

January 2025

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In this issue...



Green plaque

Canford School, Dorset, has been awarded with a plaque to celebrate two of the school's national plant collections - Katsura (*Cercidiphyllum*) and Walnut (*Juglans*) trees.

The green plaque was awarded by plant conservation charity, Plant Heritage. Founded in 1978, they aim to conserve and safeguard the UK's horticultural heritage and diversity of garden plants by keeping living examples of rare plants in the National Plant Collections scheme or with Plant Guardians (who grow and nurture one or more rare and unusual plants in their own garden or house).

The school has over 3,500 trees within the grounds, the majority of which were planted when Lord and Lady Wimborne lived in Canford Manor during the 1800s. These include the central drive avenue of Blue Cedars, the avenue of Common Limes on Lady Wimborne Drive and an oak avenue leading up to the old iron gates, but the oldest tree in the park is a 12th-century Sweet Chestnut *Castanea sativa*.

Since the school began in 1923, there has been a commitment to maintain and expand the collection of trees from the Americas and Asia, including a thriving Wollemi Pine, *Wollemia nobilis* and numerous deciduous and evergreen trees, hybrid trees, and champion trees, with heights ranging from one hundred and thirty-five feet to five feet. This has been achieved by regular inspections, annual planting and sensitive management.

Canford's Master i/c Trees, Andrew Powell, said: "It has been a privilege as a botanist to have been Canford's third master of trees these last 34 years. Head of Grounds, Kerry Mapp and Arboriculturist, Nathan Scheller, do a fantastic job in caring for the trees. As well as providing a wonderful setting for the school, the trees are a wonderful teaching aid of great interest to today's environmentally aware students."

Pictured: Canford's Master i/c Trees, Andrew Powell, on a tree tour with students

Cover background

Sports facilities – maximising revenue

Rethinking sports facilities to take advantage of their potential involves several strategies to enhance their use, generate revenue, and improve community engagement. To find out more about this and for a round-up of some of the latest sports news see pages 42-44.

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Is Your School Mentioned?

Schools featured in this issue include:

ACS International School, Cobham; ACS International School, Hillingdon; Ampleforth College; Ashville Prep School; Ballard School; Bancroft's Prep School; Bede's Senior School; Bolton School Boys' Division; Bolton School Girls' Division; Bradford Grammar School; Bryanston School; Canford School; Caterham School; Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation; Edge Grove School; Eltham College; Exeter School; Fairview International School; Felsted School; Gordonstoun; Haberdashers' Monmouth School; Haberdashers' Monmouth Prep School; The Hawthorns School; Headington Rye Oxford Prep School; The High School of Glasgow; Holme Grange School; Kimbolton Prep School; King's College Prep, Taunton; The King's School Worcester; Leighton Park School; Leweston School; Lord Wandsworth College; Loughborough Amherst School; Maidwell Hall School; Malvern College; Newcastle High School for Girls; New College School, Oxford; New Hall School; Priory School of Our Lady of Walsingham; St. Andrew's School, Rochester; St Edward's School, Oxford; St Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen; Sandroyd School; Solihull School; The Stephen Perse Foundation; Surbiton High School; Tring Park School for the Performing Arts; Wellesley Haddon Dene School; Westonbirt School

The rise of taxes in the independent school sector

With changes to tax liabilities happening across the sector, Ratings expert, David Parker, takes a closer look at some including the forthcoming removal of business rates relief and outlines why it's now more important than ever to take stock of all facilities and see whether they can be used more efficiently.

When a new government comes into power, there is hope and speculation that every individual and organisation will somehow be better off. For independent schools, the government's manifesto made it clear quite early on that there would be little to cheer, but the scale of change, and its timing, was difficult to predict.

The new government made no secret of its desire to level playing fields, whether between bricks and mortar retailers and online marketplaces, or private educators and state education providers. The problems arise when there are multiple changes, and especially when they are confirmed with very little forward warning.

The proposal to exclude the supply of education by independent schools from the VAT definition of an 'eligible body', thereby applying VAT to school fees, was clear before the election and took effect from 1 January 2025. This affects all independent schools and we have already seen many having to either pass the additional cost on to parents or guardians, absorb it into balance sheets, offset some or all of it against past or future capital expenditure, or a combination of some or all of these.

Another tax rise which affects the around half of independent schools which are registered charities, is the

removal of the previously mandatory 80% business rates relief from 1st April 2025. Business rates are a tax payable by whomever occupies, or is entitled to occupy, commercial, or non-domestic, property.

But what does this mean to the average independent school? Rateable values average at £203,000, according to the current 2023 Rating List for England & Wales. Forty of the 2,726 schools have rateable values above £1 million, but 1,824 have rateable values below £200,000. Once the annual multiplier for 2025/26 is applied to a rateable value, average annual bills in England will be around £112,600, or £115,300 in Wales. In the absence of 80% relief on these bills, this is an additional £90,000 to £92,240 per annum for affected schools.

The changes don't stop here, however. The Non-Domestic Rating (Multipliers and Schools) Bill, released in late 2024, not only formalises the business rates changes for schools, but also proposes to address the aforementioned levelling of the playing field between bricks and mortar and online retail in England. After retailers began to rely upon up to 75% relief on their rates bills during and after Covid-19, there was concern that the removal of this relief would destroy the high street. The proposed legislation

intends to build in 'up to' 40% off the annual business rates multiplier for properties in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector with rateable values below £51,000 from 1st April 2026. The explanatory notes say that it will be in part funded by 'online retail giants'. But this 'in part' aspect means that, in effect, any property with a rateable value above £500,000 will see an increase on their annual multiplier of 'up to' 18%.

According to the current Rating List, there are 294 independent schools in England which will be affected. There will be another revaluation in 2026 which could change this number, but taking today's figures, an independent school which is a registered charity with a rateable value of £501,000 could pay an additional £222,000 through the loss of the 80% relief, while any school (or indeed any property) with a similar rateable value could pay an additional £50,000 through the supplement on the annual multiplier.

The unprecedented changes to the tax liabilities of independent schools make it more important than ever to take stock of all facilities and whether they can be used more efficiently. This should then lead to a review of a school's rateable value to identify opportunities to reduce it, although bear in mind that a rateable value can go up if



David Parker

an ill-advised appeal is made to the Valuation Office Agency (VOA).

A recently introduced obligation to inform the VOA of changes to a property, with risks of financial penalties for non-compliance, known as 'duty to notify', is due to go live between 2026 and 2029, and will force all business owners to take more control of their facilities. Schools are no exception.

The method of valuing a school for business rates purposes is to estimate the cost of constructing a modern equivalent facility on the same land, before making adjustments for age and obsolescence in relation to the existing facilities. This can be a very subjective exercise and requires experience and expertise not only to collate facts and construct the relevant arguments, but also to pursue an appeal through the process in England and Wales, known as 'check, challenge, appeal'.

An appeal now can be backdated to 1st April 2023, but the window to appeal that far back ends on 31st March 2026. It is therefore a good time for schools to review their assets, assessing their function and utilisation, to identify opportunities to consolidate and operate their estate more efficiently now and into the future, and consider ways to cut current and future costs.

David Parker is Head of Rating at Savills www.savills.co.uk/people/savills-finsbury-circus-house/david-parker.aspx

This article is correct as at December 2024

Fee freeze

Certified International Baccalaureate (IB) Continuum School, Fairview International School, Bridge of Allan, has announced that its tuition fees will remain capped at the school's current prices until June 2027, with no plans to add VAT. Last year the school announced a tuition

fee freeze, and has now clarified that this freeze will include the exemption from the upcoming VAT increase of 20% on independent school fees, effective January 2025.

Headteacher of Fairview International School, Victoria Gamble, said: "We understand the

challenges many face with the removal of the value added tax (VAT) exemption for independent schools, but we are committed to supporting our families through it and we look forward to continuing to serve our students and families for many years to come."



Head of Fairview International School, Victoria Gamble

School closures

Following sector challenges, three schools have announced closure at the end of this academic year. Maidwell Hall, Northamptonshire, Loughborough Amherst School, Leicestershire and Godolphin Prep School, Wiltshire, are all set to shut.

Of those schools, Maidwell Hall and Loughborough Amherst School have both attributed the introduction of VAT to fees and changes to employers' National Insurance as compounding factors behind the closures.

Loughborough Schools Foundation's Chair of Governors, Mr Roger Harrison, said in a letter to Amherst School parents: "We face a situation now in which operating costs continue to rise, further exacerbated by the recent Autumn Budget announcements. The introduction of VAT on school fees and the removal of a sizeable exemption from business rates were confirmed, along with an increase in National Minimum Wage at a level above inflation and changes to employers' National Insurance. We have, therefore, and with regret, reached the point where it will be no longer financially viable to continue to run the school beyond the end of this academic year.

"We have reached this conclusion only after exploring alternative options and undertaking detailed financial modelling. This has not been an easy decision to make..."

And Maidwell Hall Chair of Trustees, Barbara Matthews, said: "Within the independent sector, post Covid, there has been a marked trend towards parents choosing to send their children to school as day pupils rather than boarders which has reduced the income per child and thus increased the number of pupils necessary for the school to break even.

"Further blows came in the Budget last November when the announcement of VAT on school fees and the elimination of business rates relief was confirmed, and the unexpected increase in National Insurance was announced. This forced the Trustees to recognise that the economic consequence was unavoidable – the school would need to close.

"To put this in context: at the close of 2024, Maidwell Hall had 160 pupils. In 2021, the breakeven number was forecast at 200, by 2023 it was 225; now the forecasts show the school needs 250 fee-paying pupils to break even. With inflation, soaring energy costs and interest on loans this number will only increase.

The impact on the pupils, their families and the staff has been a major consideration and has made the decision much harder. Sadly though, the school must live within its economic means and despite its best efforts, the external factors that the school, and the wider independent sector, face have proven too strong."

The remaining school, Godolphin Prep School, Wiltshire, cited declining pupil numbers, stating: "Despite the best efforts of staff and leadership, declining numbers at Godolphin Prep have presented challenges in sustaining an environment we strive to provide for every child. As a result, Godolphin Prep will close at the end of the academic year."

Current pupils at the school are being offered places at nearby Chafyn Grove School, Wiltshire, who it's been announced is joining the United Learning Group of which Godolphin is a member.

Reacting to the news of these closures ISC chief executive, Julie Robinson, said: "Many people warned the government that VAT would prove a bridge too far for

schools already under financial pressure – we are now seeing the reality: school closures, dedicated staff losing their jobs and children having their education disrupted.

"This is something that we will unfortunately see again over the coming months and years – with more communities losing an employer, a partner and an educational hub for local children. We urge the government to think again and work with us to mitigate the effects of this damaging policy."

The news comes as a recent report by The Telegraph found that the funds generated from implementing VAT on independent school fees have not, according to a Treasury source, been specifically ringfenced for improving state schools. The source said: "The money is not directly hypothecated in the same way other taxes are. The physical pounds and pence are not directly ringfenced [for state schools]... It's not physically funnelled from 'A' to 'B' but in value terms the principle is still there.

"The Chancellor has been clear that value is going to be going directly towards the education priorities."

VAT on education challenge reaches the High Court

Six families supported by the Independent Schools Council (ISC) have filed a judicial review claim in the High Court of England and Wales, challenging the introduction of VAT on the provision of education by independent primary and secondary schools. The defendant to the claim is the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, as the Minister responsible for the Treasury.

The claim highlights that the introduction of VAT is already being felt far and wide, forcing families to weigh up their options.

CEO at the ISC, Julie Robinson, commented: "Throughout the

debate over charging VAT on education, we have consistently said that the diversity within independent schools has been ignored by policymakers. As a result of the government's blanket approach, the impact is likely to be felt immediately by many families and children, many of whom have chosen an independent school for reasons including faith, SEND support, dual-language learning or single-sex education. It is to protect the rights of these families, who are having their choice removed from them by this policy, that we are seeking a declaration of incompatibility."

The ISC is also concerned about the wider impact of the policy across independent education, which it explains in detailed evidence in support of the claim.

Partner and Head of Public Law at the legal firm representing the claimants, Sophie Kemp, said: "The families are asking for careful and swift scrutiny of the impact of VAT on their lives which they feel has been ignored by the government as it seeks to rush its policy through."

The families are calling for the claim to be heard on an expedited basis. They argue that the introduction of VAT

impedes access to education at independent schools and is incompatible with the right to education guaranteed by Article 2 of the First Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). They also claim that the policy infringes Article 14 of the Convention because it causes unnecessary and discriminatory harm to certain categories of children. The families seek a declaration of incompatibility under section 4 of the Human Rights Act on the basis that the amendments to the Value Added Tax Act 1994 are incompatible with ECHR rights.

“VAT will impact our operation, not our vision or our mission”

How can independent schools continue to facilitate student social mobility and inclusivity in the face of implementation of VAT to fees? Principal the Stephen Perse Foundation, Richard Girvan, discusses the importance of ensuring financial barriers do not hinder students' access to education.



The government's decision to charge VAT on independent school fees has sparked a heated conversation around social mobility and inclusivity in education.

From this month (January) fees for education services, including boarding, will be charged with additional VAT at 20 per cent. Then, from April, those independent schools registered as charities (around half of independent schools in the UK) will no longer be eligible to claim charitable business rates relief. The challenge is compounded by higher employer National Insurance rates and a lower earnings threshold affecting all schools – teaching and support staff salaries form the majority of operating costs.

Following months of speculation, we are now able to see clearly how these changes will impact schools' operating models and, as a result, attempt to predict the broader impact of this across our sector. Predictive modelling indicates that around 37,000 pupils (approximately 6 per cent of the current independent school population)¹ will be forced to leave their current schools as a result of the impact of VAT on fees. But the impact will not be confined to this and we do not yet know what the impact will be on both independent and maintained schools of families no longer considering an independent education as an option for their child(ren) as a result of the increases in cost.

The perception, fuelled by news stories about the impact of VAT, that independent schools are inaccessible and getting further out of reach for most, is what we are working tirelessly to change at the Stephen Perse Foundation family of schools.

The role of education in social mobility

Since 2019, progress in reducing the educational attainment gap has stalled, especially in the early years and secondary years². This gap continues to widen during Years 10 and 11. It is well-established that a high-quality education helps to combat social exclusion and drive social mobility for children from disadvantaged backgrounds but, unfortunately, recent events have highlighted that this access remains far from universal. Even more young people will now be excluded from high quality education as a direct result of these measures, and will therefore not benefit from the opportunities that such an education would provide to their own advantage and to society at large.

In keeping with our founders' – Dr Stephen Perse and Dame Johane Bradbury – intentions, we aim to provide education as a means to enable improved social mobility and life chances. The Stephen Perse Foundation's schools have always sought to offer a first-class education to academically able and determined children and young people, regardless of their family circumstances. We do this through a range of bursaries and scholarships at our schools and through outreach partnerships with other schools linked to our community context in Cambridge.

The impact of financial support

Currently, approximately 40 per cent of our students receive some form of bursary or scholarship support across the Senior School and Sixth Form. In 2022/2023, the Stephen Perse student community included 156 students with bursary or scholarship awards, rising to 262 in 2023/2024. In 2024/2025, we anticipate around 400 students will receive some form of financial

support, including in-year hardship awards before the year end. Bursary, scholarship and other supported opportunities are a valuable asset within our school and our wider community. The diversity they enable within our community enriches teaching and learning experiences for everyone. Together we benefit from exposure to diversity of thought, perspective and lived experience.

The leadership team at the Stephen Perse Foundation is committed to maintaining these facets of our provision and actively managing the financial implications of VAT. While HMRC guidance suggests that some services, such as core tuition fees, will be subject to VAT, others, like school lunches, will not. We will be able to reclaim input VAT and have already reduced our pre-VAT fees from January 2025 so that, while total fees will be higher than previous years, the actual increase will be closer to 16 per cent than 20 per cent. We are also reviewing fees in the Early Years up to Year 2, to help reduce the financial pressure on parents to switch schools at crucial stages in their child's education.

These financial challenges, while far-reaching in their impact, are short-term. It has been, and will continue to be, critical to our ethos to maintain and expand our bursary programme in spite of the circumstances. We have committed to continuing to provide entrance bursaries for those joining our schools, as well as financial assistance for those already enrolled, where parents are experiencing financial difficulty.

Providing support through school partnerships

The global pandemic threw many societal inequalities into sharp relief. At the Stephen Perse Foundation, we saw first-hand how young people in our city

were disproportionately negatively affected by inequitable access to educational resources and opportunities. In response, we further built upon our state school partnership with North Cambridge Academy (NCA), which provides state education from Years 7-11, to offer additional Sixth Form places to young people impacted by the social and economic deprivation in NCA's catchment area. Through this specialised scheme, we provide fully funded places at our Sixth Form to alumni from North Cambridge Academy, supported by donors including Cambridge-based business, Costello Medical. The partnership enables students from NCA, which has the highest numbers of students registered as Pupil Premium (PP) in the county, to access educational opportunities with Stephen Perse Cambridge. Not only do NCA alumni benefit from fully funded Sixth Form places, but we also provide teaching support in areas where limited resources mean that subjects cannot be offered within the curriculum, or where more able students will benefit from additional tuition. Through this creative independent-state school partnership, we are raising aspirations and ensuring young people gain access to post-16 opportunities that they otherwise would not have.

The introduction of VAT has led many families to worry that they will no longer be able to afford the breadth of opportunity and quality of experience offered at an independent school. However, through building relationships with our supporters, school partnerships and individual support for families experiencing financial hardship, we aim to ensure that the rich educational experience on offer remains accessible to as many students as possible so that they can achieve their full potential.

¹ House of Commons Library Research Briefing, VAT on private school fees, 23/12/24, <https://tinyurl.com/5f7f937>

² UK Parliament, Education: inequalities and attainment gaps, 11/11/24, <https://post.parliament.uk/education-inequalities-and-attainment-gaps>

On a sustainability mission

What links David Beckham, Jeremy Clarkson, Ed Sheeran and now, Lord Wandsworth College, Hampshire? Head Adam Williams explains and outlines some of the ways the school is working towards becoming a beacon of green innovation.



Adam Williams

Let me begin with a confession. We may have bitten off more than we can chew.

We've recently welcomed 35,000 new residents to Lord Wandsworth College and while I'm all for new faces and a vibrant boarding community, I'm starting to think the council or even the local villagers may take a view.

These newcomers have their own laws, a royal family and a firm belief in the collective good. They don't speak our language, nor do they seem particularly interested in algebra, Shakespeare or school lunches. However, they are tidy, industrious and remarkably eco-friendly. Ladies and gentlemen, meet our new Carniolan honey bees.

