being about the number of schools we open, but rather ensuring we open high quality schools, in destinations where there is demand for British education, an ability to attract and retain the best teachers and the prospect of delivering a sensible financial return to enable us to support the family of schools from here in the UK and help fund our educational innovation and existing philanthropic

objectives, with a partner that shares our ethos and values". Paul Westbrook adds that typical franchising involves a customer with fairly limited interaction with the service provider – nights at a hotel or meals in a restaurant. Education involves a customer (the parent) trusting their most valuable possession (their child) to be educated and nurtured by one school for many years in one setting. The word "franchising" conjures up a relationship that Brighton College does not recognise. We work with our partners to ensure that every child receives a first class education, tailored for them – tailoring does not sit comfortably with the homogeneity suggested by the word "franchise". We feel an obligation to every child in our family of schools and as a result our agreements are not merely franchise agreements but are set up so as to seek to protect both our first class reputation and the quality of education and pastoral care for the children in our schools. This benefits our partners as well.

# British Schools – A Case Study

## Identifying an appropriate partner

Finding the right partner is always a challenge, regardless of the sector, but it can be particularly difficult for schools as they seek partners who can combine financial acumen with a philanthropic desire to put something back into their local communities. As Rishi Soni observes, “we are not looking for partners purely seeking a quick financial return because developing and operating schools is a long term commitment to a location. It takes generally three to five years for the schools to break even and the profits and returns come in the longer term. So we need partners who share that long term horizon.”

As a general rule, the relationship between the British school and its local partner is commercial, with both parties seeking a financial return. However, within the education sector there can be a tension between this commercial objective and the British school’s educational reputation and philanthropic aims. This tension can be exposed if the partner does not share the same approach as the British school.

Paul Westbrook recognises this possible tension while knowing that Brighton College has been fortunate to find partners who share its educational aims. Paul goes further, by acknowledging

that “part of our role is to help our partners better understand what education can do, the power of education, if you like. I am not certain how many potential partners within our sector are purely financially motivated. I am sure there are some, but we make it very clear that unless our agendas are aligned in terms of the balance between commercial returns, quality of education and wider benefit for a community, we will not move forward with a partner.”

## The hurdles, both internal and external

There is much for British schools to consider when expanding

overseas, and so it is for Brighton College. As Paul Westbrook comments, “different countries have very different cultures; different requirements in education; different human rights records; different approaches to faith or gender roles and so on. One question for any UK charity is how easy is it for our UK education to work within the requirements of a new market, what aspects of our education may we need to reconsider and how comfortable are we with the resulting breadth of our offering?”

Four of the challenges most frequently faced by British schools are:

### Compromising on ethos and standards

Maintaining standards in different environments is challenging. Brighton College is able to reconcile the adaptations required in certain local markets by focussing on what they can deliver to the children.

As Paul Westbrook concludes “in essence, as long as we feel there is an opportunity for every child in our school to develop into adults who have the desire and the tools to give something back to society and who have been equipped with a skillset to make a positive difference, then the school has achieved its objective. Our focus puts the child at the centre and in almost all cultures, we feel we can help a child develop. In addition, we need to have regard for teachers and their safety, welfare and enjoyment. We need to be comfortable with both our ability to help the child and our confidence that the environment is right for a teacher before we will enter a new territory.”

### Management distraction

Developing an overseas school takes time and management resources.

Paul Westbrook comments, “Anyone starting an overseas school business must understand that it needs a particular capacity and the right calibre of staff to oversee it. A school might consider appointing an excellent deputy head, who knows the school and understands education, to lead an expansion programme, tasking them with going off and starting schools in certain parts of the globe. Unless you find exactly the right deputy, who is able to rapidly absorb local culture and possessed of the necessary commercial acumen, the assumption they will be able to do this without support is naïve. A solid understanding of the educational aspects is necessary in defending the school brand but there is much more to it than that: you need the right executive capacity and skillsets to properly develop schools overseas and to properly service those schools.”

### Internal structure

Many British schools are charities and prohibited from licensing third parties to open and operate schools overseas.

So as to permit this commercial activity, schools incorporate and use a trading company. This has the added benefit of ring-fencing liability within the trading company, thus protecting the charity.

