

The Independent Schools Magazine



The professional journal for Management & Staff

schoolblazer

Quality
without complexity.

Excellent



★ Trustpilot

schoolblazer.info | info@schoolblazer.com | 01832 280011

UNIFORM + SPORTSWEAR

schoolblazer

In this issue...



New Rugby Academy

The High School of Glasgow has announced the launch of a new Rugby Academy from August 2026, marking a significant investment in the future of sport at the school and creating a new high-performance pathway programme to the professional game.

Designed for pupils who demonstrate potential and commitment to the game, the Rugby Academy will combine academic study with an elite structured performance programme.

Alongside the launch of the Academy, the school has also entered into a new partnership with Glasgow Warriors, becoming an official training partner.

As part of this agreement, the school's Anniesland campus will host a pre-season fixture between Glasgow Warriors and Bath Rugby. The campus will also be used by the Glasgow Warriors women's squad as an additional training venue ahead of the new season.

The wider development has been supported through collaboration with Scottish Rugby and their principal partner Arnold Clark. This will, in part, contribute to new on-site gyms and strength and conditioning facilities.

Alongside the Rugby Academy, the school is also launching the HSOG Warrior Programme – an out-of-school rugby performance programme running three evenings each week and open to both High School pupils and young players from across the wider community.

Pictured: Rector of HSOG Antonia Berry, with John Clark, Chief Commercial Officer at Arnold Clark, and Morris the Arnold Clark mascot at the Anniesland ground

Cover background

Mobile phones in schools

With the news the government is planning an amendment to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to put existing mobile phone guidance on a more statutory footing, find out what some schools are doing around smartphone use in their settings and how this is positively impacting school life. See pages 6-8.

Switching off

- 06 Reclaiming focus with a phone-free school day
- 07 A digital solution to a digital problem
- 08 Mobile phone policy – positively impacting school life

04 VAT on fees – the impact on pupils and the economy

Thoughts from SCIS CEO Lorraine Davidson

05 Helping young people find their political voice

How schools can empower pupils to engage with politics

10 Leaner learning

Crafting a curriculum that cuts costs not quality

14 The power of letting children build their own traditions

How handing responsibility for a charity event to pupils is growing school culture

24 Profile

In conversation with Mike Godwin

29 Putting heart into partnerships

Developing meaningful service activities for students and the community

36 Nurturing hidden talent

Defining and monitoring talent – why broadening matters

43 Reconnecting with nature

How learning outside the classroom benefits pupils' personal and academic development

Plus

- 12 Key strategies for supporting teenagers through exams
- 18 Inspiring young people through academic festivals
- 22 MicroBotics – launch of national competition
- 32 Music, Drama & Dance feature
- 34 The Bloxham Sustainability Challenge
- 40 From choice to controversy – private education and the new parental dilemma
- 42 Changing Faces... Changing Places
- 44 Sport feature

Contact us; Editorial Advisory Board – page 46

Is your school mentioned?

Schools featured in this issue include:

Beech Hall School; Bloxham School; Bolton School Girls' Division; Cokethorpe School; Dulwich Prep & Senior School; Durham High School; Eastbourne College; Exeter School; Fairholme Prep School; Haberdashers' Monmouth School; Hereford Cathedral School; Haileybury; The High School of Dundee; The High School of Glasgow; Highfield and Brookham School; Kimbolton School; The King's School, Gloucester; The King's School, Worcester; Leweston School; Littlegarth School; Lord Wandsworth College; Loretto School; Loughborough Grammar School; Malvern College; Merchiston Castle School; Monkton Prep School; Mulberry Bush Nursery; Myddelton College; Oakfields Prep School; Queen's College Prep School; The Queen's School, Chester; Radnor Sevenoaks Prep; RGS Worcester; St Andrew's Prep, East Sussex; St Edward's School, Oxford; Sedbergh Prep School; Sedbergh School; Sevenoaks School; Solihull School; Somerhill Independent Prep School; Stonyhurst; Terrington Prep School; Windermere School; Wrekin College; Wycliffe College

"The amount of VAT collected is soon expected to be less than the additional costs imposed on the state sector, resulting in a net loss of £16 million to public finances by next year."

VAT on fees – the impact on pupils and the economy

A recently published economic report that was commissioned by the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) has, along with the benefits independent schools bring to the Scottish economy, assessed the impact the imposition of VAT on fees has had on pupils, the economy, and taxpayers. Discussed at the SCIS annual conference last month, SCIS CEO, Lorraine Davidson, outlines some of the key report findings.