Hailing from the Alpine regions of Austria, Slovenia and beyond, these furry 'little greys' (as they're affectionately called) are a beekeeper's dream. They're gentle, frugal, resistant to disease and willing to work tirelessly. Like the aforementioned British stars who share a love for apiculture, our resident Farmer and Head Gardener are delighted to have such eager helpers adding value. We're hopeful that in the future, their industriousness may yield the first jars of LWC honey. The crumpets are being readied...

The bees are a joyous addition to our campus, but they also represent another significant step in our sustainability mission. The Carniolans are part of a sweeping initiative to make LWC a beacon of green innovation and much of this is being driven by our students.

From planting wildflower meadows to carving out a 5km parkrun through our hills and woodlands. From installing solar panels to turning wood chips into boiler fuel. We're working hard to ensure our tiny corner of Hampshire not only survives, but thrives in the face of the planet's growing challenges. At the forefront of these initiatives are often the youngest members of our community. A recent YouGov poll revealed that seven in ten young people worry about climate change. Eighty-six per cent say that being outdoors has a positive effect on their mental health. These youngsters see the problem and are keen to do something about it. I understand their thinking.

One morning, I stumbled through a blackberry-laden hedge and onto a coastal path, following an uncomfortable night in a tent. What I saw on that hilltop remains one of the most exquisite sights I've ever seen. As dawn stretched its golden arms over Durdle Door and Lulworth Cove, the Atlantic Ocean shimmered in the early light. Fishing boats chugged lazily, gulls cawed and the lights of a sleepy, coastal town blinked in the distance.

That experience has stayed with me ever since. It's why I believe so strongly in the importance of stepping off the beaten path and finding those moments when nature speaks in whispers, rather than roars. It's why we're working so hard at LWC to give our pupils those same opportunities and experiences. It's also why they, in turn, are so demanding (in the nicest possible way) and so keen to push for change.

Here, we're disinterested in the status quo. We've transformed our Saturday morning programme, built outdoor classrooms and appointed a brilliant Head of Outdoor Learning. Our pupils have launched a satellite to track forest fires (yes, really) and competed in European Space Agency competitions. We no longer plough our fields (which helped to produce 2.1 million loaves of bread last year). Instead, we direct-drill seeds using GPS to protect the soil. We harvest rainwater for our sports pitches, have our own recycling centre and, frankly, if there's a way to do it greener, smarter and kinder, we'll go for it.

This student-led movement ties into many of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals: a global blueprint for a better future. Our youngsters feel passionately about nurturing the environment. The green economy, green jobs and the green agenda are all increasingly mainstream now. As this develops

at pace, areas like our 1,200 acres provide a nursery of understanding and a lungful of fresh air. They bolster the soul and allow us to ready ourselves for the journey ahead.

In the not-so-distant future, I hope to find myself on that Dorset clifftop once again. I'll stop to take the time to watch the Atlantic glinting and maybe this time I'll catch the next generation of sleek and hyper-efficient wind turbines, catching the setting sun to the west of Durdle Door. Who knows, those turbines may have been developed by students who have passed through the 1,200. But for now, I'm content knowing that our school is alive with possibility: industrious bees, curious pupils and a shared commitment to nurturing this remarkable planet we call home.



Pictured: Bees at Lord Wandsworth College

New partnership

Surrey prep school, The Hawthorns School, is joining the Caterham Family of Schools. The school will maintain its own identity, leadership and Board of Governors.

Headmaster of The Hawthorns School, Adrian Floyd, commented: "This move brings operational benefits but more importantly

brings benefits for our families too. Our families can have full confidence that their children will continue to enjoy the school they chose and that they will continue to be fully supported and prepared for whichever senior school they choose. In addition, our pupils will now be able to gain early offers and a smoother transition

to Caterham School, if that is their chosen destination."

Ceri Jones, Headmaster of Caterham School, remarked: "Both schools have given their wholehearted support to the new partnership and this relationship will enable us to build on a shared educational vision and purpose,

and a culture of excellence underpinned by wellbeing and innovation."

The Caterham Family of Schools encompasses Caterham Senior School, Caterham Prep School and Copthorne Prep School which joined the family of schools in 2023.

Why entrepreneurship matters for pupils' starting out as well as starting up

Head of Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Employability at Bryanston School, Dorset, Caroline de Mowbray, explores the importance of entrepreneurial skills in preparing pupils for success in the modern world.

Entrepreneurship is no longer the reserve of risk-takers launching businesses from their garage or pitching new products to investors. It is a mindset and one that equips people to navigate the unpredictability of modern life and thrive in whatever path they choose. At Bryanston, we believe entrepreneurial skills are as valuable for future professionals, creatives and scientists as they are for the next tech start-up founder. My role as Head of Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Employability is to ensure our pupils develop an entrepreneurial mindset, equipping them with the tools and experiences to take risks, think creatively and build resilience, whether they are starting out in the working world, or starting up a new venture of their own.

Entrepreneurship at Bryanston is not confined to a single subject or age group. It seeps into every corner of school life, from lessons in Geography and Science to extra-curricular activities and real-world projects. Academic learning is strengthened when tied to practical application when pupils see a clear

link between what they study and how it plays out in the commercial world. More importantly, this approach allows them to experiment, face challenges and, crucially, to fail. Failure is often the quickest route to success, provided you embrace the positive aspects of the test, fail, adapt and test again approach to development and progress.

The first venture I am working on with my academic colleagues is the Adventure Enterprise Challenge, a business simulation that gives Year 10 students the opportunity to design, plan and budget for a UK-based expedition. Working in small teams, they are tasked with answering questions that challenge their thinking and prompt creativity, such as What does adventure mean? Where can it happen? How do we design a sustainable, carbon-neutral trip? It's not just about the 'what', it's about the 'how'. Students will develop critical decision-making skills under pressure, collaborate effectively and tackle real-world constraints like time and cost. Lower Sixth students will mentor

the teams, providing peer support as they bring their projects to life.

Beyond individual events, we are creating a dynamic entrepreneurship ecosystem at Bryanston. By connecting students with mentors and role models, we help them see what is possible when ambition meets innovation. Take Leo Evans, for example, an Old Bryanstonian who started his entrepreneurial journey at school at just 15 years old and is now the founder of the successful ed-tech company, The Profs. Leo, a Forbes 30 Under 30 honouree, knows first-hand how early financial challenges shaped his drive to succeed. He and other successful alumni will work closely with students to share their journeys, demystify entrepreneurship and offer guidance on how to overcome challenges. These relationships are key to making entrepreneurship relatable and accessible.

The Sixth Form will also have access to an Entrepreneurship Hub, a creative space where ideas can be shared, developed and tested. Students will have the opportunity to pursue qualifications that employers value, whether that is digital skills or project management expertise and we are currently developing a mini-MBA programme for the Sixth Form curriculum. We are also encouraging enterprise across the school community with projects like BryMe, a Bryanston platform where students can buy and sell second-hand clothing originally pitched by a group of Year 10 students as part of the enterprise challenge for the Charities Weekend. Promoting cross curricular, student-led projects is a simple yet effective way to teach the principles of sustainability, commerce and innovation while empowering students to lead a venture of their own.

Importantly, entrepreneurship is not confined to older students. We are embedding this mindset across all year groups, from the Prep School upwards. Sowing these seeds early



Caroline de Mowbray

helps children view challenges as opportunities and cultivates a spirit of creativity and curiosity. By the time they reach senior school, these young innovators will be ready to take their ideas to the next level.

Of course, the digital world offers huge opportunities for students to explore innovation, and we are working closely with Bryanston's Digital Team to make that happen. Not every student wants to study coding or Computer Science at GCSE, but many want to learn how to set up websites, explore digital marketing or develop skills that align with careers in tech and media. By offering a menu of digital activities, we are ensuring that students have access to the tools they need to thrive in a digital-first world.

My objective is not about creating a generation of entrepreneurs in the traditional sense, but it is about nurturing a mindset that will empower and serve our students wherever life takes them. It is about confidence, creativity, and, above all, fun. Experimenting, learning from mistakes and taking risks in a safe environment prepares pupils for the realities of the working world, where change and challenges are inevitable, but adaptability and resilience will be key to success.

I am excited about the future here at Bryanston. At a time when traditional academic qualifications are under scrutiny: we have a real opportunity to shine a light on what we do differently. We are giving pupils the space, support and skills to innovate and in doing so, we are preparing them to stand out, step up and make their mark in a world that rewards creative thinkers and bold ideas.

Hitting the jackpot!

The Business Enterprise Club from Bancroft's Prep School, Essex, have achieved success with their branded trading cards, styled like Top Trumps and featuring staff members. The cards – designed, cut, and assembled by the pupils – sold out almost immediately.

The club estimates that their efforts will generate over £2,500

in profit, even after factoring in the £600+ cost of materials and resources required to manufacture and generate the cards.

The club has operated like a professional production team, with 36 pupils taking on roles such as cutting, corner-cutting, gluing, and quality control.

The cards have also transformed break times with pupils across year groups trading, swapping, and playing with the cards, fostering friendships and creating a vibrant social scene.

Proceeds from the card sales will be reinvested into school improvements, such as new playground equipment, ensuring the whole community benefits.



Pupils with their trading cards



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Independent schools and SEND

Legal experts Sophia Coles and Alice Yandle review the basic legal and regulatory requirements in relation to SEND and focus on two areas where difficulties can arise – reasonable adjustments and exclusions/required removals – offering some practical tips to help schools better support pupils, reduce legal risk and be on the front foot when it comes to managing some of these issues.

Over the last few years there has been a significant uptick in complex cases that schools are dealing with involving special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These can relate to all aspects of school life from admissions to day-to-day learning support, behaviour management and disciplinary issues. Sometimes relationships between parents and the school can become strained and tricky parental complaints, allegations of disability discrimination or even litigation can result. Managing this can be costly, time consuming and stressful.

A reminder

There is a detailed regime set out in the SEND Code of Practice which describes how Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) can be applied for, put in place and reviewed. EHCPs are for pupils with complex or significant needs and will often meet the legal definition of being disabled (although not always). EHCPs set out what those needs are and what support is required to meet those needs. Whatever support is described in the EHCP must – by law – be provided or funded by the local authority; this is their statutory obligation. SEND support is an area that the current government has committed to reviewing and reforming, although it is unclear what this will look like and what the timeframes will be.

Independent schools can be named in an EHCP, i.e. be selected as the school where the parent would like the child to be educated (and the place they will receive the support under the EHCP). However, unlike maintained schools, independent schools are not required to accept a child with an EHCP or agree to be the 'named school'. To note,

objecting to being named is a significant decision (and one that could carry legal risk) and should be taken with care and with the benefit of legal advice.

Independent schools are, however, required – like all schools – to comply with the Equality Act 2010. The Act requires schools (including at the admissions stage) to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability – either directly, indirectly or in relation to something arising from a disability. It also prohibits victimisation or harassment on the basis of disability. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has published guidance about the Act for schools¹.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments is specific to pupils with disabilities and applies to any pupil meeting the (relatively broad) legal definition of disabled. It is also a proactive duty and if the school identifies a reasonable adjustment, it must accommodate and pay for it – the cost cannot be passed on to the parents.

In reality, it is the requirements of the Act that principally govern and guide how schools should be supporting disabled pupils – regardless of whether they have an EHCP or not.

Reasonable adjustments and EHCPs

Having an EHCP does not automatically mean that a pupil is disabled but many pupils with high SEND need (who may have or be applying for an EHCP) will meet the definition (as will many pupils without an EHCP). Where the school is unsure about whether a child is disabled or not, expert medical and legal advice should be sought.

Some schools have in the past assumed that because the pupil has (or is about to have) an EHCP, the school is relieved of its duty to make reasonable adjustments and/or that the support identified in the EHCP defines what those reasonable adjustments are. A recent court case flagged this confusion and sought to provide some clarity.

The court reiterated that reasonable adjustments are steps to be taken in response to an existing approach, technically described as a "provision, criterion or practice", or "PCP". If a school identifies a PCP it has in place, which puts a disabled pupil at a substantial disadvantage when compared to their non-disabled peers, it will be required to take such steps as are reasonable to avoid the pupil suffering that disadvantage.

These adjustments can range from those effecting physical access and resources, through to additional curriculum interventions and adjustments to methods for teaching and learning.

In terms of deciding what is reasonable or not, the court said that cost is one factor to consider. However, this must be balanced against how effective the adjustment will be in overcoming the identified disadvantage and be put in the context of the school's resources. It said that EHCPs are also relevant in this assessment as in reality an EHCP will usually be instructive in terms of a child's needs and should identify suitable adjustments (which the local authority is then obliged to meet). However, it should not be seen as the final word, and it does not mean the school should not think about or make other adjustments. Plainly where all the relevant support needs are being provided

by the local authority, the school does not have a duty to provide that support. However, if the local authority were to stop or pause the support, be delayed in providing it or the pupil's needs were to significantly change (and the EHCP were not updated to reflect that) schools must ask whether it is reasonable to meet the student's (unmet or new) needs in the short or longer term. In thinking through adjustments, schools would be well advised to:

- get independent expert advice (including in respect of the student's needs, the impact of adjustments and on the school's legal obligations), and getting advice early will often hold the school in good stead and help avoid future pitfalls;
- document what support is in place and monitor the impact;
- seek to cultivate a positive dialogue with parents and the local authority; and
- have a joined-up approach in school. The provision of support often involves many people and departments and a misalignment in approach can create confusion and challenge. For example, one team may say that something can be accommodated when in fact it would not be workable for another.

Discipline and exclusions

Disputes regarding discipline and exclusion/required removal of pupils with disabilities or with EHCPs can be fraught. The fact that a pupil has an EHCP or a disability does not preclude an independent school from applying their usual disciplinary processes under the terms of their relevant policies and the parent contract. However, regardless of the terms of the contract, if a pupil is

¹ Equality and Human Rights Commission, Equality Act 2010 Technical guidance for schools, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/technical-guidance-schools-england>
Alice Yandle and Sophia Coles are Partner and Senior Associate respectively at Farrer & Co, www.farrer.co.uk/clients-and-sectors/education

removed because of something connected to their SEN, disability or a provision in any EHCP, there is likely to be legal risk. For example, either a claim that adjustments were not made to support the child's behaviour, or that the sanction/removal is an act of discrimination arising from their disability because the reason for the decision – be it poor attendance, performance or behaviour etc. – is directly or indirectly caused by or connected to the pupil's disability.

In general terms, schools are most successful in ensuring provision for a pupil and mitigating risk where there is early and structured information sharing between the school and the parents. Otherwise, information about needs can be drip-fed to schools or come too late for the school to respond properly, and this can have behaviour/disciplinary consequences if a school is not able to contextualise the pupil's behaviour. Where conduct/behaviour is or could be related to a child's disability, the school must feel confident



Sophia Coles

it has the information needed to understand and assess this link and factor this into any decision making, principally asking whether it has made appropriate adjustments for the student and whether applying the proposed sanction is proportionate.

Cases where the decision to remove a pupil is not punitive, i.e. is not connected to misconduct or behavioural concern but based on the school's assessment that it cannot reasonably meet need or it is not in the child's or the school's best interests for the pupil to stay, can be particularly difficult. This is because schools may not have a set procedure to manage



Alice Yandle

these kinds of decisions, and they directly relate to the child's actual/potential disability, meaning they carry inherent disability discrimination risk.

Schools should ensure it follow their relevant policies and procedures in a fair and consistent manner, consult the parent contract to check the contractual basis for a removal, and that reasonable adjustments are considered and made in respect of the application of any of those policies.

Schools should make their expectations clear to parents about what they expect them to share with the school and that they require an open and constructive

dialogue. Taking the time with a new or prospective pupil and their family to understand who they are and set out what support the school will expect from parents can help both to make sure a pupil's needs are met day-to-day and minimise the risk of a dispute further down the line.

Summary

- Make sure to proactively consider and paper your consideration of any necessary adjustments for pupils with disabilities, considering that wider-than-usual definition of disability and don't make the mistake that an EHCP removes this obligation.
- Design clear and consistent policies and reporting lines for discussing issues regarding pupils with disabilities either internally, with parents or with local authorities.
- Take advice early before taking decisions which could become contentious, whether on admissions, adjustments or discipline.

This article is correct as at December 2024 and is a general summary of the law. It should not replace legal advice tailored to your specific circumstances

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To teach or not to teach (again) – revitalising the teaching community

Many teachers who have retired or taken early retirement find they are still keen to share their knowledge and teach again, but what are the options for ex-teachers taking on roles in independent schools today? Educator, Jenn Harris, looks at over-55s retraining and discusses how schools can capitalise on the breadth of skills still out there.

The teacher shortage across the UK has been an issue for several years but over the last few years this has got steadily more challenging for schools. One of the major setbacks around enticing individuals into the teaching profession centres around conflicting needs and priorities. Schools need (or at least prefer) permanent, full-time teachers, while many teachers coming into the profession are interested in more flexible part-time, hybrid roles which fit around their lifestyle and family choices. As such, educators are having to work harder to review traditional teaching roles to find ways to meet the changing social norms around employment. For example, how might hybrid work models be incorporated into traditional classroom-based roles?

Over the years, the profession of teaching itself has been devalued by many, whether that is as a result of the shift in focus of the role (i.e., combining the academic and pastoral load with increasing administrative work), or pay sector increases that have not been or cannot be, sustained in line with other inflationary increases. If the demands of the role increase, but the financial remuneration fails to keep pace, that naturally leads to a sector shortage. Another possible barrier to entry is around the evolving use of technology and AI in classrooms and expectations around teachers being equipped to deal with mental health in young people. Without adequate training in these areas, many teachers will worry about keeping up with changing teaching and learning techniques.

A wealth of untapped skills

Yet when we look at the teacher crisis, we usually think of those entering the profession rather than the idea of re-entering it, even though the retired sector provides

a huge wealth of untapped skills. If a teacher has spent all or most of their career in the educational sector, it's fair to say it wasn't for financial gain. Most educational professionals love what they do and gain a genuine sense of satisfaction from seeing students' progress. Moving away from that sense of purpose may leave a bit of a void. Many teaching retirees have reported a need to stay actively engaged with society, to keep using their brains and to do something that contributes in a meaningful way.

Likewise, many recently retired teachers can offer our classrooms a wealth of knowledge, with decades of skills and experience (from both inside and outside of the classroom), and they also offer much needed resilience. These skills need to be imparted to our next generation of teachers, while they in turn have so much to share with their older, more experienced counterparts. Returning teachers may be able to run the extra/co-curricular activities and clubs or supervise study groups, support students with additional learning support requirements or prepare homework.