There can, and should, be a strong connection between the two entities, especially in the early days when the trading company may be unable to employ a full roster of staff, relying instead on seconded staff from the school. This has the added benefit, as Paul Westbrook describes, of “protecting the school’s DNA” when the trading company works with potential partners. As these staff members are still actively working within the school, they provide a connection and a sense of continuum. Of course, this should be a two-way street, enabling them to use in their home school knowledge gained from the overseas operation.

At some stage, the trading company can develop its own sense of identity and this can bring tension with the charity. This is more likely to happen when the trading company is separated or distinct from the school. Paul Westbrook comments, “Brighton recognises this risk and has made a commitment to allocate specific time of a number of senior staff between the College in the UK and the family overseas. I maintain a role within the UK Group as its COO, for example. I can therefore speak with authenticity as to what the UK schools and our family of schools around the world are doing.”

### Supporting local partners

If the local partner is to operate the international school in accordance with the British school’s requirements it needs initial and on-going support.

This requires dedicated management time and good communication skills (and emotional intelligence) to ensure the local partner understands what is being said and does follow the guidance it is given.

One culture might welcome clear and pointed dialogue whereas, in another, such a direct conversation might damage the relationship.

## Key lessons learned

When asked what advice he would give to any British school expanding overseas, Rishi Soni’s advice is simple, “do not underestimate the work involved in delivering an international school and getting it right”. Brighton College has been expanding overseas for over a decade and is regularly expanding its team. But Rishi sees the benefit of starting off on the right footing, “at the start of the project, get proper legal advice to support you in your contracts, do your research on the investors and the markets before you go into it to ensure there is demand for the service you want to offer to that market.”

Schools also need to be aware of the regulations in every country they are looking to enter – and even within a country, as is the case in the UAE where regulations differ from one Emirate to another. “So right from the outset, truly understand what the regulations are and how they might impinge on the type of education you can deliver.”

Paul agreed with Rishi’s assessment: “Get the team right, don’t underestimate the task, don’t be under any illusions that it is easy, and don’t feel the pressure to do something swiftly, take your time to get it right.”

There is now more pressure than ever on schools to expand

overseas. That pressure increases the risk of taking a short-term decision that comes back and bites a school in the future. An international school typically envisages a 30 to 50 year relationship and as Paul Westbrook says, “if you rush and make a mistake at the outset, you might be lucky if the partner accepts this and is prepared to work with you to improve matters; but on the other hand, you might have a long time to regret it: for these type of long term agreements, when you commit to something, you are committing not just yourself but future generations of the school, its governing body and its senior management team to it”.

## Closing comments

As a final comment, Paul Westbrook notes “I feel incredibly fortunate working with Brighton College as we have committed to a meaningful overseas family and invested in both our educational innovation and our overseas team but I feel for those schools who are not able to afford a team or who may lack the financial or commercial experience to enter overseas markets safely, having conducted the appropriate due diligence. I wish those who find themselves with ambition but less experience and resource all the very best in steering a course through what can be very opaque waters. With an inexperienced team, good advice becomes even more critical.”

David Bond is a partner at European law firm Fieldfisher LLP and can be contacted at david.bond@fieldfisher.com or 020 7861 4079.

# Virtual learning is evolving to bring new opportunities in independent education



The great majority of children benefit from being in school but what about those children for whom (for a variety of reasons), day to day 'physical school' just doesn't work? Is there an independent education option for them? Hugh Viney, Deputy Head at Minerva's Virtual Academy School explains why there is a real need for virtual learning to become more relevant, more integral and more accessible to pupils...

It goes without saying that parents want a continuous, stable education for their children; and one which equips them to succeed and flourish as well-rounded individuals in their future lives. Last year's disruption to schooling has brought much uncertainty into the classroom and has undoubtedly contributed to rising cases of anxiety and mental illness in the young. All children will of course experience ups and downs as part of a normal, healthy life at school; even at the best of times. However, while schools have a duty to prepare pupils for the practicalities and realities of adulthood, this year has been extraordinarily tough. In particular, cases of social anxiety and social phobias have been on the rise, as pupils have struggled to deal with unpredictability and inconsistent messaging both at school and at home.