Lorraine Davidson

The Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) recently held its annual conference at Murrayfield, Edinburgh. One of the highlights was a panel comprising the education spokespeople of every main political party contesting the Scottish elections.

Just days before they faced the verdict from the electorate, these leading politicians faced an audience of independent school heads, bursars and chairs. Even a couple of years ago, the idea of our sector being given this level of priority from politicians across the political spectrum would have been dismissed as wishful thinking.

The backdrop to the conference was the publication of an independent Economic Impact report commissioned by SCIS which set out in stark terms the damaging impact of VAT on school fees for all pupils, the economy, and taxpayers.

The report from BiGGAR Economics revealed the imposition of VAT on independent school fees, far from raising money for the state sector, has cost the Scottish economy almost £60 million and 900 jobs in the year since the policy was introduced.

Pupil numbers across Scotland's independent schools have fallen by 9% since the education tax was introduced. The impact has been particularly marked at key entry points, with a 13% decline in Primary 1 and a 15% decline in S1.

As a result, the amount of VAT collected is soon expected to be less than the additional costs imposed on the state sector, resulting in a net loss of £16 million to public finances by next year. If the current trends continue, by 2038 that figure is projected to rise to £181 million.

Had pupil numbers remained at pre-VAT levels, the sector would now be worth £727million – £58 million higher – and would support 11,510 jobs – 900 more than today.

Unless we can arrest the decline, the economic impact of SCIS schools is projected to drop to £441 million by 2039, with staff numbers falling to 6,980 – a loss of £227 million and 3,610 jobs.

However, even on these projections, it is clear that the sector would remain a significant contributor to the economy.

The introduction of VAT has caused significant harm, but our schools are doing what they do best, responding to the current challenges with creativity and determination, adapting so they can continue to deliver excellent education and pastoral care for their pupils and continue to make a positive contribution far beyond their own school gates.

How the economy and the wider education system respond to the extra pressure it has heaped on them at a time of significant strain is less clear.

The reason politicians in Scotland are taking notice of our sector is because we responded to the VAT on fees policy with evidence and a clear narrative focused on the impact, not on our schools, but through the lens of their constituents and their local economies.

As the dust settles on the Holyrood elections and a new administration is formed, it will face the daunting prospect of plugging a £5 billion shortfall in its budget by the end of the decade.

Spending constraints on public services will tighten, civil servants will be under pressure to find new

ways of delivering and the public will demand improvements in education and other services.

Against this backdrop, it was notable that only the Scottish Green Party manifesto contained a policy to further increase taxes on our schools, as a way of improving state education. It is likely the other parties are beginning to wake up to the fact that a sector currently worth £668 million and supporting 10,590 jobs, which is contracting because of a punitive education tax, is not one which can withstand further financial assault without more pain for the economy.

In the interests of all pupils in Scotland, we are calling on the new administration to work even more closely with the independent sector.

There is an opportunity to build on the already strong collaboration with a sector that makes a huge contribution to the Scottish economy, and to the education system in which we are already seen as a valued partner.

AI will change the workplaces of the future, which today's pupils will inhabit. Our schools can trial groundbreaking curricular initiatives from which all pupils can benefit. The number of pupils who need support for additional learning needs is rising; our mainstream schools have a strong reputation for providing this

support, and our specialist schools have deep expertise on how to care for young people who deserve the greatest levels of support due to their complex needs. There is excellent work taking place in our state schools too.

To give all pupils the best chance of success, independent and state schools need to work together to share experiences and best practice. They already do that in many local areas, but the Scottish government could send a signal to the state sector that it values this close working and encourage more of it.

Our boarding schools generate more than £43 million a year for the Scottish economy in international income, and there is the potential for that figure to rise.

The Scottish government has a network of offices around the world which could help promote the attractiveness of boarding in Scotland.

Instead of policies targeting one section of Scottish education, politicians could support all parts of the rich tapestry of Scottish education.

It is time to work in partnership with our sector at a strategic level in the interests of all pupils and celebrate a system where choice, collaboration and common sense prevail over ideology.



The SCIS conference panel session in progress

To read the BiGGAR Economics report in full visit www.scis.org.uk/facts-and-figures/economic-impact-report

Helping young people find their political voice

With elections this month and research still suggesting that young people feel disengaged and do not know how to get involved in politics, Senior Deputy Head of Loretto School, East Lothian, Rachael Delaney, discusses the state of political education in schools right now, why it must evolve to meet the needs of young people today, and what schools can do to empower pupils to engage with, and take an interest in, political issues in 2026.