Apart from the altruistic reasons, we cannot ignore the fact that retirement is often not what many dreamed it would be. It may feel lonely, financially unviable, or simply not enjoyable. Perhaps the administrative or management responsibilities contributed to a desire to retire, and now teachers want to come back to simply teach. This could offer a valuable lifeline to schools, colleges and universities, who may discover there is a talent pool available and willing to work part-time, ad hoc or on fixed and short-term contracts to fill the gaps left by younger teachers seeking more flexibility.

Bridging the gap for skilled teachers

This is a perfect opportunity to blend experiences and knowledge, with both ends of the teaching spectrum having something to offer the other. Younger teachers can support with learning new technologies (although this is not always an age-related challenge), and teachers with more experience can pass on knowledge of traditional teaching pedagogies. Perhaps a reverse mentoring scheme, where an older teacher is mentored by a younger one, might be a beneficial learning experience for both parties?

Retired teachers returning to the classroom may be the perfect solution for cover teachers, short-term absences or specialist sessions, adding variety and richness to the classrooms. This skill is likely to be more affordable than supply agencies and could offer greater continuity on cover for teachers who are comfortable with occasional or ad hoc work to supplement their income. Perhaps there is also an opportunity for job shares allowing a returning teacher to focus on classroom-based activities, with the administrative load picked up by a colleague.

There are a lot of organisations that are focused on supporting the over 55s to return to or enter teaching as well as a myriad of other professions (such as NowTeach, 55/Redefined etc.), along with social media platforms like Facebook (where almost 40% of users are 45+) and alumni communications. Any attempts to entice teachers back into the profession must have clearly defined roles and responsibilities with well-structured training and development opportunities. Schools need to be prepared to provide the right training for teachers and there



Jenn Harris

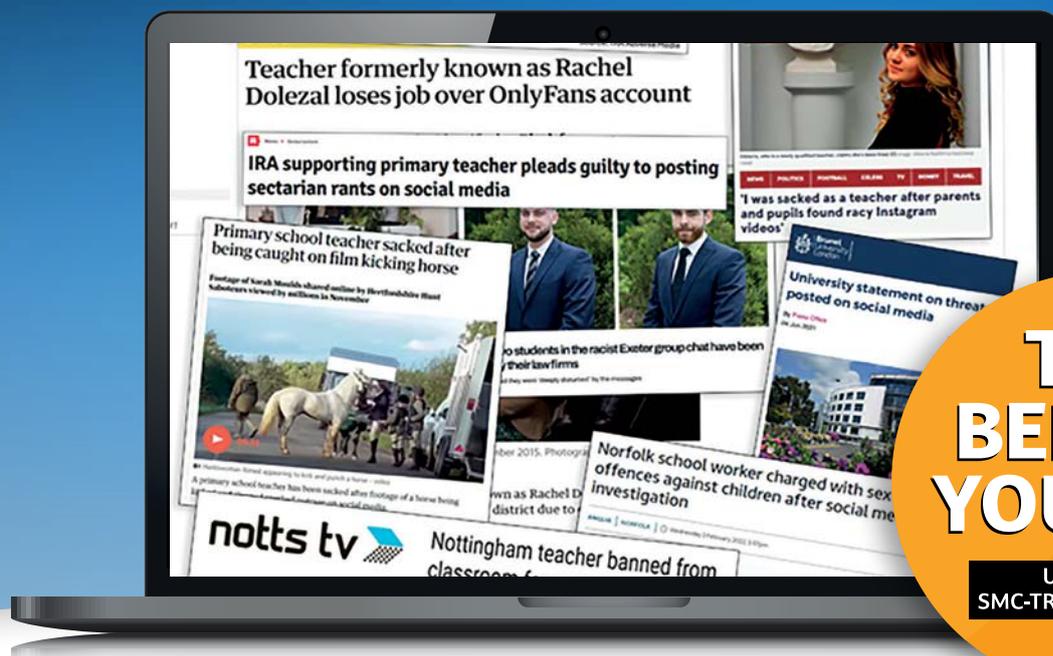
are many external courses available to refresh skills and knowledge. The benefits of returning must also be clear – such as the upskilling returning to the classroom would offer, helping prepare for an uncertain future combined with the financial benefits. Financial advice and pension planning should be available to everyone. Schools, colleges and universities looking to recruit from older age groups could also publish articles that discuss the non-financial benefits of working into retirement – such as delaying the ageing process and preventing social isolation.

Opening up conversations

There are likely to be other benefits of returning to teaching that will appeal to the over-55s market (on top of continued pension contributions) such as training on new technology, opportunities to upskill and prepare for an uncertain future, or independent schools could look at options around offering reduced fees for grandchildren. There is a wide array of topics that might either be required, or simply be of interest, for a teacher looking to return to a classroom, irrespective of age.

Opening up more doors for teaching opportunities across the board has to be an important consideration for schools. This might mean shifting the dynamic of what teaching looks like today and providing the right training. Having open conversations around the role of the teacher as a facilitator and coach who supports students to develop critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving (and other future skills) rather than imparting knowledge and facts is vital.

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'A sense of belonging'

Religious Studies and Civics Tutor at Priory School of Our Lady of Walsingham, Isle of Wight, Jeremy Strickley, discusses how schools can promote belonging and a sense of place whatever their size.

It was the economist E. F. Schumacher, intent on signalling a gentler, more localised form of economy, who titled his 1973 compilation of essays 'Small is Beautiful'. This same turn of phrase might be used to describe those schools whose modest size belies their ability to communicate belonging, a key factor in shaping students' lives for the better.

Priory School of Our Lady of Walsingham, a co-educational day school for ages 4 to 18, is such a school. Its story is a recent one. Emerging out of changes in the independent sector in the Isle of Wight in the early 1990s, it moved to its present location in the village of Whippingham in 2012. Part of its main building was designed by Prince Albert and erected by Queen Victoria, for the purpose of teaching staff children of the Osborne Estate. In 1983 and 1996, sympathetic additions were made to the original architecture, including a purpose-built assembly hall and a new classroom wing. Notably, such has been the constancy of education on this site, that its 150th year was marked by a commemorative plaque, unveiled by Princess Beatrice in 2014.

Its name has also undergone change. Originally titled 'Priory School', in 2017 this was expanded to include

the Marian dedication, with the consent of the Bishop of Portsmouth, the Ordinate of Our Lady of Walsingham and the Custodian of the Basilica at Walsingham, in order to signify its Christian nature. It welcomes all religious persuasions, and none, within the ethos of the Roman Catholic tradition. This is further strengthened through its association with the nearby St. Mildred's Church, also redesigned by Prince Albert, where termly services and prize-giving ceremonies, amongst other events, are held.

How then does Priory School of Our Lady of Walsingham promote belonging? The meaning of the term merits some explanation. In educational circles, it seems to be a trending conversation. In the US publication *Psychology Today*, for instance, educational psychologist Dr Kelly-Ann Allen (2022) explores belonging in schools' and references a 1993 study, which defines it as "the extent to which children feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others – especially teachers and other adults within the school social environment"². Allen et al. (2021) go so far as to view belonging as "a fundamental human need..."³, a point echoed by researcher Michael Ralph (2022) in *Edutopia*. Ralph observes that people look

"for a sense of connection with the people and places in their lives"⁴ – places which include educational sites, such as schools. Belonging is also linked to social cohesion⁵ and associations of being "valued and connected..."⁶.

In the UK, Kathryn Riley, Professor of Urban Education at University College London, is a leading figure in studying belonging in schools and its place in supporting pupils' emotional and academic growth. Importantly, Riley's 2020 report, co-authored with Dr Max Coates and Dr Tracey Allen, finds that one quarter of pupils "feel they do not belong in school: a figure which is rising."⁷ The report also argues that teachers are "the key influencers for children."⁸ and that schools are vital spaces to encourage belonging, through intentionality, direction and a dedicated sense of connectivity⁹. These elements require a locational vector, however. Here, Riley draws on the importance of place in promoting belonging, and the significance of schools as "places of belonging"¹⁰. It seems reasonable, then, to conclude that belonging is inextricably tied up with feelings of acceptance, community and place. Importantly, it can be nourished or neglected, and schools play a special role in fostering it. This is where, I suggest, smaller



Jeremy Strickley

educational bodies can match their larger counterparts. In the case of Priory School of Our Lady of Walsingham, there are several distinct strands to how it encourages belonging and a sense of place.

First, it has small class sizes, typically less than 15 pupils in a group. Some exam courses number their students in single figures. Such small groups enable subject tutors to develop a keen understanding of their students' personalities and aptitudes, better enabling them to provision for a range of learning styles. As a result, communities of learning, if you will, emerge naturally, where differentiation is organic and pupils are motivated – a crucial factor in their feeling that they 'belong' in a school¹¹. Form groups, too, are led by pairs of form tutors, who support the school's enrichment curriculum by utilising their contrasting teaching styles and expertise to form a more complete connection with their tutees.

Next, there is a tangible sense of collegiality among all staff. From office administrators to the school Housekeeper and Groundsman, to the parent

1 Allen, Kelly-Ann, 2022, 'The Science of School Belonging', *Psychology Today*, 22 January 2022, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/sense-of-belonging/202201/the-science-of-school-belonging>
2 Goodenow, Carol and Grady, Kathleen E., 1993, 'The Relationship of School Belonging and Friends' Values to Academic Motivation among Urban Adolescent Students', pp60-61 from *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 62(1), pp60-71.
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4 Ralph, Michael, 2022, 'How to Cultivate a Sense of Belonging in Schools', *Edutopia*, <https://www.edutopia.org/article/importance-belonging-in-schools>
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6 Whedon, Sarah, 2023, 'Why Students Need to Feel a Sense of Belonging and How To Create It: A Comprehensive Guide', *Panorama Education*, <https://www.panoramaed.com/blog/student-sense-of-belonging>
7 Riley, Kathryn, Coates, Max and Allen, Tracey, 2020, 'Place and Belonging in School: Why It Matters Today – Case Studies', p3, from *The Art of Possibilities & UCL, Institute of Education*, <https://neu.org.uk/latest/library/place-and-belonging-school-why-it-matters-today>
8 Riley, Coates and Allen, p10.
9 Riley, Coates and Allen, p13.
10 Riley, Kathryn, 2022, *Compassionate Leadership for School Belonging*, London, UCL Press, p13. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10146072/1/Compassionate-Leadership-for-School-Belonging.pdf>
11 Riley, Coates and Allen, p3.
12 Riley, Coates and Allen, p14.
13 Tuan, Yi-Fu, 1979, 'Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective', p387. In Stephen Gale and Gunnar Olsson, eds. *Philosophy in Geography*. Holland. D. Reidel Publishing Company, pp387-427

Flushing poverty down the loo



Pupils from Ashville Prep School, North Yorkshire, have raised nearly £800 to help improve basic sanitation in developing countries across Africa through a 'toilet twinning' initiative.

The youngsters have twinned seven of their school toilets with toilets in communities in Pakistan, Uganda, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Tanzania and South Sudan.

Pictured: Andy Hart with Year 6 pupils

Each of these communities will now be supported to build a toilet, either for their community or for a primary school, to give many people a safe and secure place to go to the loo for the first time.

The Year 6 children, led by teacher Andy Hart, created a 'luxury loo' in school and collected their spare pennies selling items on Vinted, giving their pocket money, making jewellery to sell and doing a sponsored litter pick.

community and its association, to subject tutors, this sentiment is palpable. Helping out, for example, is a standard practice, whether that be schoolwide tidy-ups, relocating furniture and books, supporting a school production, or simply stacking and unstacking the staffroom dishwasher. Such camaraderie may well arise from the extent to which roles are fluid and siloing less prevalent. This flexibility includes the Principal, who embraces a range of duties, micro as well as macro, thus making the position more visible and accessible.

Thirdly, the school day allows space for students to explore local, national and international developments through subjects such as Civics and student-led initiatives such as the Eco-Council. The former explores aspects of political science and encourages students to consider their place in society through the vehicle of informed discussion, where "a mutual understanding of what matters and a shared language.¹²" can be nurtured. In the case of the latter, pupil representatives, from across the school, work to implement ecologically sensitive school policies, and raise awareness of green issues through newsletters and assemblies.

Finally, and perhaps most critically, student progress is evaluated and communicated on a granular level, from form tutor to subject tutor, to SENCO, to heads of school, to Principal. Part of this process is supported by a staff briefing, which takes place in the main hall before the start of each and every school day. These briefings not only disseminate important up-to-the-minute student-centred information, but they also elicit advice on matters pertaining to the school community and help to

shape the deliberations that take place in the weekly Senior School and Junior School staff meetings. Indeed, staff voice, as well as pupil voice, is a key driver in school development.

Besides these strands, there is one other quality, somewhat less tangible in educational terms, which has continually struck me since I first joined the school in the Christmas Term of 2019. This is the admixture of local geography and history contained within its walls. From its Victorian beginnings to its late-twentieth century extensions, to its twenty-first century additions, Priory School of Our Lady of Walsingham resides within walking distance of the aforesaid St Mildred's Church, once a regular place of worship for Queen Victoria, and Osborne House, the stately home that became her family's private residence. I find this particular attribute gives the school a feeling of permanence, which in turn lends itself to an atmosphere of belonging and a sense of place, which itself entails history¹³.

Of course, none of the above features are exclusive or original to Priory School of Our Lady of Walsingham. This being said, I hope that these points may illustrate how even within small, village-like schools, sentiments such as belonging can be nurtured, and a sense of place encouraged. Thus, Schumacher's notion of a local, small-scale economy, as an effective and sustainable motor for human societies, may be applied to less grand educational settings as well, where small not only denotes beauty but also belonging, perhaps the most vital ingredient in a pupil's learning.

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Global nursery and preschool opening



A preschool offering from Asia is to open its first campus in London.

Odyssey, which has several campuses in Singapore and Malaysia, is investing over £2m in its first UK nursery and preschool in Marylebone, London, which will offer Reggio Emilia-inspired teaching including foreign languages and a bespoke curriculum for children aged 0-5.

The Odyssey brand name, which means an “eventful or adventurous journey”, is being rolled out in the UK and its first Grade II listed site in Marylebone will open in spring 2025. The site will feature an atelier art room and music studio with dedicated art and music mentors, and an outdoor area with a ‘grow your own’ garden

Pictured: An artist's impression of the Grade II listed Marylebone campus

and climbing wall to encourage learning through physical movement. The La Cucina cookery station will create a menu of nutritional and delicious cuisines from countries and cultures from across the world, all prepared by the in-house chef.

Throughout their Odyssey journey, children will be supported by ‘Infant Mentors’ with learning programmes split into three stages: Bambino Odyssey, Odyssey Toddlers and finally, Odyssey Preschool. When it opens, the school will be staffed by a team of early childhood educators from the Odyssey Singapore campuses.

The first UK Odyssey nursery and preschool will offer 106 places.



Breaking ground

Staff and pupils at Westonbirt School, Gloucestershire, have been celebrating as construction of two new Prep School buildings has started.

The new buildings will feature six light and spacious classrooms, a new school hall and kitchen, new play equipment and a new entrance, all designed to enhance the learning experience and foster a sense of community around a central courtyard space, surrounded by Grade 1 parkland and historic trees.

Working with architects, pupils will soon benefit from the latest developments in biophilic design, a practice which uses design techniques to connect children to the landscape.

Securing planning permission for the development required close co-

operation with Cotswold District Council and Historic England to ensure that the designs reflected the importance and quality of the other buildings at Westonbirt, while also taking account of the natural environment and being as sustainable as possible.

The project is the latest in a series of developments at Westonbirt School which has seen the recent construction of eight new classrooms in the walled garden area for maths, business and psychology, two new boarding houses, an international-standard AstroTurf hockey pitch, ECB accredited cricket nets and upgraded sports facilities to complement the indoor pool: all in addition to longer-term heritage conservation and decarbonisation programmes.

Pictured: Westonbirt Prep School pupils alongside representatives of Wishford Education Group; Quattro Design Architecture; RJ Leighfield and Sons and Headmistresses Rebecca Mitchell, of Westonbirt Prep School, and Natasha Dangerfield of Westonbirt School

Acquisition

New Hall School, Essex, has acquired Boreham House, just one mile from the school. This is planned to be the new home of New Hall's Preparatory Divisions from September 2025, subject to the normal planning consents. Boreham House, like New Hall, is a Grade I listed property, set in 35 acres of countryside.

New Hall and Boreham House are historically linked, with both originally part of the New Hall estate.

The vision is that Boreham House will provide enhanced and bespoke facilities for New Hall Preparatory Divisions. In turn, this will free up space on the New Hall site for the Senior Divisions and, in particular, will provide a new, university-style Thomas More

Sixth Form Centre and extra space for the Performing Arts.

Since 2008, Boreham House has been run by the entrepreneur Teresa Ward as a wedding and event venue. Mrs Ward now plans to retire and is handing on the care of the property to New Hall School.

Mrs Katherine Jeffrey, Principal of New Hall School, said: “We are all so excited by the unique opportunity that owning Boreham House presents for our Preparatory Divisions, as we reunite these two historically linked properties under the care of New Hall School Trust.

“As the new owners, New Hall School Trust will be using its expertise and experience in



maintaining and enhancing the neighbouring Grade I listed site, to benefit Boreham House and its parkland setting. As a Catholic school charity, we are also committed to sharing our resources with schools and parishes in the Diocese of Brentwood, with our international sister Religious Communities and

their schools, and of course with our local community in Boreham.”

New Hall has been in preliminary discussions with Chelmsford City Council's Principal Heritage Officer ahead of submitting formal applications for change of use and associated alterations. These discussions have been very positive.

Pictured: Teresa Ward handing over the keys of Boreham House to New Hall School's Principal, Katherine Jeffrey

Safeguard your pupils and your reputation

Can you afford to sit on the fence when it comes to online checks?

KCSIE (Keeping children safe in education) guidance states “As part of the shortlisting process, schools and colleges should consider carrying out an online search as part of their due diligence on the shortlisted candidates.”

The independent Schools Inspectorate has stated: “Where the guidance states schools **should** do something, this should be followed unless the school has a good reason not to”.

Clearly, to ignore the advice is indefensible: putting students at risk, in addition to causing reputational damage that can take years to repair. It’s also best practice to extend that guidance to existing teachers, board members and support staff. Indeed, recent cases from the Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA) demonstrate the need for more rigorous online checks with many of the complaints pertaining to social media use, ranging from exchanging messages with pupils to posting/sharing inappropriate content. It’s clear the language and imagery used in many of the TRA cases could have been identified and highlighted as a risk using our Social Media Check (SMC) solution. It searches



posts across the major social media platforms against nine key behavioural characteristics: toxic language, extremist groups, hate speech, swearing and profanity, potential nudity, violent images, drugs, weapons and firearms.