Thankfully, our society is now becoming much better equipped to deal with these challenges than it perhaps was five years ago. Schools have had to up their game when it comes to remote and blended learning and they have also had to cope with increasing numbers of pupils that struggle to come into school every day. Most children, even those who struggle from time to time, will benefit from being educated in a physical school, with all of the traditional structures that go with it. It is often the best place for them to be. On the other hand, some mountains are too big for anyone to climb - there are a smaller number of children for whom traditional school simply doesn't work, for a variety of reasons. It is vital that these children get the specialist support they need and that they have a greater range of educational options available, to help them succeed and thrive in the modern world.

More about Minerva's Virtual Academy [www.minervavirtual.com](http://www.minervavirtual.com)

## Every child must be able to thrive

Those who have been impacted by mental health at some point in their lives will understand that the issues can be multi-layered and very complex indeed. There will be a number of children who usually struggle emotionally and mentally in school, who actually thrived at home during the first lockdown and were able to focus on home learning with positive results. Many will have also developed important skills such as self-reliance and resilience while accessing remote learning. This period has certainly highlighted a number of interesting revelations that may impact the future educational landscape.

Children are no strangers to technology. They had been used to accessing information using devices way before COVID struck. So, this transition towards remote learning has in many cases, been fairly intuitive and even natural for children. For the child who doesn't feel comfortable or able to cope in school, whether that is in the classroom, playground or lining up with peers outside the dining hall, these feelings may have a detrimental impact on their academic progress, self-esteem and their general wellbeing. It doesn't take long for anxieties to manifest and for depression to set in, which can be an extremely daunting and difficult process to unravel.

Virtual schooling, even temporarily, can be a viable solution for pupils who lack confidence as it offers a way for them to approach the curriculum at their own pace, in the comfort and security of their home. As an example, we've recently enrolled a pupil who has an excellent mind for mathematics and computer science, but has mild Dyslexia, which is really affecting his overall confidence in school. His parents have chosen to switch to virtual learning for just one year,

with a focus on building up his self-esteem before he starts a new term at a brand new bricks and mortar sixth form in September 2022. Virtual learning can also work well for overseas pupils too as well as expat families who want their children to receive a British education whilst living abroad.

## Children should never feel isolated while learning

Historically many have argued (quite rightly) that traditional home schooling can be lonely and isolating for children. For modern online schools operating in a traditional way, the opposite is true. It is crucial that online schools try to cultivate the same friendships and socialisation between pupils as traditional schools do. Social interaction and building robust friendships are core aspects of attending school and of life.

Children should never feel isolated while learning, it is up to schools (physical or online) to help pupils feel included, supported, and to feel that they belong to a real school community. Virtual schools like ours still hold weekly assemblies, which allow everyone to celebrate their successes and discuss current affairs. Virtual group subject classes are also important so pupils can learn and revise together. Likewise, running after school clubs so children can collectively develop shared passions outside of the classroom are still a key focus for virtual schools.

Many believe that virtual learning has arrived at the right time. Now more than ever children are adept with technology and already use it daily at home to their advantage and also in traditional schools to enhance their learning in class. Online learning platforms are now being designed to help children to take responsibility for their own education and to develop an independent love of learning that will remain with them long after

they leave school - qualities that traditional schools also champion.

## Some children will always struggle with being at school

Sometimes, although often unintentionally, traditional schools can feel like a production house for exam success. With virtual learning, exams are still critical, but there's a novelty and an excitement to it as well. Without the restrictions of a bricks and mortar premise, online learning can push for an innovative teaching programme, attract the brightest, most inspirational teachers from around the country (regardless of location) and even offer more unusual subjects.

Children need to develop the social skills required to live fulfilling lives and also the real-life practical skills to succeed in the workplaces of the future. Placing high value on the attributes of independence and self-sufficiency are important, but virtual schooling also champions collaboration, problem-solving, creative and critical thinking, leadership, and mindfulness.

The last year has really highlighted how virtual learning will have a transformational effect on education in this country in future years. Giving control of learning back to pupils, even for those in physical school, means teachers can free up more resource to focus on nurturing motivation, boosting confidence and delivering more engaging, interactive lessons. Probably most significantly, lockdown has conceptualised virtual learning for every household in the country. A small number of pupils have always struggled with being at school, and now, thanks to technology, there is an alternative option for these children, which is far more socially acceptable and far less isolating than it was even a year ago. That can only be a positive thing.

# NEU Independent Sector Conference

Coronavirus left its mark on the 2020 NEU Independent Sector Conference, with attendees forced to gather online, writes John Richardson....