While the TRA panels involving social media posts are of a serious nature, in many cases, an SMC check will reveal a naïve post made many years ago that has simply been forgotten by the individual. The opportunity to edit or delete a post that might cause embarrassment to both employee and employer, but would not necessarily prevent the person from being considered for, or retaining, a position, increases

the value of undertaking the check collaboratively with the individual.

Moreover, an SMC check can only be made with the consent of an individual, making it GDPR compliant. As it’s a fully automated solution, it eliminates the need for manual searching, which is fraught with dangers and often ineffective due to school filtering systems, or the possibility of unconscious bias, providing an additional layer of checks and security, in addition to offering valuable insights that traditional criminal and background checks might miss.

KCSIE refers to incidents or issues that have happened and are

publicly available online. With SMC, you have the flexibility to opt for public only or public and private posts as your search criteria. A comprehensive report is returned within the hour. Its unique carousel format enables you to quickly and easily access the online behaviours of an individual. You can then decide if they are aligned or not with the values of your organisation. A certificate with a summary of findings can be stored for any ISI inspection.

SMC is widely used by MATs, independent schools and in a wide range of public and private sectors where safeguarding is a primary consideration.

Ten key categories analysed with Social Media Check



Extremist Groups



Hate Speech



Potential Nudity



Swearing & Profanity



Toxic Language



Violent Images



Drugs



Weapons



Firearms



Client Keywords

The No Bounce Sport bra

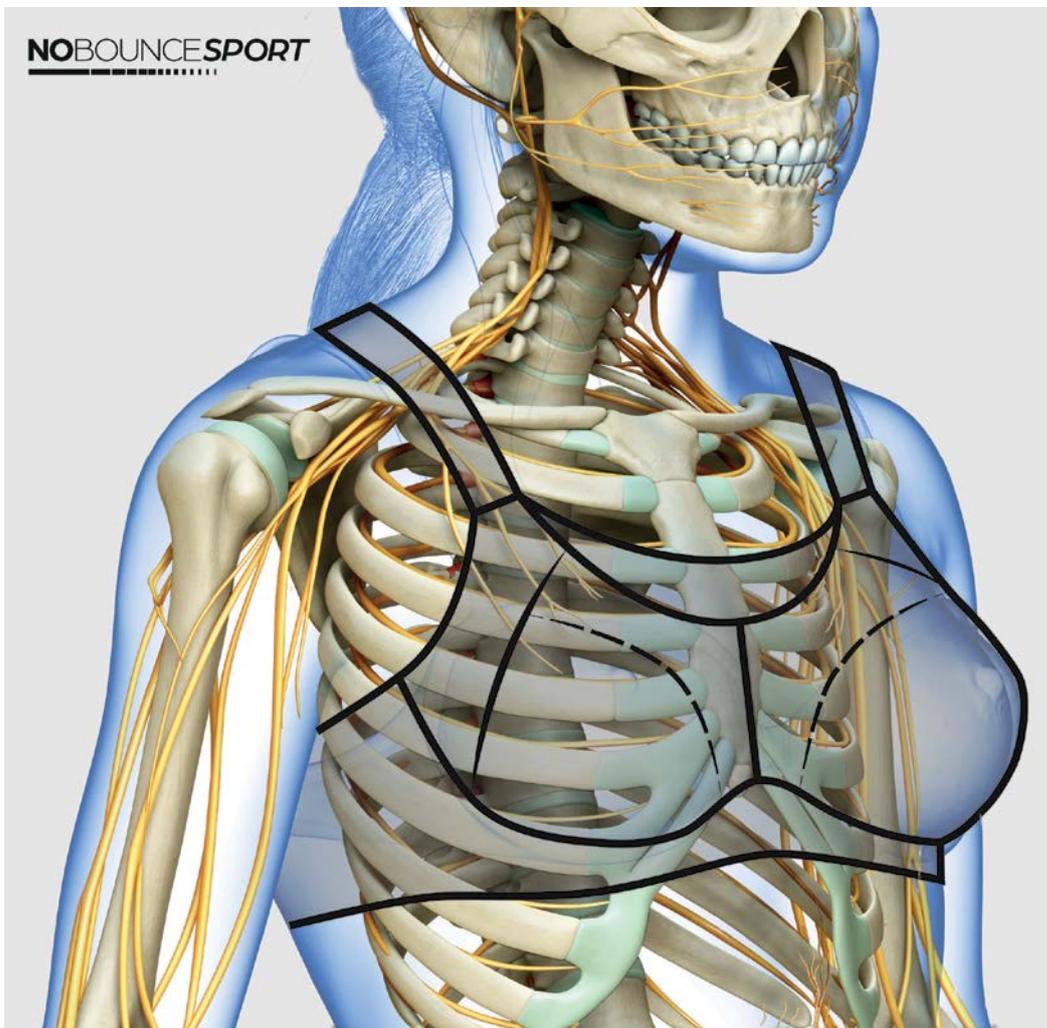
The No Bounce Sport team have over thirty years specialist expertise in the bra industry, designing, developing and manufacturing for global brands.

Watching her daughter horse ride, Jeanette Misseldine, founder of No Bounce Sport, challenged herself to create a sports bra to stop the bust from bouncing with every trot!

Jeanette explains: "The right bra reduces breast movement, pain, discomfort, and self-consciousness. We need to raise awareness of wearing the right bra as we grow to keep our girls playing sport feeling comfortable and confident."

While traditional sports bras look attractive, they are not necessarily as functional as required. There are so many styles and levels to choose from which is confusing for consumers.

No Bounce Sport consider the female form from a medical and biomechanical perspective.



Dr Eva Carneiro

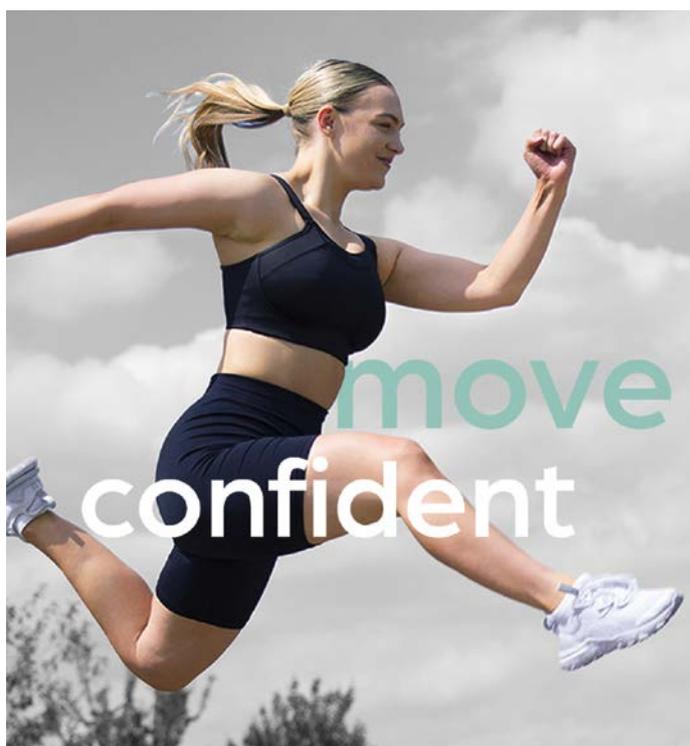
Dr Eva Carneiro is a Sports and Exercise Physician, a former Team Doctor for Chelsea Football Club from 2009-2015 and works in London's Harley Street.

Dr Carneiro agrees, "There is good evidence that numbers of girls participating in sport diminish as they progress into teens and adulthood. A study by Women in Sport¹ revealed that over a million girls (43%) disengage from sport following primary school. 'Lack of confidence' and 'perception of being judged' were identified as two of the significant reasons. Normal maturation is likely to add to self-awareness and minimising discomfort is likely to increase confidence.

1. <https://womeninsport.org/news/more-than-1-million-teenage-girls-fall-out-of-love-with-sport>

There is the added perspective of injury prevention. Repetitive trauma of the breast can injure the breast tissue. Breasts are mainly composed of adipose tissue (fatty tissue), held together by skin and deep fascia. Small ligaments (Coopers' ligaments) support glands and ducts but not the actual remaining breast tissue. Repetitive trauma in sometimes multiple planes required by some sports e.g. basketball or football can lead to irreversible damage.

Additionally, the vast majority of bras act by some level of compression of the thoracic spine and rib cage. The problem with this is that you are suddenly restricting movement of ribs over the sternum and thoracic spine in flexion and rotation



NOBOUNCE SPORT



which happens during breathing and can place greater demands on cervical spine and shoulder/scapular movements. This can be a precursor for back and neck pain but is particularly significant in skeletal maturation and development”.

Jeanette challenged herself to create one bra for all sports, all sizes, all girls, and their mums! The essential requirements were “no movement” and easy to get the bra on and off with a regular back fastening.

As girls and women, we are not S M L sized; we are individually sized based on our body structure. All skeletons are different, and it is essential while exercising that we can breathe. Therefore we also developed the bra in a specific way to work with all body types, allowing maximum airflow to the lungs and providing maximum support to the breast tissue.

The No Bounce Sport bra was scientifically tested at Progressive Sports Technologies on a treadmill by ladies with fuller breast sizes and against other leading bra brands. The No Bounce Sport bra excelled in comparison. The results prove our bra achieves 44% less movement than other branded sports bras. No Bounce Sport was born!

Being chosen by Premiership football clubs and the Armed Forces for its performance and comfort is a proud moment for us. There is nothing like watching the players and servicewomen, knowing

your innovation is helping them perform their best.

The No Bounce Sport bra has been granted patents in the UK, US and throughout Europe for its inventive performance, construction, and its unique internal design.

The No Bounce team have also successfully delivered their bra education programme to Trent College in Nottinghamshire. A focused presentation starts the day where the girls learn to correctly identify their size and body shapes along with a discreet fitting. This ensures all girls are educated for the future and feel empowered to make the best choices for their physic and comfort.

All senior years participated, and the girls’ accurate sizing was identified, solving a predicament many mums face! Trent College Sports Director, Nicola Charsley, states “We had the privilege of welcoming No Bounce Sport to our school. They displayed utmost professionalism and understood the diverse needs of our students. They effortlessly put nervous girls at ease, and the happiness reflected on their faces after the fittings.

I had the opportunity to personally test the No Bounce Sport bra. I



Jeanette Misseldine
Founder, No Bounce Sport

can genuinely say that I will never wear any other bra for sport. The support it provides is unparalleled, surpassing anything else I have come across in the market. I wholeheartedly recommend it to everyone without hesitation.”

As well as fitting the girls we allow time for staff and parents to have their own fitting. No Bounce Sport travel throughout the country delivering this education experience.

If you would like us to visit your school, please contact kelly@nobouncesport.com



'12 Days of Bookmas'



A group of book enthusiasts from St Margaret's School for Girls in Aberdeen launched a new initiative in the run-up to Christmas to encourage more students to read over the festive season. Members of the school's Library Club created 12 Days of Bookmas – an Advent Calendar of book recommendations inspired by the festive spirit of Christmas and the tradition of giving, but with a literary twist.

The Library Club took suggestions from throughout the senior school to establish the Christmas Advent Calendar of book recommendations across different genres ranging from fantasy to murder mystery and included:

- Day 1 – A Good Girl's Guide to Murder by Holly Jackson
- Day 2 – The Priory of the Orange Tree by Samantha Shannon
- Day 3 – The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins
- Day 4 – Ace of Spades by Faridah Àbiké-Íyímídé

Pictured: Celebrating the 12 Days of Bookmas

- Day 5 – The Poet X by Elizabeth Ace Vedo
- Day 6 – Six of Crows by Leigh Bardugo
- Day 7 – Wings of Fire by Tui. T Sutherland
- Day 8 – The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood
- Day 9 – Infamous by Lex Croucher
- Day 10 – I'm Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter by Erika Sánchez
- Day 11 – Cinder by Marissa Meyer
- Day 12 – Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens

Head of English at St Margaret's School for Girls, Emma McDonald, said: "It's important that students are encouraged to read for pleasure, not just as a school requirement. Initiatives like 12 Days of Bookmas not only help them unplug from their screens and rediscover the joys of reading over the festive season, but can also help foster a love of reading long after they leave the school."

Spreading cheer

Leighton Park School, Berkshire, transformed into a festive hub of joy and fellowship for Year 8 students to welcome clients from Age UK Reading for a Christmas Extravaganza.

Guests were treated to a variety show featuring music, dance, comedy and a game of bingo. The students also served food and engaged in conversations with their guests.

The event, which had been designed and hosted by the

students with the support of Director of Years 7 & 8, Becky Edwards, and Senior Assistant Head: Partnerships and Co-Curricular, Tash Coccia, marked the first in-person intergenerational gathering since the pandemic.

Tash Coccia reflected: "Many of the clients live on their own and don't have family nearby, so we felt Christmas was a really good time to bring those people in and spread some Christmas cheer."



Pictured: Lily, 102 (centre), was among the visitors to the Ballard School community Christmas concert

Christmas activities

More than 100 guests from 11 New Forest care homes were welcomed to Ballard School, Hampshire, for their annual Christmas community concert.

The visitors were collected from homes across New Milton, Barton on Sea and Milford on Sea, and brought to the school in Ballard's fleet of minibuses for the occasion – including centenarian Lily, aged 102.

Festive music filled the air as the children performed favourite Christmas songs, from an a cappella arrangement of 'The Carol of the Bells' to a sweet rendition of 'Little Donkey', as well as some sing-along carols.

Year 8 Prefects were on hand with hot drinks, homemade mince pies and an assortment of biscuits, and spent time chatting to residents and

helping clear away too. Even Father Christmas popped in to join the festivities!

The Lower Prep Chamber Choir also popped into Mornington Court Care Home opposite the school to perform a mini-Christmas concert for residents. And Ballard's Upper Voices Choir performed at Oakhaven Hospice's Light Up a Life Carol Service in Lymington.

The school also supported Oakhaven's annual 'Santa Dash' around Lymington with more than 60 Ballard representatives taking part in the fundraising fun run.

In addition, every class in the school took part in a 'reverse advent calendar', gathering donations for New Forest Basics Bank, with more than 50 boxes and hampers delivered.



Pictured: More than 60 Ballard School representatives took part in the Santa Dash

Hugh Grant? Who Grant?

Head of Malvern College, Worcestershire, Keith Metcalfe, has taken over the role made famous by Mr Grant in THAT Christmas film

for an end of term spoof which has taken the school socials by storm. To see the video visit: <https://tinyurl.com/yp52d6u7>



Keith Metcalfe as Hugh Grant in 'Love Actually'



Toy appeal

The Year 7 girls at Bolton School, Lancashire, raised over £2,400 through a Sponsored Silence with the money used to buy gifts for the Bolton Lions Christmas Toy Appeal.

Every Year 7 pupil in the Girls' Division was silent for a whole school day to raise money for the cause. The year group's Charity Representatives, along with Sixth Form helpers and members of staff, then visited the Smyths Toy Superstore at Middlebrook Retail Park to spend their sponsorship money.

Pictured: Year 7 girls at Bolton School donated toys and gifts to the Bolton Lions Christmas Toy Appeal Credit: Bolton School Girls' Division

The girls bought toys suitable for everyone: age groups from babies to teenagers, boys and girls, large toys, small toys, balls, activities, teddies, and everything in between! They had so much fun on the lunchtime 'trolley dash' around the toyshop, and were even more delighted to present the Bolton Lions with their haul on their return to school.

The school also donated £590 to be spent on gift vouchers for older children, as well as a collection of toys donated by older pupils and Old Girls.

Reindeer Run



Exeter School, Devon, and Hospiscare, have teamed up on a unique project to give Sixth Form students the opportunity to become young ambassadors for end-of-life care. The programme, which launched recently, involves a series of workshops with Hospiscare's Learning and Development team, as well as opportunities to volunteer and fundraise for the local hospice charity.

The eight pupil ambassadors, all studying in the sixth form, hosted a Reindeer Run event before Christmas for the entire Exeter

Pictured: The Reindeer Run at Exeter School

Junior School at lunchtime. Pupils decorated reindeer headbands to prepare and learn about what the event was in aid of, donning colourful bibs to showcase team-spirit and to create a sense of competition and collaboration with members of their own and other house teams.

This was all brought together with cheer as the Sixth Form students provided race stations along the way, dressed in festive costumes, honed the playlists to blast 'Run Run Rudolph'.

Advertorial Feature

The psychology of smell in boarding schools

Our sense of smell is deeply connected to memory and emotion, more so than any other sense. This connection is particularly important in boarding schools, where students live away from home and their familiar surroundings for extended periods. Research has shown that certain smells evoke powerful emotional responses, often linked to childhood experiences, and can provide reassurance and comfort in unfamiliar environments.

Behavioural Psychologist Jo Hemmings explains that smells associated with early memories create strong conditioned responses throughout our lives. For students

in boarding schools, familiar scents can play a significant role in reducing anxiety and fostering a sense of safety. Items like a pillowcase from home, soft toys, or favourite clothes washed with familiar detergents can create a psychological link to home, offering emotional comfort and stability. These familiar smells not only improve mood but also promote pro-social behaviours like kindness and co-operation, contributing to a positive atmosphere in the boarding school environment.

The importance of smell extends beyond emotion to hygiene. In schools, ensuring cleanliness while preserving comforting scents is essential. Innovations like Miele Professional's Benchmark washing machines provide hygienic cleaning with disinfection programmes that hold high temperatures, ensuring thorough washing and infection prevention. At the same time, these machines maintain the comforting



scents of home fabrics, combining cleanliness with emotional reassurance.

By harnessing the power of smell, boarding schools can create environments that feel welcoming and safe, helping students adjust

to life away from home. Smell is more than a sensory experience – it is a bridge to memory, comfort, and emotional wellbeing, making it an invaluable tool in fostering a supportive atmosphere for young people.



Discover more at www.miele.co.uk/pl/

Skills for the future

ACS International School Cobham, Surrey, recently held a Future Ready Forum which asked 'What skills do our children need to excel in the future?' Director of Education and Integrated Technology at ACS International Schools, Dr Robert Harrison, outlines some of the vital skills that were highlighted and considers what schools can do to ensure young people are ready for a new world of work.



“Today’s students are facing complex challenges, including rapid social change, changing labour markets, emerging technologies, and global climate change. Against this backdrop of uncertainty, what skills do children and young people require if they are to be ready for the world they inherit from us?”

At ACS International Schools, we believe that the future is not defined by trends or challenges, but by how we engage with them. There’s no surprise that future-ready skills include competence managing self, working collaboratively with others, living resiliently, exercising empathy, and directing their own learning over the course of a lifetime.

At a recent Future Ready Forum¹, we welcomed Applied Futurist Tom Cheesewright, who highlighted vital skills (“Three ‘C’s”) that students will need to succeed in the workplace and drive forward positive change.

1. Curation

As critical thinkers, citizens and workers must be able to discover and evaluate information. As importantly, we have to be able to identify gaps in our knowledge and consider how we can fill them without falling prey to misinformation, falsehoods, and fake news (digital media literacy). For example, in the workplace, employees need to be able to reflect on what they don’t yet know about markets and competition, find reliable data, and effectively apply it across widely different contexts.

2. Creativity

Creativity is a fundamental human gift and discipline – a skill that can be cultivated and taught. Creativity includes a broad spectrum of practices – learning to make and test things, failing, mixing and recombining products, prototyping, innovating iteratively, building on each other’s ideas, imagining better.

Practice, repetition and refinement are more important than strokes of genius.

3. Communication

To be successful, people must be able to sell their ideas: to colleagues, customers, and the wider community. Communicating ideas efficiently and persuasively is an increasingly valuable human competence for most roles in business and society at large. Effective communication goes beyond rational argument to include authenticity, precision, and beauty.

Skills for the workplace

These skills are just some of the key competencies that young people will need to succeed in tomorrow’s workplace. While academic qualifications are still important, today’s employers are looking for candidates who are also able to apply their creativity and communication skills in situations that haven’t been encountered before. This echoes findings from our research, *Education for a World of Opportunity*², which surveyed a range of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) on what they valued in terms of workplace skills. (SMEs represent 99% of the business population in the UK.) Subject-specific knowledge takes a clear second place behind problem solving, communication, critical thinking, and reflection skills.

So, what can schools do to ensure our graduates are ready for a new world of work in the age of AI? How do we help students not only acquire knowledge, but develop social-emotional intelligence and become authentically human?

Where can we offer experience and inspiration that whets their appetites for optimistically engaging with a world filled with opportunity?

A broad and balanced curriculum is a good place to start. Any instructional design that helps students learn practical skills in a supporting learning environment, where they are encouraged to explore, play, experiment and develop a real sense of self. International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes, the Career-related Programme (CP) in particular, offer students real-life learning opportunities that enable them to put their learning into action in real contexts beyond the classroom. Partnerships with business and industry are key. Action with and for the wider community offers limitless possibilities to learn.

Today’s world is characterised by disruption and high-frequency change. Educators have professional and moral obligations to prepare our students not only for their roles in national and local economies that are continually emerging, but also to fulfil their uniquely human role in technology-enhanced futures. The skills that students need for economic success also give them keys to self-fulfilment. As Tom has written, these skills “allow us to expand our own abilities, feel the reward of making something new and communicating our value to others – whether your objective is financial, self-development, or about growing your role in society”.

Why not all three?



Pictured: Tom Cheesewright at the Future Ready Forum

¹ Future Ready Forum <https://www.acs-schools.com/blog/the-latest/news/top-skills-students-need-to-thrive-in-the-future>

² ACS International Schools, *Purpose of Education*, <https://www.acs-schools.com/blog/the-latest/news/purpose-of-education>

BRAIN FOOD: SMART NUTRITION THAT APPEALS

Kaylea Frost, National Account Manager at Creed Foodservice, specialising in independent schools, discusses the challenges facing schools, what parents want to see from school menus and how to get pupils on board with new food ideas.



The independent schools we work with are facing the same challenges when it comes to their catering provision – rising food prices, budgets that have to stretch further, and the new VAT.

The perception from others that independent schools have plentiful catering budgets simply isn't true. In addition to budgets, independent schools also have a myriad of complexities to consider.

Nearly all independent schools have a cohort of international pupils and need to consider differing food formats. For some boarding schools, budgeting needs to cover meals, snacks and drinks for pupils during both weekdays and weekends. And sustainability is now a core priority, with schools factoring this into decisions around supplier partners, product sourcing and food miles.

Parents' expectations also have an influence. Recent research we conducted, as part of our 'Brain Food' education campaign, revealed that 96% of parents say

they would welcome their child's school offering a menu that provides dishes rich in nutrients that support brain function, a sentiment shared by 75% of those who work in independent secondary schools.

However, at a recent roundtable we hosted, attended by various schools including Oundle School, a co-educational boarding and day school, based in Northamptonshire, part of the discussion centred around how serving dishes that are 'good for you' is just part of the puzzle. They have to be offered in a format and way that appeals to pupils; otherwise, they simply won't choose them and uptake will be low.

Involving pupils with new school menu ideas and hosting feedback tasting sessions, such as Food Forums, is key to increasing uptake. Giving pupils the opportunity to have a say means they are far more likely to be engaged and make better choices at break and lunchtime.

Offering dishes that flex and

fit around pupils' lifestyles is also key. Our research showed that independent school pupils' priorities at lunch time are socialising with their friends and playing sports outside. Therefore, offering meals in formats that they can take away with them, and eat on the go, will allow them autonomy over where they eat.

Then there is of course finding dishes that include ingredients that fall within budget, are easy to prepare for catering teams and adhere to allergen safety, which is incredibly important to get right. All of the independent schools we work with welcome products that are allergen-free, as it means they can serve them to all pupils with no worry or concern for students' safety.

Often, it comes to marrying the two – creating menus that are both nourishing and appealing for pupils, and that realistically work for catering teams.

Wholesalers – like ourselves at Creed – work with independent schools to do just this. Recently,

we partnered with Registered Dietitian Juliette Kellow to co-create the UK's first ever Brain Food school menu with our team of Development Chefs. The menu offers dishes in formats that pupils want to eat, and are cost-effective and simple to prepare and serve.

Oundle School launched the menu during a 'Brain Food' week a couple of months ago. Dishes such as the Posh Pot Noodle, with chicken and vegetables in a miso broth, worked well. It's not only an on-trend grab & go style dish, it also taps into global food flavours, perfect for Gens Z and Alpha, who embrace a variety of cuisines, flavours and tastes.

Menu development is just one solution. Reviewing the overall catering range, ingredients used and working around VAT budget pressures are all things we can help with. Now, more than ever, the sector needs to work together to provide the best possible service to our pupils that we can.

For further information please visit www.creedfoodservice.co.uk/content/brainfood



Profile

In conversation with Amanda Hardie

Born: November 1973

Married: For 27 years to my husband Alan, who also works in education.

Children: 2 daughters, Emilia (23) who lives in London and is working in news production and Scarlett (19) who is studying Fashion Marketing at university.

Schools and Universities attended: University of Oxford and Durham University.

First Job: A 'Saturday Girl' at the age of 16 working for the famous North East baker Greggs.

First job in independent education: Teacher of Religious Studies at The Newcastle Upon Tyne Church High School.

Appointed to the current job: September 2023

Favourite piece of music: 'Burn' from the musical Hamilton.

Favourite food: Oysters with shallot vinegar dressing.

Favourite drink: A crisp cold glass of Provence Rose.

Favourite holiday destination: Usually somewhere in the Mediterranean.

Favourite leisure pastime: Spending time with family and friends, enjoying good food and good company.

Favourite TV or radio programme/series: I have particularly enjoyed the recent television series adaptation of Hilary Mantel's novels, *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*.

Suggested epitaph: Do something every day that you can be proud of.

Q You initially studied theology before moving into teaching. If you hadn't gone into education, what would you have chosen to do?

A I had always dreamt of being a teacher, having experienced personally the transformative impact of education. I did, however, consider a career in law, and spent some time carrying out work experience with a law firm while in Sixth Form. This helped me conclude that I could make more of a difference to the lives of young people via education and that's what led me to complete my PGCE at Durham University after studying Theology.

Q You had been at Newcastle High School for Girls for a number of years before becoming Head. Did you encounter any particular challenges and sensitivities when taking up an internal appointment which would not have applied if you were coming fresh to the school?

A Any challenges I faced when taking up the internal appointment were far outweighed by the huge benefits resulting from my intricate knowledge of the school, the existing relationships I had with families across both Junior and Senior School, and the knowledge I had of each individual girl in school. All of this allowed me to immediately focus on driving further improvements in school and to quickly build upon the school's success. I didn't need to spend time getting to know new routines, colleagues and a new environment – instead, I was able to focus on developing a strong and happy staff team and working together with them towards our shared goal, developing an exciting, future-facing all-girl offer for students across school. Although not new to the school, I was fresh to the role and I have been able to bring enthusiasm, passion, drive and ambition for the school, which added momentum to the school's future development and success.

Q You have now been in post for just over a year. Reflecting on 2024, what would you say has been your favourite highlight? Despite the various sector challenges ahead, what do you think 2025 will bring?

A There have been so many highlights since taking up the headship it is difficult to pin down one particular moment! Successfully navigating an ISI inspection three weeks into my new role was so rewarding – the feedback was real affirmation of the work we are doing, the warmth of our community and the strength of our staff team. NHSG being shortlisted for three national school awards in 2024 was also a real highlight. However, my favourite highlight was probably A Level results day, as it is the culmination of so much hard work for girls and staff. Seeing the dramatic improvement in our A Level results and celebrating the individual success of each girl as they head off to follow their dreams was such a joy. It is such an exciting time to be at Newcastle High, and I know 2025 will bring us further opportunities to build upon our success, continue to grow our student numbers, cement links with partners, continue to develop a future-facing and exciting curriculum offer and ensure that our girls are empowered to be leaders, trailblazers and world shapers.

Q Your teaching career has spanned nearly three decades and has primarily been within an all-girls environment. Recent trends might suggest that single-sex schools are on the way out. Do you think such schools can remain as relevant and appealing as they once were? What are the advantages of an all-girl education?

A I passionately believe in the value of an all-girls education and that the work we do is more relevant than ever. We know that girls thrive in an all-girls environment and that an all-girl education provides the confidence and aspiration that girls need to compete in the world beyond school. At NHSG, our all-girl approach

Amanda Hardie is Head of Newcastle High School for Girls, Tyne and Wear. She has been at the school since 2014, and previously held the roles of Deputy Head Academic and Head of Junior School.



means that we challenge and support girls to develop their voice, to know their worth, to be resilient and fearless, to know the value of their contribution and to be ambitious for themselves. They are therefore more likely to choose subjects based on their passion and interests rather than on stereotypes, more likely to be able to engage in intelligent and informed debate in the classroom and to know that their opinion matters. At university, they stand out as a result of an inner confidence that comes without arrogance, a willingness to speak out in seminars and group discussion, a self-assuredness and knowledge that their viewpoint matters, a determination not to be shouted down or discounted in debate – in short, they stand out because they have a voice. That in turn will make an impact in the workplace, where our young women are more likely to take their place at the table in boardrooms, more likely to be leaders in their chosen field, and less likely to underestimate themselves. In a world that is still woefully far from equal, girls' education is more relevant than ever.

Q The school vision statement specifies that you aim to be 'champions of excellence in all-girl education, empowering girls to be leaders, trailblazers and world shapers.' When Head of Juniors you introduced a new leadership programme. What are the key ingredients of this programme, and how have you measured its impact?

A The Junior School leadership programme offers pupils the opportunity to take on an important role within school which is suited to their passions and ambitions. The programme was also specially designed to help prepare girls for similar leadership roles at Senior School. It covers three key strands: charity, diversity and sustainability, and harnesses pupil voice in considering how girls could work to make a difference in the world around them. The programme includes leadership training

throughout the academic year, a charter for action – agreeing together what we want to achieve and how we will make that happen – and key responsibilities include working to bring about effective change in our school community and beyond in our local community. The impact has been measurable in terms of pupil buy-in, with increasing numbers of pupils applying for roles year on year, and each strand has been measured in terms of impact through an impact evaluation including our annual pupil EDI survey, an annual sustainability report, and charity report. The girls are proud of the contribution they make to our school community and pupil voice at NHSG is strong from a very young age.

Q You also firmly believe in the importance of role models in empowering girls, and NHSG regularly invites alumnae back to the school to speak to students. Which subject have your girls found the most inspiring to date? And was that because of the content or the presentational style?

A Different subjects speak to different girls and that's why we ensure that we have a diverse range of alumnae who come in across the academic year to speak to our students. We've had topics ranging from swarm robotics to Formula 1 engineering, medicine to languages. There can be nothing more powerful and inspiring for our girls than listening to someone who once sat where they are now sitting and who has gone on to achieve amazing things in their chosen field. We encourage our girls to strive to be the best version of themselves every day and hearing from our alumnae ensures that they know the sky is the limit and they can achieve whatever they set their mind to.

Q With careers in STEM subjects still often seen as male-dominated professions, how are you going about addressing that gender gap and

encouraging student interest in these subjects?

A Our girls are free to choose subjects without stereotype and as a result a significant number of students go on to opt for STEM subjects at A Level. We ensure an inspiring STEM curriculum, supplemented by a wide range of co-curricular STEM opportunities including robotics, esports, F1 in schools and other competitions. We are working in partnership with Sage, a major North East tech employer, to provide opportunities for girls to develop their skills in cyber-security and coding and we have a mentor programme in place to support Sixth Form girls who have an interest in pursuing a career in this industry. We are also working alongside Northumbria University to deliver a bespoke NHSG Tech Diploma that will allow girls to further develop their skills in this area, and this is offered to Sixth Form students alongside the GDST Space Tech Diploma and the GDST LEAD Diploma. We support each girl to follow her passion and achieve her dreams and our broad and varied curriculum and co-curricular offer ensures that girls are given rich experiences that allow them to identify where that passion lies.

Q In a new report published recently by the Girls' School Association (GSA) and ImpactED, it was found that the largest challenge reported by teachers within same-sex girls' schools was pupils' relationship to social media and mental health issues. Do you agree with that? Are the ways of addressing this challenge different in an all-girl environment than in other educational settings?

A I think that girls' relationships with social media and corresponding mental health issues are a concern nationally, in both girls-only schools and co-educational schools. It is certainly something we have been doing a lot of work to tackle here at Newcastle High.

Continued >

Profile In conversation with Amanda Hardie (continued)

Our all-girl environment offers a safe space for girls to share their experiences, thoughts and concerns without fear of judgement and we take opportunities to talk openly about the challenges facing girls in society today, the negative impact social media can have on self-esteem and teach our girls how to protect themselves from it. We teach girls to be their own cheerleader, to show kindness towards themselves as well as towards each other and this is a theme that runs through our assembly programme, character development programme and curriculum. Everything we do is centred around girls and their needs and that is why as a school we are focusing our efforts on supporting our girls to navigate some of the challenges that come with using social media.

Q You are keen on developing a 'pupil voice' in school. Which is the most useful suggestion which has evolved from this initiative?

A Our girls are very adept at coming up with initiatives that enhance our school community, and we offer so many opportunities for them to share their ideas. It is really important to us as, after all, only they can truly know what it is like to be a student at NHSG and they are therefore best placed to share how we can enhance the experience even further. In our recent head girl interviews, I was so impressed with the suggestions the girls came up with for initiatives they would like to implement if appointed. They ranged from a pupil-led homework hub to allow peer support with homework, to a termly achievement award for each of the eight pupil learning characteristics that we

are encouraging as part of our character development programme. The suggestions were so in tune with our whole school ethos and approach that they made me very proud!

Q You have previously said that "The intense nature of teaching during term time means that taking the foot off the pedal from time to time is a pre-requisite for wellbeing". What do you like to do in your downtime to help you relax?

A Family and friends are incredibly important to me, so I spend any downtime I have enjoying time with them. I particularly enjoy travel as it offers the perfect opportunity to switch off, relax and enjoy exploring different cultures and sharing new experiences with loved ones.

Students bring abandoned ancient island back to life

A group of students from Gordonstoun, Moray, have become the first people in half a century to camp out on an abandoned Scottish island dating back 5,000 years.

The tiny Orkney Island of Swona was abandoned in 1974, leaving only a small herd of feral cattle to roam the 92 acres. Ten Year 12 students and two school staff spent eight days on the island restoring much of the infrastructure. They stayed in an abandoned house unlivable for a century and learned how to catch fish off the North Head of the island, baked their own bread on an open fire and even

had to pump fresh water from a 1,000-year-old well.

The students worked with the owners of the island – descendants of the last people to live there – to rebuild the old pier, paths and stone dykes and make one of the old cottages habitable. It took ten hours going by bus, ferry and boat to reach the remote island, situated in the Pentland Firth, around seven miles north of John O'Groats.

Gordonstoun Houseparent, Dan McLean, who also supports pastoral care for the students, said: "The students of Gordonstoun's first Swona Service Project were mesmerised by their experience, learning a great deal about themselves and their abilities as well as about the island and its history.

"Their work will allow greater access to the island for those interested in its natural riches and its unique heritage. The project was such a success that we now plan to make an annual trip to Swona.

"Future groups will not only continue the ecological and heritage work that was begun



but will also begin to assess the archaeological potential of the island, until now untouched. We will be working with professional archaeologists from the University of Highlands and Islands to find out more about the island's heritage."

Pictured: Gordonstoun students on Swona Photo credit: Gordonstoun





Password for schools: The key to multilingual learner success

Assessments designed for learners with EAL

Research shows proficiency in English is the most important predictor of academic progress and attainment for learners with EAL.

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Supporting global university ambitions in independent schools

The landscape of university admissions has evolved dramatically over the past decade. With increasing numbers of British students looking beyond traditional routes to consider prestigious institutions worldwide, schools face new challenges in providing comprehensive support for these aspirations.

Since 2013, we at Crimson Education have observed a significant shift in how independent schools approach international university preparation. The most successful schools now embrace a holistic strategy that complements their existing excellence in domestic university preparation by partnering with specialist university admissions consultancies.

This evolution reflects a broader trend in independent education. Today's students aren't simply choosing between Oxford and Cambridge; they're weighing these options against Harvard, Yale, Sciences Po, and other leading global institutions. This expanded horizon brings both opportunities

and complexities for school leadership teams.

The challenge lies in maintaining the school's traditional strengths while developing expertise in multiple admission systems. For example, while a strong personal statement might suffice for UCAS, US applications demand multiple essays, standardised tests, and evidence of sustained extracurricular engagement. Similarly, Oxbridge interviews, though demanding, differ markedly from the alumni interviews common to US admissions.