Despite being deprived of the usual conviviality, collegiality, and comradeship of meeting in person, members appreciated the opportunity to unite online. And, on the plus side, there was greater accessibility, saved time and reduced cost!

And there was still plenty of passion, with 140 NEU workplace reps and active members sharing experience and joining debate.

NEU Joint General Secretary, Mary Bousted, commenced proceedings with a heart-felt tribute to the sterling efforts of members to ensure education continues while coping with the health risks to themselves, the pupils, and their families.

As she pertinently remarked, NEU members are working very hard academically and pastorally, mastering new technologies, navigating altered relationships with pupils, and adapting to new procedures and routines.

John Richardson, NEU National Official, independent sector

Robin Bevan, NEU President, powerfully argued that the government's late, ill-advised, and poorly executed response to the crisis displayed none of the horizon scanning that school leadership teams undertake. In contrast, he confidently asserted that members could be proud of the leadership that the NEU had provided during the crisis.

Fire and rehire tactics being used to deprive members of their TPS were roundly condemned. Employers were cautioned that Coronavirus is not a get-out-of-jail-free card to cut pay, dump staff out of the TPS and increase workload. Of course, some employers will have to cut cost, but others are making a choice and evoking coronavirus carte blanche to quell staff opposition.

While membership of the TPS is coming under increasing pressure, conference celebrated NEU members' successful campaign to

remain in over 50 independent sector workplaces, including recent successes at Durham High School and St. Mary's, Cambridge.

Helen Porter, chair of NEU's elected National Council independent sector, gave voice to the 1,500 members who shared their experiences in the NEU Independent Sector Pay and Conditions Survey 2020, embargoed until the conference. Naturally, the risk of catching the virus while keeping schools open was foremost on members' minds.

The second session was given over to member debate of key issues and the sector motion to be sent to NEU Annual Conference 2021 [in addition to motions through the usual democratic route of Branches and Districts].

After impassioned debate, the motion proposed by Shaun Murtagh-Howard, and seconded by Rachel Bradley, both NEU National Council independent sector, on



Union Recognition and Teachers Pension Scheme won the day. It calls for campaigning regionally and nationally to defend the right of all teachers to be members of the TPS and to support and promote Union Recognition within the Independent Sector.

Conference ended with Helen Porter reflecting on an extraordinary time – the like of which has never been seen in schools. NEU members and their schools had risen commendably to the challenge. It was deeply regrettable that for some their reward was a cut to their pay and conditions. She concluded with a rallying call – if your terms and conditions are threatened, to push back; ensure your voices are heard; and make a difference.

## Message to the future

One of England's oldest prep schools is celebrating its 150th birthday and the opening of a brand new classroom block with a 2020 Time Capsule.

Staff and boys at Homefield Prep, Surrey, have been choosing items to bury in a Time Capsule to be opened in fifty years' time. Year 3 Teacher Mr. M. Powell curated items from a variety of sources to provide the future Homefield community with a snapshot of what life is like in 2020; a year that has been unlike any other!

Amongst the items included are USB drives with videos containing staff and boys' personal messages, a tour of the school, plus footage of the current technology used in

classrooms. Boys have responded enthusiastically to the challenge of telling future Homefield boys about life at school in 2020; anything from what their favourite lessons are, predictions for the future, to what jobs they plan to do. Boys plan to come back in 2070 for the big reveal.

Mr John Towers, Headmaster, said: "Boys have selected items or messages to go into the Time Capsule that illustrate something for which they can be grateful. For example, photos of the boys within their designated bubbles show that they are thankful for the support, friendship and strong sense of community shown at school. Some touching poetry and short stories show just how brilliantly they have adapted to life in 2020".

Homefield Prep is investing over £7 million to provide the highest quality facilities for their boys now, and for future generations. The Time Capsule will stay under a glass pane in the floor of the brand new classroom block.



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2007-2008	Nauf Al-Hadi	Laura Wilson
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2009-2010	Richard White	Anna Dismore

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# Looking back at Christmas

A selection of images from the end of last term



## Maintenance team spread Christmas cheer!

The Maintenance team at **Shebbear College** in North Devon – Mark Skinner, Matt Hopkins, Mike Douglas and Steve Booker – worked in their own time to transform the old changing rooms into a version of Harry Potter's Diagon Alley, complete with magical shops with hand carved signs leading into a fairy tale snow scene and a festive Father Christmas' grotto.