Schools are finding innovative ways to address these challenges. Some have established dedicated international university counselling roles, while others

have formed strategic partnerships with admissions consultancies to provide their students with expert guidance. The most effective approaches typically combine the school's deep understanding of their students with the specialised knowledge and resources that external partners can provide.

Supporting staff development is a key part of our partnership with schools. We provide regular training sessions for teachers and counsellors to keep them up-to-date with the latest admissions requirements and trends. Through our partner community, school staff can access networking events, share experiences with colleagues from other institutions, and receive ongoing support. This investment in staff development

often yields dividends in improved student outcomes and enhanced school reputation.

The results speak for themselves. Over the past decade, we've seen over 5,000 students secure places at leading global universities. These successes stem from collaborative partnerships between schools, families, and specialist advisors, each contributing their unique expertise to support students' ambitions.

As we look to the future, the trend toward global university choices seems likely to continue. Schools that embrace this change, whilst maintaining their traditional strengths, will be best positioned to support their students' expanding ambitions.



What Crimson Education can offer:

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CHANGING FACES... CHANGING PLACES...



ACS International School Cobham in Surrey has announced the appointment of

Robert Crowther as its new Head of School. Formerly the Middle School

Principal and Head of Senior School, Robert has been a member of ACS Cobham since 2016. Born in the UK and raised in Australia, Robert's leadership journey has taken him across the globe to Rome, Frankfurt, Berlin, Ho Chi Minh City and Jakarta.



Jon Mutton is the new head at Ampleforth College, North Yorkshire. He has been at

Ampleforth for 13 years and has held leadership positions in academic, pastoral and co-curricular aspects of the college. He was previously at the Royal Grammar School, Newcastle.

Jon holds an undergraduate degree in Classics and English from the University of Leeds, as well as a Masters in Classics. He also has a Masters in Educational Leadership.

A marathon runner who enjoys sports coaching, he is also a former junior chess champion and ran the chess club for many years.



Mrs Helen Holt has been appointed as Head of Bolton School's Junior Girls' School, Lancashire.

She was previously Deputy Head.

She has worked in education for over 30 years after studying at Homerton College, Cambridge, for a B.Ed degree with Music as a main study.

The Junior Girls' School she now leads is part of Bolton School's Primary Division, which comprises a Nursery, Pre-School Class, Infant School, Boys' Junior School and Girls' Junior School, and of the wider Bolton School Foundation, which includes Girls' and Boys' Senior Schools and educates pupils up to 18 years of age.



Edge Grove School, Hertfordshire, has appointed Richard Stanley as its new Head. With over 40

years in primary education, 27 years of those in a headship capacity,

Mr Stanley joined Edge Grove over two years ago, taking on the role of interim Head back in September 2022, after having retired to England following several years working as Head of two of South Africa's prep schools.



A new Head of Prep for Headington Rye Oxford Prep School has been announced.

Mr Bertrand Leullier, currently Senior Deputy Head at co-educational prep school St Hugh's, South Oxfordshire, will take on the role in September 2025. He will be taking over from Jane Crouch, who has been the Head of Prep for 11 years.

Mr Leullier, a dual French-British national, brings over 16 years of experience in preparatory education and a background in business leadership.

During his 16 years teaching at St Hugh's, he started out as a Teacher of French before taking on increasing roles of responsibility, including serving as interim Head during the 2022-23 academic year.



The Governors of The King's School Worcester have announced the appointment of Mr

Ben Charles, the current Principal of King's Rochester, Kent, as the new Head of Foundation. He will join King's Worcester on 1st September 2025.

Ben Charles has been Principal and Head of the Senior School at King's Rochester since 2019. Prior to that, he was Second Master (Senior Deputy Head) at

Portsmouth Grammar School, Hampshire.

After completing his degree in Music at the University of Exeter and his PGCE at Durham University, Ben began his teaching career as Assistant Director of Music at another The King's School, in Peterborough. He went on to become Director of Music at Chigwell School, Essex, and later Millfield School, Somerset.

Dr Alison Oliver will remain Acting Head until Ben arrives in September 2025.



Mr Matthew Shoults has joined Surbiton High School, Surrey, as Principal this month (January).

Mr Shoults was previously at Notting Hill and Ealing High School, London, where he was Headmaster for the past seven years, drawing on his expertise as a Head of Classics, Academic Deputy Head and Senior Deputy Head in prior roles.

A graduate of Worcester College, University of Oxford, where he studied Classics, Mr Shoults began his professional journey in the

Civil Service Fast Stream before pursuing his PGCE at the University of Cambridge. His teaching career commenced in 2000, and he has since taught at King's College School Wimbledon and North London Collegiate School.

Outside of his professional life, Mr Shoults is a runner and hill walker, with aspirations to complete his final 12 Munros. He enjoys music, playing the violin and singing in ensembles, and is an avid cryptic crossword enthusiast. He is married to Sini, a professional violinist, and together they have a six-month-old daughter, Matilda.



Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation has announced Dr Michael Alderson as its next Principal.

He is currently Executive Head at Merchant Taylors' Schools in Liverpool, and will assume leadership in September 2025, succeeding interim Principal Andrew Pearson.

Born and raised in North Yorkshire, Michael first came to Durham as an undergraduate at Durham University, where he read Modern European Languages. He began his teaching career in 2000 after completing

a PGCE at the Universities of Cambridge and Innsbruck.

After serving as Head of Sixth Form at Derby Grammar School, he joined Durham School in 2003, teaching French and German before becoming Head of Department.

Michael has also led as Warden of Glenalmond College, Perthshire and Kinross, where he steered the school through the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dr Alderson will be joined in Durham by his wife, Emma, a teacher in the city, and their black Labrador, Angus.



Wellesley Haddon Dene, Kent, has announced the appointment of Duncan Andrews as

its new Headmaster.

Mr Andrews' career in independent education includes previous roles at the Merlin School in Putney, Wetherby Pre-Preparatory School

in Kensington and, most recently, as Deputy Head at St Faith's Prep School in Kent.

Joining him on this journey will be his wife, Jade, and their two sons.

Mr Andrews will officially begin his role in April, taking over from interim Headmistress, Lisa Harries, who will be leaving at the end of the academic year.



The Governors of Sandroyd School, Wiltshire, have announced the appointment of Sarah

Segrave as the new Headmistress, effective September 2025. Sarah is currently Principal of Eaton House

Schools and Headmistress of Eaton House the Manor Prep School, London.

Educated at Cranbrook School in Kent, Sarah studied Education at Durham University and the Institute of Education.



Heidi Berry has been appointed as the new Head of King's College Prep, Taunton, Somerset.

She will commence her tenure in September 2025.

Currently serving as Headteacher at Sherborne Preparatory School in Qatar, Heidi has over 14 years of leadership experience, complemented by a Masters degree, an MBA in

Senior Leadership, and experience as a current School Inspector.

Her teaching career began in the Midlands, before joining Sherborne Preparatory School, Dorset, in 2007. In 2010, she was appointed Head of Pre-Prep and then subsequently took on the role of Deputy Head at Sherborne Preparatory School, Qatar, in 2022, before being promoted to Headteacher in 2023.



The High School of Glasgow has announced the appointment of a new Rector, Ms Antonia Berry, to succeed Mr John O'Neill on his retirement from the role at the end of session in June 2025.

Ms Berry is currently Depute Rector at St Columba's School, Kilmacollm, Inverclyde. She was educated at Howard of Effingham School, Surrey, and gained a Bachelor of Arts in English and American Literature at the University of Kent. She holds a Masters degree in Educational

Leadership from the University of Buckingham.

Her teaching journey began as an English and Performing Arts Teacher at Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre, Kent, and continued as Head of English at Prior's Field School, Surrey, before becoming Depute Rector at St Columba's School. In addition to her current position at St Columba's School, she is an Associate Assessor for Education Scotland, which has responsibility for carrying out school inspections. Ms Berry has also published a number of articles on teaching and learning.

Heads Hunted

Among the upcoming head and principal appointments:

Ackworth Junior School	West Yorkshire
Clifton College Pre-Prep	Avon
Grange Park Prep School	London
Hill House Junior School	South Yorkshire
Kew Green Prep School	Surrey
Prestfelde School	Shropshire
St Bees School	Cumbria
St Hilary's School	Surrey
St Margaret's School, Hampstead	London
Silcoates School	West Yorkshire

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:
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SYDNEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Fish Nankivell

Sydney Grammar School, Australia

HEADMASTER/PRINCIPAL

Founded by an Act of Parliament in 1854 to offer a liberal education regardless of background or religious affiliation, Sydney Grammar School is an independent, academically selective school for boys. Its enrolment spans two preparatory schools at St Ives and Edgecliff (Pre K/Kindergarten to Year 6), and the senior school at College Street in the centre of Sydney (Years 7 to 12).

Sydney Grammar School offers its pupils a broad and liberal education. This encompasses academic study and also a wide range of co-curricular activities including debating, sport, outdoor education, and the arts. Its aim is to prepare future leaders with a wide and deep knowledge of the world, past and present, and to foster their intellect, curiosity, and commitment to public service.

With the appointment of the current Head, Dr Richard Malpass, to a leading school in Singapore from mid-2025, the Trustees of Sydney Grammar School now invite applications for the role of Head for commencement from July 2025, or later by arrangement.

The successful candidate will be someone who possesses excellent interpersonal skills, intellectual liveliness and rigour, strong ethical values, and an affinity with the aims and ethos of the School. Just as critical is proven leadership experience to manage an educational institution of this size and public significance.



Please obtain information about the position by emailing the consultant assisting the School, Kathy McLean, of Fish Nankivell, as soon as possible on kmclean@fishnankivell.com with a basic CV and a short email explanation of your interest in the role. She will then forward the Candidate Brief.

Applications will close on Saturday 15 February 2025. A concurrent search is being conducted.

Please note that, because of current Australian visa regulations, generally only candidates with Australian/New Zealand residency or citizenship are eligible to be appointed to Principal roles in Australia. Potential candidates are advised to undertake their own research into this.

MP visit

Pupils at St. Andrew's School, Rochester, Kent, have welcomed MP for Rochester and Strood, Lauren Edwards, for a visit.

During her time at the school, Ms Edwards held Q&A sessions with both Infant and Junior pupils, sharing insights into leadership, public service, and the power of civic engagement. It was aimed at encouraging pupils to think critically, engage in their communities, and consider their roles in shaping the future.

Ms Edwards also met with the School Parliament, where the young leaders were able to

showcase recent achievements, including fundraising efforts for Young Carers and Children in Need, initiatives to improve parking safety, and a recycling project.

School Parliament Leader at St. Andrew's, Mrs Lorraine Burrows, said: "We were thrilled to welcome Lauren Edwards MP to St. Andrew's. We are proud to provide our pupils with opportunities to learn from leaders across all walks of life. The pupils were captivated by the discussions, and we hope this experience has inspired some of them to become the next generation of MPs."



Pictured: Lauren Edwards MP with St Andrew's pupils



Uniforms making a difference

Two years ago, the Parents' Association (PA) from Surbiton High School, Surrey, following a uniform change, faced the challenge of rehoming surplus uniforms featuring the old school logo. Demonstrating ingenuity and a commitment to sustainability, the PA partnered with schools abroad to find new homes for these items.

The initiative has borne fruit, with uniforms now distributed to the Katamanso Presbyterian School,

Katamanso Number 1 JHS School, and the Children of the Sunday School of Olive Tree Praise Ministry near Accra, Ghana.

This success was made possible by the Parents' Association, volunteers, and supportive parents.

Surbiton High School remains committed to this meaningful project and is set to continue the collection of old logo uniforms and other suitable items to support these partner schools.

Pictured: Donated uniforms with pupils in Ghana

Ditching homework for a fortnight of fiction

Solihull School, West Midlands, has welcomed its students back to school with a tempting New Year's Resolution: ditch your device for a book and we will drop homework for two whole weeks!

Students below the Sixth Form are allowed to choose any book to read and, during the fortnight, will share what they have learned with the rest of their class. Students can opt for fiction or non-fiction books and e-readers are encouraged as well as print books.

Reluctant readers are offered plenty of ideas to help them choose something that will pique their interest, while Sixth Form students are being given a range of reading material

Pictured: Solihull School students switching homework for books

which supports and develops their A Level studies, expanding their horizons ahead of critical decisions about their future.

Parents are also being encouraged to act as role models, choosing their own books to read too, reading aloud with younger children, and talking about favourite books around the dinner table.

Executive Headmaster Charles Fillingham said: "It's critically important we prepare our students for a digital future, but there's also nothing quite like the joy of getting completely lost in a book – so we work hard to ground all our students, from the very youngest to those about to leave us for university or the world of work, in a love

of reading that will support their vocabulary, imagination, skills-acquisition and critical thinking capabilities throughout their childhood and into adult life.

"Studies have also shown that young people who read more are often happier and better able to manage emotional challenges

too – so we believe that ditching homework for two short weeks, in favour of reading, will pay dividends in all aspects of personal and academic development."

More about this initiative and its aims will be featured in the next issue.





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Strategic partnerships in education – a vision for a collaborative future

Director of Educational Partnerships at New College School, Oxford, Louise Brown, discusses the importance of educational partnerships and how by fostering them all children – regardless of background – can have the opportunity to succeed.

In today's complex educational landscape, fostering meaningful, sustainable partnerships between schools across sectors is not just desirable – it is essential. The School Partnerships Alliance (SPA), a charity I had the privilege of attending a conference with recently, is dedicated to facilitating cross-sector relationships. SPA aims to create a more collaborative and effective education system for all children, regardless of their background. By researching, enabling, and promoting such partnerships, SPA ensures that schools can work together for the benefit of the next generation.

SPA is driven by a clear and compelling vision: to unlock the potential of cross-sector collaboration within the national education system. The charity works to break down barriers, encouraging schools to share resources, expertise, and best practices. At its core, SPA believes that strategic partnerships should serve as a vehicle for school improvement – sustainable, impactful, and mutually beneficial.

The focus of SPA's work goes beyond mere goodwill or charity; it's about creating meaningful, strategic collaborations with a long-lasting, positive impact. These partnerships can take many forms – from sharing teaching resources and professional development opportunities to joint extracurricular activities and collaborative research projects. The goal is to create an environment where schools can learn from one another, share strengths, and address weaknesses.

As Marcus Shepherd, Education Director at E-ACT, highlighted at the conference, disparities exist not only between independent and state schools but also within the state sector itself. Partnerships, therefore, can help address these

internal disparities, ensuring that all schools – regardless of their sector – benefit from shared expertise and resources.

One of the most important aspects of SPA's work is its focus on supporting disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantage is measured using several criteria, including postcode against a deprivation index, whether a pupil is a first-generation university applicant, housing status (e.g. owned, rented, or social housing), household income, eligibility for Pupil Premium (PP) or Free School Meals (FSM), and whether a child is a Looked After Child or a young carer. While there are other factors to consider, these indicators are widely accepted as reliable measures of disadvantage.

SPA's partnership programmes have reached thousands of disadvantaged children across the country. Some schools have even implemented initiatives supporting over 1,000 disadvantaged pupils, with more than 100 of their own involved. The impact of these programmes is increasingly clear – not only in terms of academic progress, the sharing of specialist teachers being a key aspect of this, but also in the development of vital soft skills.

For example, students engaged in cross-sector partnerships have opportunities to participate in shared activities and mentoring. This is particularly powerful when older pupils mentor younger students in primary schools. Students involved in these initiatives report that they are able to share their passions, act as role models, and develop essential life skills such as leadership, teamwork, and communication. These partnerships create not only effective learners but also compassionate and confident individuals with a broader perspective.

Objective data supports the success of these initiatives. Schools have shown that students who participated in SPA's programmes consistently score 1–2 grades higher in Progress 8 compared to their peers who were not involved. Additionally, university mentoring programmes have raised aspirations, with students gaining valuable insights into higher education and career pathways, which helps build their confidence and ambition.

There is growing evidence that these partnerships also positively impact students' wellbeing. Some schools have implemented initiatives that focus not just on academic achievement but also on social and emotional development. For example, peer mentoring schemes and wellbeing programmes, in which students have mentors from both sectors, have been shown to improve engagement, boost self-esteem, and even address attendance issues.

These initiatives foster not only academic excellence but also the broader development of students as well-rounded individuals – well-prepared for the challenges of life beyond school.

Despite the clear successes of these programmes, a policy shift away from supporting them comes just as the DfE outlined its 2024 priorities for Pupil Premium funding. These priorities focus on high-quality teaching in core subjects, targeted tutoring, and improving attendance. Many of the DfE's current Pupil Premium priorities – such as enhancing teaching methods, providing targeted academic support, and improving student engagement – are already being addressed by SPA's partnership programmes. Through collaborative efforts, schools in both the independent and state sectors are working together to improve



Louise Brown

teaching, provide academic support, and enhance the overall educational experience for disadvantaged pupils. Moreover, the impact of these programmes extends beyond academic achievement to address students' wellbeing, life skills, and social and cultural capital.

A growing body of quantitative evidence now underscores the long-term benefits of these collaborations. These partnerships are helping to level the playing field, boosting social mobility, and equipping young people with the essential life skills that will serve them well throughout their careers and personal lives. Research shows that these partnerships not only support academic achievement but also foster greater wellbeing, helping students develop resilience, confidence, and the mindset needed to succeed in the modern world.

If we are serious about addressing the root causes of educational inequality, we must look beyond traditional state-run solutions, and the reliance on policies that stoke division and envy, rather than fostering unity and progress, and embrace the untapped potential of cross-sector collaboration.

By fostering these collaborations, we can ensure that all children – regardless of background – have the opportunity to succeed. It's time for bold action. Let's make cross-sector partnerships a central part of the educational agenda.

“More than just sharing”

Warden of St Edward's School, Oxford, Alastair Chirside, considers the value of partnership work and why, despite new financial pressures, it should always have a future.

Partnership means sharing, but it means much more than sharing resources and facilities. It means sharing aims, objectives, values and vision. It means working with others to open up opportunity and to pursue common goals. It is the essence of community.

It is for that reason that partnership work is so fundamental to the ethos of independent schools. I took many memories from my time at an independent school thirty years ago, but among the clearest came from my weekly visits with a small group of other pupils to the local day centre for the elderly, where we called bingo and talked with people for whom our visits provided a lifeline for company.

Partnership work was important then, but it tended to be a minority pursuit. At St Edward's today – Teddies, as we are known in our community – it is universal. Our most recent Social Impact Report makes that point in numbers: students spent nearly 6,000 hours last year volunteering; they were involved in projects with more than 40 different primary and secondary schools; we welcomed more than 2,000 primary school children for sporting events; we welcomed 3,500 young people from local primary and secondary schools to the school's arts centre; 750 children took part in educational workshops and activities provided by St Edward's; we provided 7,000

lunches to local charities; students raised nearly £70,000 for local charities; Teddies teachers invested more than 1,100 hours of their time working with children in other schools. St Edward's is not alone: those numbers will be multiplied many times over in independent schools across the country.

Numbers provide an easy shorthand for the breadth of the partnership work undertaken by the sector. They do not, however, do full justice to the depth of the relationships which follow from it or to the impact which it has on everyone involved. Our work with Northern House Academy offers a case in point. Just across the road from St Edward's, Northern House is a school for children who have been identified as having social, emotional, and mental health difficulties. All its pupils have an Educational, Health and Care Plan. It is a very different school from St Edward's, but we are working every day in partnership with them.

The mutual benefit of this partnership is evident from the feedback from all involved. In the words of Bex Holmes, Head of School at Northern House Academy:

“These dedicated students bring an unparalleled level of enthusiasm and commitment to engaging our pupils in fun and enriching activities. Their presence not only brightens the school environment but also

plays a pivotal role in supporting the individual learning outcomes outlined in our children's Education, Health and Care Plans. The relationships that these Lower Sixth Form students build with our pupils are truly invaluable.”

From our pupil placement evaluations, we know their experiences are equally educational, enjoyable and life-affirming.

Seventy students in the Lower Sixth (Year 12) visit Northern House every week in groups of five or six as part of Teddies Collaborates, the weekly programme for partnership work in which all the students in Year 12 at St Edward's have 90 minutes ring-fenced in their timetables to work in local primary schools, foodbanks, charity shops and shelters for the homeless.

That model is common in independent schools, but its universality is rare – perhaps even unique. With Teddies Collaborates now embedded into school culture as well as the timetable, our focus is on creating similar opportunities for younger students so that they can learn at the earliest opportunity the most important lessons to take from their time at school – that we can learn and achieve even more when we work together in partnership with others, sharing our time and our resources for wider benefit beyond our school community.

It is not enough for independent schools simply to open up their facilities to children from other schools. The pressures on staffing in the state sector are so great that teachers simply do not have time to help their pupils to take advantage of those opportunities. The greatest need, therefore, is for teachers' time. Teddies Up! is one example. It is a Saturday morning school for children in primary schools in Oxford. They do not just use the laboratories, classrooms and performance spaces at St Edward's; they are also taught by Teddies teachers and supported by our students. It is not unique:



Alastair Chirside

the brilliance of Teddies Up! and programmes like it all across the country brightens the lives of thousands of children.

It has become fashionable to criticise independent schools for the facilities which they have built for the benefit of their students, but that is to ignore the benefits which those same facilities bring for others in the wider community, young and old. When we drew up plans for a new sports centre at St Edward's, for example, the first step was to meet with the leaders of local schools and charities, to ask them what facilities they needed and to work out how to maximise the benefits from the project not only for students at Teddies but also for others in the community in and around Oxford. Proper partnership starts at the planning stage.

Although the government has decided to impose VAT on school fees and to end business rates relief for independent schools, the debate about the rightness of the policy continues. Among its themes will be the value of partnership work and the extent to which these new financial pressures will limit independent schools' ability to undertake it. The new financial landscape will undoubtedly make it harder: schools will need to generate more commercial income from facilities which they would otherwise be able to open up free of charge, and the need for even greater efficiency in staffing will make it harder for teachers to have the time to work with children outside their schools. At the same time, partnership work can and should remain part of the curriculum, because the benefits are reciprocal. All children benefit, wherever they go to school. That is what we mean by public benefit. It is also why, however difficult the financial present, partnership work will always have a future.



Pictured: Northern House Teddies Collaboration

Music, Drama & Dance

And all that jazz!



High school students from ACS International School Hillingdon, Middlesex, have recently put on a razzle dazzle teen edition performance of the Broadway hit, 'Chicago', taking the audience back to the Roaring '20s.

The entire production was curated by the school's students, from music and lighting to stage production and choreography.

Production Director of the performance, Katerina S Sleiman, said: "Directing and choreographing our school production of Chicago

Pictured: ACS Hillingdon students put on their performance of Broadway hit 'Chicago'

has been an exhilarating journey of creativity and collaboration; bringing this musical to life requires a mix of precision, passion and teamwork. From teaching Fosse-inspired choreography to shaping the storytelling with direction, the students have embraced every challenge with energy and commitment. Watching their growth, from mastering complex dance sequences to embodying the characters and singing with jazz flare and harmony, has been extremely rewarding."

Guys and Dolls

Students from Bryanston School, Dorset, have put on a theatrical production of 'Guys and Dolls', entertaining an audience of around 2,000 people across three nights.

Over 100 students were involved in the production, including a 19-piece orchestra which also featured professional musicians.

The performances were led by James H as Nathan Detroit, the lovable rogue running an illegal craps game,,,, and Grace M as Miss Adelaide, Nathan's long-suffering but devoted fiancée. Toni K played



Pictured: Performing 'Guys and Dolls' at Bryanston School

Sky Masterson, the suave gambler who embarks on an unexpected romance with the strait-laced Salvation Army missionary Sarah Brown, played by Elinor G.

The high-spirited and cheery Nicely-Nicely Johnson, often on stage as Nathan's right-hand man, was played by Xandi S.

Director of Performing Arts and Choreographer of Guys and Dolls, Vicki Green, commented: "From start to finish, this production of Guys and Dolls, one of my favourite musicals, has been the most joyful and collaborative experience. The success of the shows is a product of the teamwork and determination from every single person involved, including our performing arts scholars. I thoroughly enjoyed working with Martin Wright as Set Designer, Xavier Iles as Musical Director, and of course the brilliant creative support from Choreographers Katherine Stauch and Sam O'Neill. The rehearsals and creative process are just as important for me as the final product."



'Come Dancing'

New Hall School, Essex, has held its annual Come Dancing charity inter-house competition. With glitter balls spinning and the air alive with excitement, this year's event raised over £1,600 for Farleigh Hospice, a local charity providing care to people affected by lifelimiting illnesses.

The event saw participants from the school's six houses pairing up to deliver show-stopping routines. Head of Dance at New Hall School, Sarah Molina, commented: "This event allows all students and staff to get involved and learn new skills. The students had a few lessons in Ballroom and Latin dance in the build-up to this event and showcased routines in the jive, rumba, salsa, cha-cha-cha and samba. From sugar pushes to

energetic drops, every performance demonstrated a remarkable blend of creativity and commitment."

The routines were judged by a panel of students, staff and professional dancers.

After an evening of fierce but friendly competition, it was Acutis House who danced their way to victory, with a performance from 'The Blues Brothers' and a dance to 'Rolling on the River' earning them the New Hall Come Dancing trophy.

Vice Principal of New Hall School, Vincent Holden, said: "New Hall Come Dancing is not just about dancing; it's about teamwork, creativity, and the community spirit in fundraising. Seeing students and staff collaborate like this is truly inspiring."

Pictured: Winners of the New Hall Come Dancing trophy

CBBC TV docuseries



A new TV series commissioned for CBBC and BBC iPlayer, and created by Drummer Television, is set to immerse viewers into the world of life at a performing arts school.

'Stage Stars' will follow a group of young performers from Tring Park School for the Performing Arts, Hertfordshire, exploring the delicate balance between boarding school life and the hard work and dedication needed for a career in the spotlight. The series, commissioned by Sarah Muller, Senior Head of BBC Children's

Pictured: Ballet class at Tring Park School

Commissioning 7+, will go behind the scenes to capture all the ups and downs, as the students face challenges both inside and outside school.

The series will enhance storytelling within the documentary through performance in break-out moments during each episode. The Executive Producer for the BBC is Fiona Piper and Executive Producers for Drummer Television are Tamsin Summers and Rachel Drummond-Hay.



New adaptation

Haberdashers' Monmouth Prep School has debuted a modern reimagining of the Nativity story. The Monmouth Nativity was a newly commissioned work, crafted by Composer Russell Hepplewhite and Playwright Jamila Gavin, and sought to connect timeless themes with today's world.

Jamila Gavin explained: "All children are naturally creative and imaginative. The Nativity at Christmas is often the only opportunity for many to engage with theatre and music. With The Monmouth Nativity, I wanted to make it as inclusive as possible – and relevant.

"The story of Herod's threat to the Holy Family, their exile, and their

Pictured: Prep school pupils performing The Monmouth Nativity

search for safety should resonate with all refugees fleeing danger. It remains a strikingly relevant story in our world today."

Russell Hepplewhite's music was also developed in close partnership with the school. Hepplewhite said: "Composing becomes a much more enjoyable process when those who have commissioned the piece are genuinely involved. The Monmouth Nativity is an example of a journey that has been enriching for everyone. I hope it finds a lasting place among Nativity repertoires for children."

The performances also raised funds for UNICEF, supporting children affected by conflict and hardship.

Living Nativity



Holme Grange School, Berkshire, has hosted its Living Nativity, bringing together pupils, staff, families, and members of the local community in a celebration of Christmas spirit and tradition.

Guests were treated to a journey through key scenes of the Nativity, complete with live animals, traditional carols, and performances by the pupils.

Pictured: Performing the Living Nativity, complete with camels

Reflecting on the success of the event, Head of Holme Grange School, Mrs Claire Robinson, said: "The Living Nativity was a truly special experience. Who could forget the joy of seeing camels and donkeys as part of this magical event? Events like this bring people together in the most inspiring way, and we are so proud of the joy and inspiration it brought to everyone who attended."

Bringing the festive spirit



Kimbolton Prep School, Cambridgeshire, was filled with festive spirit as pupils from Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 brought the magic of Christmas alive on stage with a series of productions.

Reception pupils put on a Nativity performance of 'Snuggle Up Stable'. Set in Bethlehem, the story sees animals, shepherds, kings and angels gathered to celebrate the birth of a very special baby.

Year 1 pupils took their turn to shine with 'The Angel Who Nearly Missed It All!'. This tale is about an angel who is so preoccupied with perfecting her duties, polishing her halo and taking naps, that she almost misses the birth of Jesus!

Pictured: The Christmas performances at Kimbolton Prep School

Rounding off the celebrations, Year 2 pupils took audiences on a journey with 'The Mouse in Santa's House'. This story introduces Tommy, a little boy whose greatest wish is to have a mouse for Christmas. Thanks to Santa and his elves, Tommy's dream comes true in the form of Tip, a tiny mouse – who becomes the best Christmas gift of all.

Head of Kimbolton Prep School, Claire Petrie, said: "All three performances brought festive cheer to our school. The joyous atmosphere and messages of love, hope and togetherness left the audience with hearts full of holiday spirit."



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Thinking of dropping your charitable status? Don't overlook how this will affect your minibus operations

The removal of VAT exemption on private school fees from 1 January, and the impending removal of charitable business rates relief in April, might lead many independent schools to consider moving from charity status to a commercial model, as two of the main financial benefits charitable status brought are removed.

Transitioning from charity status to a commercial operation will impact on minibus operations and require significant changes, namely the shift from operating under a Section 19 Permit to a Public Service Vehicle (PSV) Operator's Licence. This switch involves legal and operational changes that must be carefully managed, and budgeted for, to ensure legal compliance and the continued safe transport of students.

The Difference Between Section 19 Permits and a PSV Operator's Licence

A PSV Operator's Licence is required when operating minibuses for hire or reward in a commercial capacity. Schools without charitable status must have a PSV Operator's Licence for their minibus operations. Having a PSV Operators' Licence involves stricter regulatory controls and higher operational standards than a Section 19 Permit.

Drivers must hold a full D1 licence with CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence) and the organisation must employ or contract a dedicated transport manager.

Section 19 Permits are issued to non-commercial organisations, including schools that hold charitable status, who are not profiting from their minibus operations. It allows schools to charge fees to cover the costs of minibus operations and pay their drivers, without the need for a PSV Operator's Licence.

Another advantage of a Section 19 Permit is that it allows drivers without D1 entitlement to drive minibuses with a GVW of 3.5 tonnes or under on their standard B1 car licence, provided they

are not paid to do so (other conditions apply).

Key considerations if you're transitioning from Section 19 Permits to a PSV Operator's Licence

- 1. Applying for the O Licence –** Schools moving to commercial operations must apply for a PSV Operator's Licence from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).
- 2. Tachographs –** Under a PSV Operator's Licence all minibuses will need to be fitted with tachographs to ensure drivers are not exceeding safe driving hours and are taking appropriate breaks.
- 3. Training and licence requirements –** Schools will need to ensure all their drivers, whether paid or 'volunteer', have the full D1 licence. This includes a medical check, theory and practical driving test, as well as 35 hours of CPC training per year. This is regardless of the weight of the minibus, as the 3500kg limit is only relevant under a Section 19 Permit.
- 4. Enhanced Safety Inspections –** Whether you operate under a Section 19 Permit or PSV Operator's Licence, regular safety inspections are required, and a PSV safety inspection includes an additional rolling brake test.
- 5. DBS Checks –** Drivers will require enhanced DBS checks, if they do not already have them.
- 6. Insurance –** 'Commercial' minibus operations may require different insurance coverage from charitable provision, so this needs to be discussed with insurance providers. Employers' liability and

public liability insurance may also need to reflect a 'commercial' risk.

- 7. Operational management and policies –** Schools will need to implement formal transport policies and employ either an internal or external transport manager to oversee minibus operations.

The financial considerations of transitioning from a Section 19 Permit to a PSV Operator's Licence will undoubtedly increase operating costs. Increased costs could be offset by the removal of the non-profit-making restriction of a Section 19 Permit. Now is either a good time to increase costs of transport in line with increased fees, or something schools want to avoid precisely because of any fee increases due to VAT.

There may be some schools and organisations for whom the transition will not have too much of an impact, this depends on how many of their drivers already have a full D1 licence. Many schools will already have a dedicated transport manager, even under a Section 19 Permit, to ensure they are running a safe and compliant minibus operation, they will just need to check the transport manager's qualification requirements under an Operator's Licence.

Our recommended steps to transition successfully

- 1. Conduct a minibus audit to assess your current minibus operations and identify areas that will be impacted and the likely costs;** Rivervale Minibus can help you with this free of charge. For example, understanding who can drive which vehicle and perhaps switching some larger minibuses for eight-passenger vehicles



John Peterson

may be a way to reduce training costs as these can be driven on a standard car licence.

- 2. Engage with the DVSA early in the process and apply for a PSV Operator's Licence.**
- 3. Check all your drivers' licences and book D1 driver training and CPC for those that need it;** again Rivervale Minibus can help with this.
- 4. Recruit or formalise the employment/contract of a qualified transport manager so they can manage your operations and update and implement your policies and procedures reflecting new commercial requirements.**
- 5. Communicate the changes with your drivers and inform staff, parents, and any other relevant stakeholders about the changes.** This may include talking to teachers (and possibly some governors or parents) who cannot now drive the minibuses.

Minibus operations are an essential part of school operations, providing home-to-school transport, and getting pupils to sporting fixtures, Forest School or any school trip. The impact that non-charity status would have on their operation is a consideration that many schools may not be aware of or realise the financial implications of.

If you have any questions or concerns, whether you are currently a Rivervale customer or not, then please get in touch with the team on 01869 253744 or email minibus@rivervale.co.uk

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Celebrating anniversaries and milestones: What role can a school archivist play?

Many schools celebrate a milestone or important anniversary every few years – commemorating their foundation, the opening of a major building or the creation of an important aspect of their community. Archivist at Eltham College, London, Andrew Beattie, describes how his role played a part in helping the school community mark two recent major centenaries.

The 2023-24 academic year saw two major centenaries celebrated at Eltham College. Firstly, the year marked a hundred years since the creation of the school's house system, which was inaugurated at the start of the 1923-24 academic year; secondly, July 2024 saw the hundredth anniversary of the 1924 Paris Olympics, when Eric Liddell, one of the school's most prominent former pupils, won the gold medal in the 400 metres – an event later immortalised in the Oscar-winning film, 'Chariots of Fire'.

Eltham College has its origins in the nineteenth century as a boarding school for the sons of Baptist and Congregational missionaries serving overseas, and although much has changed over recent decades – not least the end of boarding and the admission of girls – the school's "missionary heritage" is still celebrated as an important aspect of the school's tradition and ethos. Indeed, both centenaries firmly celebrate this heritage: the four houses, Carey, Livingstone, Moffat and Chalmers, were named after prominent missionaries, while Eric Liddell was born in China to missionary parents and attended the school, like so many of his generation, as a boarder. Following his career as an athlete and rugby player Liddell served for nearly 20 years as a missionary in China, where he died shortly before the end of the Second World War.

Much about the house system as it operates today would have been familiar to those pupils who took part in the first competition a hundred years ago. Over the

course of the academic year houses compete with each other in various competitions (many, but not all, requiring athletic or sporting prowess) and a final ranking is decided by points accrued; through this means the winner of the annual championship is decided at the end of each summer term (Carey were the first winners in July 1924, and indeed won the next three years, until Livingstone broke their winning streak in 1928). As part of celebrating the centenary, and emphasising to current pupils that the house competition remains an integral part of the school today, I was able to give a number of assemblies explaining its history and rationale; I also described the lives of the missionaries after whom each house is named (David Livingstone, the noted explorer, being by far the best-known). I then contributed to a project organised for Year 7 pupils in which they were asked to design their own logos or 'coats-of-arms' for their house – which involved some research by them into the parts of the world where 'their' missionary served. They were also able to work out which of the house competitions from a hundred years ago had survived into the present day (house cricket and football) and which had fallen by the wayside over time (in those days there was house fives and gymnastics; today there's house musical theatre and debating).

The centenary also provided an opportunity to engage with past pupils: in the school magazine, Elthamian, which I edit, we published a list of the winners of every house competition from the



Pictured: The First XV rugby team in 1916, featuring Eric Liddell and his brother Robert

first (Carey, 1924) to the most recent (Moffat, 2024) – and invited former students (who receive copies of the magazine) to 'fill in the gaps' for the years we had no records for; sure enough, former pupils emailed in, telling us (for example) that their house Moffat were the winners for 1980 and 1981. Such engagement strengthens both the 'Old Elthamian' community and the current school community (and current school staff learned a thing or two about their houses, too).