Mark, who led the project, said 'We wanted to raise everyone's spirits this Christmas and decided to up our game and create 'Prospect Lane' – Shebbear's equivalent of Diagon Alley. We built all the shop window frames and made the signs mostly from things we had lying around in our shed, I can't reveal

all of our secrets but I will tell you that the snow scene was carved out of old polystyrene! We worked hard to make sure it was all covid-safe, with a one-way system throughout, airflow and no contact.'

The shops in 'Prospect Lane' include 'Lovett's Sweets' after the Pastoral Deputy Head Mrs Lovett, 'Drakes' potion shop after Chemistry teacher Mr Drake and 'Kirby & Jenkins' dressmakers after Head, Mrs Kirby and Senior Deputy Head, Mr Jenkins.

Pupils at Shebbear College were given timeslots to visit in their bubbles and the school also welcomed pupils from Shebbear Primary School.



**Vinehall School**, Sussex came up with a 'Green Screen' solution to deliver a fun, safe seasonal performance that included all the pre-prep pupils and maintained the true nature of a Nativity. Challenges included keeping the children acting and dancing within the confines of the green screen without losing

the energy. One highlight was when the children saw the edited performance, as none of them had realised what the green screen would do. When they saw how they were actually dancing in a street in Nazareth, or in the clouds, the true spirit of Christmas was realised. The nativity was sent out as a link to families.

**Students at St Benedict's School**, London, made a special Christmas collection for Ealing Foodbank, donating over 50 Christmas hampers. The hampers were created by each of the school's form-groups – from Year 7 to the Sixth Form – filling the school hall with Christmas cheer and requiring several mini-bus trips to deliver them to the foodbank. The festive collections included seasonal items such as Christmas cakes, Christmas puddings, selection boxes and Advent calendars, along with standard items such as tinned fruit, tea and coffee. Throughout this term the school has made weekly collections of non-perishable food and toiletries for Ealing Foodbank, which is part of



The Trussell Trust's UK network of 1,200 foodbanks.

**St. Dunstan's College**, London, Art Department launched a competition for the annual Christmas card image. Students from Year 5 to Year 13 were given the task of creating artwork that would be used for the Christmas card to be sent out by the Headmaster to those in the local community, governors and other schools. The winning entry was created by Year 9 pupil, Mei Lin, who created a stunning winter landscape. St. Dunstan's decided to send it as an e-card, donating the money normally spent on the cards to the charity Crisis.



While COVID-19 has scuppered all kinds of plans this year, **Lockers Park School**, Hertfordshire, enjoyed getting into the festive spirit, adapting their Christmas traditions to suit current times. The adapted highlights featured a Virtual Carol Service that included a poignant rendition of *Once in Royal David's City* given by Year 7 and 8 pupils, readings performed by pupils, some hearty Christmas carol singing from the rest of the school

and staff plus a guest appearance from the Reverend Michael Macey of St John's Church in Boxmoor. Pupils also enjoyed Christingle Services in their bubbles and a Pre-Prep Nativity set across a series of locations in the school, all of which were filmed and sent out for parents to enjoy from the comfort of their own homes as well as for pupils to enjoy in their bubbles on the big screen in the school hall.



Pupils at **Christ College Brecon** got into the festive spirit and compiled a Christmas showcase for family and friends to enjoy remotely from home. With the usual nativities, Christmas shows and carol services cancelled this year due to COVID-19 restrictions, Christ College ensured that pupils did not miss out on taking part in a school production, and gave

loved ones a special performance they could watch together again and again. Each senior house bubble from Year 11 to Upper Sixth rehearsed and performed selected songs from musicals which were edited into a one hour musical medley ensemble and streamed to the school community via its virtual event platform during the last week of term.



**King William's College**, Isle of Man, was probably the only independent school in the entire British Isles to be able to hold its chapel services as normal. Two services were open to the public in the presence of the Lord Bishop and the Archdeacon respectively, and this year's guests included both His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Richard Gozney, and the Island's Chief Minister, Howard

Quayle. A final service was held for the school's own pupils to bring the College term to an end. The services were based on the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols which was first sung in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge, and there was a mixture of both traditional and modern carols including items by Warlock, Rutter, Stopford and Gardner. As usual there was also a Manx carol and

this year the choir, pictured, sang *S'feyar yn Oie* (Cold is the Night) by Annie Kissack. Earlier last

month (December) the Buchan, the College's junior school, held its own carol service led by its own choir.