As to the second anniversary, Eric Liddell's name is known to generations of Elthamians – but the centenary of his Olympic victory gave the school an opportunity to once again remember his life and legacy. Last February a special choral evensong was held at a church in London commemorating Eric Liddell's life; musicians from the school sang in the choir and Sixth Formers participated too – and I was able to help one of them construct a display (using old photos from our archive) about Eric Liddell's time at Eltham College. In May, when musicians from the school participated in a 'Proms Praise' event at the Royal Albert Hall focusing on Liddell and his legacy, I was asked to speak on camera in the interval (the event was 'live-streamed') about his time at the school, and show the viewers some artefacts we have in our archives, including the Blackheath

Cup for best sportsman or woman which Liddell won and which is still awarded today. Both events were attended (or watched online) by former pupils and this once again provided an opportunity for engagement with both the Old Elthamian community as well as with current students. Separately, I was also able to use a copy of the script of Chariots of Fire, given to the archives by the film's screenwriter Colin Welland when he visited the school in 1982, in a session with Year 7 pupils who through it were introduced to the way screenplays are written and set out on the page – again, inspiring them to take an interest in Eric Liddell's story.

Of course, each school will have its own unique anniversaries to celebrate and ways of doing things. I worked with the Development Director, Head of Communications, Deputy Head (Co-Curricular) and various academic staff on the projects I have outlined, and such co-operation is vital to make them a success. However, I hope some of what I have outlined here, which strengthened an appreciation of the school's heritage across the community of current and former pupils, parents and staff, might inspire archivists at other schools that are facing similar anniversaries.

POINTS FOR THE YEAR.

	Carey.	Chalmers.	Moffat.	Livingstone.
Football	30'833	23'333	35'	8'33
Colourmen	4'	4'	4'	8'
Tackling Bars	11'	11'	14'	14'
Sports	4'7	7'9	11'	10'4
Cricket	23'75	15'	30'	21'25
Fielding Bars	10'	8'	9'	11'
Fives	4'	6'	5'	3'
Swimming	3'	6'667	2'	6'133
Gymnastics	6'221	6'2	6'348	6'23
External Examinations	36'	20'	13'	10'
School Work	30'	26'	16'	32'
Conduct	72'	73'	58'	77'
Prefects	9'	8'	4'	4'
Total	244'504	215'1	207'348	203'846

Pictured: Points scored by houses in the first house competition, July 1924

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Sports facilities – maximising revenue

Rethinking sports facilities to take advantage of their potential involves several strategies to enhance their use, generate revenue, and improve community engagement. Architect, Peter Baker, examines how a fresh perspective on the design of sports facilities can help create revenue and opportunities that did not previously exist.

Traditionally, the primary purpose of school sports facilities is for use by students during the school day, with community users being a secondary user group at the weekend. Community use varies from traditional out-of-school-hours, largely comprising teams ranging from grassroots to professional level, through to memberships more akin to a sports centre or gym where users access the facilities throughout the week, around block-booking by the school. The third most significant use is during school holidays by local and international providers.

Those that work best have clear safeguarding and security arrangements, have good access to support facilities such as parking and hospitality, and are safe and attractive places to be. All-weather and indoor sports facilities are clearly able to be used most intensively, however grass can be improved with lower cost to increase capacity for use.

Schools could take a fresh look at the potential of making small changes that can bring big rewards in terms of making facilities work as a new revenue stream. One example of this is reviewing and streamlining the school use to provide larger blocks of times for external users which become more 'useful' or

user-friendly to attract a greater membership.

This is achievable through market research to discover if there are sports that are becoming popular in an area or that are already popular, but lack facilities. At our practice we have seen significant increases in cricket amongst girls and women in recent years. Sports such as padel tennis entering the sporting landscape with hockey, football and rugby are always crying out for more space, in particular all-weather surfaces with lighting. A feasibility study would test a school for options to upgrade, remodel or add new facilities. This can be costed to enable return on investment to be understood.

An example of increased use is a recent development called a 'Gen 2' pitch or court. This was developed with a wider range of sporting bodies than previously for MUGAs (Multi-Use Games Areas). These primarily allow tennis, hockey, lacrosse and tennis to share a surface with football and futsal using it recreationally.

Funding and planning are the main hurdles we find impeding the construction of facilities; however, creative approaches can be tested in feasibility studies to maximise the function of sports facilities, with a safe pair of hands needed to guide

projects over the hurdles. Planning hurdles are occasionally exacerbated by misconceptions, such as lower sports lights being better at reducing glare for neighbours when in reality taller columns allow lights to point towards the surface of the pitch and not towards the neighbours. Modern lighting is also far more energy efficient, and controls its spread of light with a range of options for brightness, housings and 'colour temperature'. National governing bodies may have funds to enable sports improvements, or formal relationships with teams or clubs may enable partnerships to be fostered to share costs with benefits for all.

Refurbishments or upgrades can be lower cost options while adding functionality, for example 2G and 3G synthetic pitch surfaces need replacing over 12–15-year cycles at which point the specification of carpet could be changed to increase the number of sports that can be played. Lighting is often something that is compromised by the planning process, but the technological advances mentioned could well unlock previously intractable issues.

Many of the schools we work with are mature organisations with a great depth of knowledge and experience of their facilities and planning context, but a fresh perspective can help unlock a problem or create opportunities that did not previously exist.

This was the case with St John's Marlborough, Wiltshire, where we undertook a feasibility study for one brief, which evolved into a facility that unlocked space and timetabling. The site was originally designated for a full-sized all-weather pitch when the school was rebuilt in the mid-2000s. A Sixth Form was built on part of the land in the meantime: that left three-quarters of the space for future



Peter Baker

sports. We tested the space for sports pitches, games courts and covered courts, to find the most efficient use of the area. The covered courts were tendered as a Design & Build to a specialist contractor who offered a, relatively, low-cost option to upgrade the cladding to become a sports hall, which increased the functionality significantly. The placement of the building was carefully considered in relation to student supervision and the approach to the school reception. The space was able to accommodate a two-court Multi-Use Games Area, which was placed at the edge of the site as the safeguarding line framing a much-needed student social space that relates to both the main school and the Sixth Form. The planning constraints were significant, with a nearby SSSI Bat Roost, being outside of the town boundary and within a National Landscape (formerly known as AONBs). Lighting and visual impact were key to these constraints which we carefully designed to prevent harm to the bats, and we reduced the visibility with colour studies for the building, all demonstrated within a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment.

Ultimately, schools are natural focal points for communities. Their large spaces, halls, theatres, gyms, sports halls and the like can be used by any number of clubs and community groups. Fostering such relationships can bring multiple benefits to a school, beyond the financial, such as greater understanding within the wider community and opportunities for students/pupils and staff.



Hockey at Epsom College, Surrey

Peter is Director of Landscape Architecture at NVB Architects and leads a team of landscape architects specialising in schools www.nvbarchitects.co.uk



Equestrian centre opening

Leweston School, Dorset, has officially opened the Leweston Chedington Riding Academy. This facility is set to provide a wide range of opportunities for students both within the curriculum and as an extra-curricular activity. It will also provide a home for the Leweston Equestrian team who have topped the SW Regional NSEA Pointes League for seven consecutive years.

The Academy features:

- 20 spacious stables designed to provide the best care and comfort for horses.
- A flood-lit arena, offering year-round training and competition opportunities.
- A dedicated classroom, enhancing equestrian education through theory and practical integration.

The Riding Academy will also offer livery and riding packages exclusively for students, alongside a range of camps, lessons, and arena hire

Pictured: Chris Burton cutting the ribbon

available to the wider community. The school has introduced BTEC Equine Studies in Sixth Form with six students forming the first cohort, and all of Year 7 and 8 have the opportunity to use the Academy as part of the curriculum.

The Centre was formally opened by Chris Burton, Australian equestrian and Olympic Silver medallist in individual eventing at Paris 2024. It included tours of the facility, and an opportunity to meet the team behind this initiative.

Headmaster, John Paget-Tomlinson, commented: "The Leweston Chedington Riding Academy represents a significant step forward for Leweston School. It is not just an equestrian facility; it is a hub for passion, dedication, and development. We are thrilled to provide this opportunity to our students and look forward to welcoming the wider community to enjoy all that the Academy has to offer."



Olympic target

Eva D, a 13-year-old student from Stephen Perse Cambridge, has been selected to join Archery GB's Youth National Talent Development Programme, taking the first step in her journey to compete at the Olympics.

The young athlete is one of only a few nationwide to be invited to join the initiative. The programme

Pictured: Stephen Perse Cambridge student, Eva D, loading her bow
Photo Credit: Archery GB

prepares high performing archers to compete at Olympic level. Participants benefit from residential training camps bringing together the UK's most talented competitors to develop their form and technique with specialist workshops and strength and conditioning sessions. Eva will also receive regular one-to-one training with a national archery coach.

County selections



Nine female students from Lord Wandsworth College, Hampshire, have received call-ups to county cricket sides. The girls, aged between 11 and 18, have been selected for a combination of the Hampshire and Berkshire County Pathways.

Lord Wandsworth College continues to remain committed to the development of cricket facilities at the school, recently creating a girls' cricket training area as well as completing the refurbishment of 20 outdoor cricket nets, and will be unveiling

Pictured: LWC's county cricketers, alongside Headmaster, Adam Williams
Photo credit: Lord Wandsworth College

a new Head of Cricket in the new year.

LWC Headmaster, Adam Williams, added, "The transformation of LWC's cricket provision in the last decade has mirrored that of the professional game, matching innovation, widening access and creating joy and adventure around the sport for both girls and boys. We're excited for the future and the opportunities open to all here, as well as being deeply committed to supporting the game in the region for all pupils, not only those at LWC."

Border Shield victory



Monmouth School's 1st XV rugby team have claimed a 33-20 victory over Malvern in the Border Shield clash at Sixways Stadium, Worcester, overturning a 15-7 halftime deficit to claim the trophy, with two second half tries from Luke Daniels and a further try from Captain Harry Dawes.

Monmouth's travelling supporters, numbering two coachloads of students and staff, provided encouragement throughout the match, further fuelling the team's efforts.

Pictured: Monmouth School's 1st XV rugby team in action

England Netball School Nationals



The U14 netballers from Felsted School, Essex, have won through to the regional stage of the England Netball School Nationals for the first time in the school's history.

The girls showed their talent in seven 15-minute matches against some of the best local teams in the Essex County round, held at New Hall, securing top spot in a tricky pool before moving on to face Southend High School in the semi-finals, and New Hall School in the finals. Although Felsted put

Pictured: Felsted's U14 netballers

in a valiant effort, favourites New Hall lived up to their billing and took the title.

Felsted Goal Attack and Goal Defence Freya R was named Player of the Final for her performance in both attack and defence.

The regional round of the national competition takes place in February at Stanborough School in Hertfordshire, where Felsted will meet teams from Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Thurrock.

Squad selections



Several sports players from Bolton School Boys' Division, Lancashire, have been selected for regional and national football and rugby squads.

Five Year 8 boys have been selected for the Independent Schools Football Association

North West Under 13 side. Noah, Benji, Matthew, Stefan and Rhys will represent the region at the national ISFA tournament at Easter.

Brothers Oscar (Year 10) and Oliver (Year 12) have also recently represented the ISFA National sides, while Year 9 students Daniel and Harry have also been selected

Pictured: The Year 8 boys who have been selected for the ISFA North West Under 13 side
Photo credit: Bolton School Boys' Division

for upcoming Under 14 ISFA National camps. Kieran (Year 11) attended St George's Park, the National Football Centre, at the end of December.

Seven Year 10 students have also been selected for the Sale Sharks Under 15 Player Development Group (PDG), formerly known as the Sale Sharks Development Player Programme (DPP). Chris, Oliver, David, Frank and Daniel will train with the Manchester Development Group, where Bolton School Rugby Coach Tim Barlow will be coaching. Max and George will train with the Merseyside and Lancashire groups.

Truce Tournament

Year 7 Bradford Grammar School (BGS) student, Ben Collinson, has represented Manchester City Under 12s at the Premier League Christmas Truce Tournament in Ypres, Belgium. The tournament commemorates the Christmas Truce of 1914.

The Truce Tournament brought teams together from across Europe and included Under 12 academy teams from clubs across England, such as Arsenal, Liverpool, Newcastle United and Southampton, who, like Manchester City, earned their places through qualifying events.

Alongside matches, Ben took part in cultural activities, including a wreath-laying ceremony at the Menin Gate and an immersive experience of life in World War 1 trenches.

On the pitch, Manchester City defeated Bayer Leverkusen 5-0 and Liverpool 2-0. They also secured a 1-1 draw against Southampton, who narrowly finished above them to win the tournament.

Pictured: BGS pupil and Man City U12 goalie Ben Collinson lays a wreath at the Menin Gate



Premier League clubs also participated in the educational 'Power in Pals - The Football Battalion' project, completing missions to promote community unity. As a result, Brentford, Brighton & Hove Albion and Middlesbrough earned additional spots in the tournament. They were joined by European teams Anderlecht, Genk, Bayer Leverkusen and Toulouse, representing nations historically linked to the Ypres region during the First World War.

Football scholarship



Year 10 student, Fraser Widdop, from Bede's Senior School, East Sussex, has signed an early scholarship deal with Premier League club Brighton & Hove Albion.

Fraser, who regularly plays above his age group, will be a signed scholar up until the end of U18s.

Bede's football coaches are working closely with Brighton & Hove Albion in order to ensure

Pictured: Fraser Widdop at Brighton & Hove Albion
Photo credit: Brighton & Hove Albion

that Fraser's development is being supported in the most effective and meaningful way.

Director of Football at Bede's, David Caryer, said "We are incredibly proud of Fraser. This early scholarship offer is a testament to his hard work and commitment. We are excited to support him as he embarks on this exciting chapter in his footballing journey."

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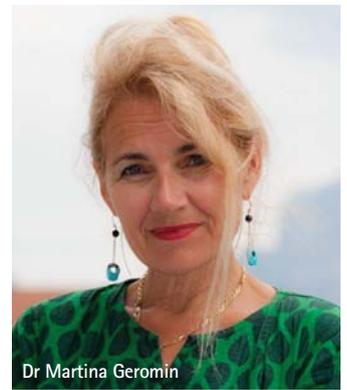
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BEFORE

AFTER
Beaconsfield High School

Personalised learning: Exploring new educational pathways

With the educational landscape shifting, academic, Dr Martina Geromin, asks what needs to change in order to best equip children for the modern world, especially in light of tuition fees increasing at universities and many students taking new pathways away from degrees.



Dr Martina Geromin

The world of education is fast-paced and ever-evolving and young people today are quite rightly challenging the status quo; yet as schools we are perhaps guilty of not moving quickly enough to keep up with the changes afoot. We only have to look at the latest stats across the UK education sector as a whole to see that more and more young people are refusing to engage with or attend school, and the number of children being home schooled has risen, as has the number who are struggling to access the inclusive educational support they need. Add to this the VAT being imposed on independent school fees and the projected surplus of children coming into state schools as a result, and it is easy to see how these numbers could escalate. If education is to truly cater to all children, I believe the way day-to-day schooling and current educational pathways are viewed needs some adjustment.

As independent schools this presents us with a huge opportunity to lead as ambassadors for change and to pave the way for the future of education. Most schools would agree that the focus should be on the individual child and how we can best equip them for the modern world, but that does mean making difficult decisions – which could be from re-modelling the current curriculum, to personalising learning approaches at a more granular level to suit each specific child. Education is about self-discovery. Every child has their own compass when it comes to personal development so schooling must be flexible and fit for purpose for today's evolving world.

Dr Martina Geromin is an academic and Co-founder of School Beyond Limitations.

Encouraging conscious leaders

Young people today are overloaded and overwhelmed: the volume of biased and fake information they have access to in the palm of their hand is beyond confusing. They need to know how to ask the right questions, how to analyse what they read in a mindful way, how to recognise what fact and fiction is and where those lines might blur. This can only happen if young people are equipped with the skills that allow them to safely navigate a digitally driven world. While academic excellence is important, young people also need the soft skills to understand how to access and use the knowledge they have acquired.

A good example of this is two primary school pupils, aged just six and eight years, who channelled their passion for designing unique bracelets. They took their idea further by creating a business plan, setting up a website, and engaging the entire school community to offer their bracelets as thoughtful Christmas gifts. Meanwhile, a 17-year-old student was also inspired by this model of learning and developing soft skills and was driven by the belief that he could foster widespread prosperity and modernisation from a schooling perspective, so he reached out directly to politicians and investors to advocate for this kind of transformative educational approach in schools. These examples highlight the entrepreneurial spirit, global vision, and impact-driven mindset cultivated by equipping young people with the freedom to explore their passions.

Young people are also often driven by a desire to do things differently and are keen to make an impact on the world. They want to be in control of designing their learning too, which in turn will help them to become conscious leaders of their own lives. To support this, our teaching and learning methods could be adapted in a way that frees up the individual pupil to find a pathway that works for them and one that is tailored more closely to specific needs and abilities.

We also need to lean more heavily into personal interests. Every person is unique with different goals, dreams and passions. As such, mentoring is key to the future of providing a holistic education. Allowing time to coach, mentor and support every individual child lays the foundations for a safe and secure environment where pupils feel able to make mistakes. This goes against the often-toxic culture of social media where everything has to be 'perfect' or at least be seen to be. Life is full of imperfections and education needs to embrace this.

Thematic approach to personalised learning

When looking to deliver a more personalised experience at school, a project-driven thematic approach to learning can be really helpful in demonstrating how different subjects translate across each other. This could be achieved with a focus on personal interests, specific project work on a chosen topic and also through teamwork and collaboration. For example, on a basic level, a child could embark on a project about the Amazon Rainforest and utilise maths when calculating population, size or

numbers of animals. Likewise, describing the environment itself down to the sensory detailing would help with English Language skills or sketching images would nurture creativity.

Immersing children in a variety of different environments while tapping into things they are interested in also deepens their knowledge and understanding and personalises their experience. Project-based learning can also help to equip students with the creativity, entrepreneurial and problem-solving skills they need to navigate life's opportunities and challenges.

Most schools would agree that a spoon-fed education doesn't work. We want to challenge and inspire our pupils' curiosity. The question we should be asking is: what is the pupil interested in? Then we need to allow them the space to explore that. Learning does and should come in all shapes and sizes because we are essentially giving young people the competence and readiness for their future life which will be unique to them – how they get there is important. Learning has to be engaging, purposeful and allow children the opportunity to bring out the true essence of themselves within their discoveries.

In summary, the 'traditional' educational landscape is changing. If the recent headlines around the rise in university tuition fees are anything to go by, it is clear that more young people are choosing new pathways beyond school and college, and it is no longer about fitting into a specific category. Learning is about enrichment and ultimately reaching individual personal goals, whatever that might look like.



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