## CHANGING FACES... CHANGING PLACES...



Paul Logan will be head of Derby Grammar School when Dr Ruth Norris departs to take the helm at one of the world's leading international schools in Switzerland at the end of the academic year.

Mr Logan began his teaching career in 1995 after leaving Price Waterhouse Coopers, where

he trained as an accountant after graduating from Durham University. After 13 years in the state sector he moved to independent education in 2007, as Head of Maths at Uppingham School. Recently he has been at Wisbech Grammar, an HMC day and boarding school in Cambridgeshire, first as Deputy Head Operations and then Deputy Head Academic for the last 3 years.



The Rugby School Group and the Governing Body of Rugby School Thailand are delighted to announce the appointment of Bruce Grindlay as the new Principal of Rugby School Thailand.

Bruce is Head Master of Sutton Valence School in Kent. Educated at King's College School, Wimbledon, and Saint George's School, Vancouver, Bruce went on to read Music at Emmanuel College, Cambridge where he

also undertook Postgraduate studies while teaching there. An accomplished organist, he was Director of Music at Christ's Hospital from 2001 to 2009, having started his teaching career at Christ's College in Brecon and at Bedford School, where he was a boarding housemaster.

Bruce is married to Lilla, who is Head of English at The King's School, Canterbury, and their two children are currently attending university in the UK. He will embark on his new role in September next year.



Laura Stotesbury will be the new Head of St Joseph's College, Berkshire, from September, taking over from Andrew Colpus, who has led St Joseph's for the last eight years.

Laura Stotesbury is currently Deputy Head (Academic) at Prior Park College in Bath, where she has been employed since September 2015. As a teacher of Economics and Business, she has also held roles at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital School, Bristol, Malvern College and Bedford School.



Mr Giles Tollit is to be head Arnold House School, London, with effect from September. Giles

is succeeding Viv Thomas, who retires at the end of the Summer Term after fifteen years. Giles is currently in his tenth year as the Headmaster of Horris Hill, Berkshire.

# New specialist school with state-of-the-art facilities

A new specialist school with state-of-the-art facilities has opened in Stowmarket, Suffolk in Grade II listed former rectory Wetheringsett Manor, in response to the growing demand for personalised learning to meet the needs of pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties.

An architectural gem set in beautiful grounds, Wetheringsett Manor School has been extensively refurbished and extended to provide an inspiring and

therapeutic learning environment for vulnerable pupils aged 11-18 – and its specialist approach is already attracting pupils from the surrounding counties of Essex, Norfolk and Cambridge as well as Suffolk.

At Wetheringsett Manor School, part of Acorn Education & Care and Outcomes First Group, education is adapted to meet each individual's learning needs while ensuring they also feel safe, secure and nurtured. Catering

to pupils who have a wide range of social, emotional and mental health needs – for whom a mainstream environment is often too overwhelming – the school provides a variety of learning spaces suitable for one-to-one and small group teaching to optimise outcomes. Classes have a maximum of six children with one teacher and a teaching assistant, with additional support from a team of specialist staff – including speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and occupational therapists.

A brand new extension adjoining the main building, which dates back to 1843, houses spacious modern classrooms, each equipped with the latest education technology including interactive whiteboards and laptops. Calming sensory areas provide essential spaces for pupils to regulate their senses, which in turn helps to support their emotional wellbeing. While literacy and numeracy skills underpin the school's curriculum, great emphasis is placed on ensuring that the education delivered is relevant to pupils'

experiences of the real world so that they can apply what they learn in everyday situations.

Further plans in the pipeline include a new sports centre, as well as developing the existing on-site factory to provide vocational training opportunities for pupils in sectors such as mechanics, health and beauty, decorating and plumbing.

Commenting on the opening of Wetheringsett Manor School, Headteacher David Bishop said, "We are delighted to be welcoming our first students and supporting them on their education journey, helping to unlock both their personal and academic potential. Our traditional manor house has expanded to include a modern classroom block with everything teachers and students could need. We believe in delivering an exceptional education and to do this we've invested in creating an environment to inspire learning, which, coupled with our professional teaching team, gives our students a first class start in life."



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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 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 on the internet.

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