This month saw elections happening across the country, yet over a decade on from gaining the vote, research from Young Scot suggests 52% of young people in Scotland feel disengaged and unsure how to get involved in politics¹. With 16- and 17-year-olds in England potentially voting soon, this raises an important question for all of us: how do we engage the next generation in politics in the long term?

Young people are often more thoughtful, passionate and engaged than they are given credit for. They care about climate change, equality, conflict, opportunity and the future. But too often, politics can feel distant, intimidating or inaccessible. Our role as educators is to change that by bringing pupils into the political conversation and helping them to understand both the power of democracy and the importance of their voice.

Teaching students the power of their voice

Although more than half of young people feel disengaged, 82% say it is important to be involved in politics. So why the disparity? From my experience, the issue is less about interest and more about confidence. Too often, pupils feel that politics is something they are not yet ready to take part in.

Schools have an important role in shifting this perception by helping pupils understand democratic systems and how, as individuals, we all contribute to sustaining them. Teachers play a vital role in showing that everyone, regardless of age, has a voice – and that how they use it matters.

This begins in the everyday classroom. When open conversation is encouraged, questions are welcomed. Pupils feel able to explore ideas without fear of judgement. Over time, this makes it easier for them to engage in political discussion beyond the classroom.

Making politics matter

Taxation, pensions, infrastructure – these are the terms that dominate election cycles and can feel distant, particularly without lived experience.

But politics is already part of their lives. It is in the opportunities available to them, their communities and the future they imagine for themselves. When pupils see those connections, politics becomes less intimidating and more meaningful.

Schools can encourage this by linking lessons to current events or inviting pupils to share views on issues they already care about. Politics does not need to begin with party manifestos or parliamentary sittings. It can begin with: “what matters to you, and why?”

Politics, at its best, is about understanding the world around us and working with others to improve it.

At Loretto, initiatives such as Model United Nations (MUN) help bring this to life. Pupils explore global issues, develop confidence in public speaking, work collaboratively and gain insight into how decisions are made.

What continually impresses me is not only the passion pupils bring to global issues, but how they learn to respectfully challenge opposing, and sometimes polarised, views. That is invaluable for any young person learning what citizenship really means.

Teaching media literacy

The way pupils encounter politics has evolved significantly in the last decade. With around 75% accessing news through social media, young people are navigating a constant flow of information. And, while this brings greater access, it also presents challenges. Misinformation and unverified content can make it difficult to know what to trust.

Pupils need to know how to question what they see online,

compare sources, recognise bias and form views with care. Just as importantly, they need the confidence to say, “I am not sure yet,” and the curiosity to keep learning.

At Loretto, we encourage pupils to engage with a range of news outlets, question what they see online and discuss current affairs openly. This supports the formation of personal views, while recognising potential inaccuracies. Creating room for these conversations helps young voters to feel informed, rather than overwhelmed, by what they encounter.

Be a role model

As educators, how we behave in the classroom matters just as much as what we teach. We set the tone for how pupils learn to engage with the world. The way we respond to different viewpoints, encourage discussion and model respect, empathy and curiosity all influence how conversations unfold.

Equally important is the range of perspectives pupils are exposed to. Introducing diverse voices expands horizons, and ensuring leadership is visible in different forms can have a lasting impact in broadening aspirations and challenging assumptions.



As a senior female leader, I feel this acutely. Female representation helps girls see that leadership is realistic and within reach. It makes women in leadership feel normal, rather than exceptional.

Making space for these perspectives helps pupils understand that there is no single way to lead, and that varied viewpoints strengthen decision-making.

Young people are not powerless. In a world that can feel overwhelming, children need to know that they can effect change, and that their voice matters. When schools nurture that belief – alongside the confidence and skills to act on it – they don't just prepare students to participate in democracy; they equip them to shape the future.

BSA Boarding Award

Monkton Prep School, Somerset, has been awarded the Supporting Junior Boarders Award at the 60th Anniversary of the Boarding Schools' Association (BSA) Supporting Excellence Awards.

The award was given in recognition of the school's research-led approach to boarding induction, developed to support both pupils and their families through every stage of the boarding journey.

At the heart of this work is Houseparent, Sarah Winfield, who explored boarding induction as part of her BSA Boarding Pictured: Boarders at Monkton Prep



Leadership Diploma action research project. Her research identified the importance of emotional preparation for the whole family to ensure a successful transition to boarding, and the need for this preparation to begin well before a child arrives and continue long afterwards.

¹ Fake news fuels political disconnect among Scotland's young voters, Young Scot: <https://youngscot.net/news-database/fake-news-fuels-political-disconnect-among-scotland-s-young-voters>

Reclaiming focus: why a phone-free school day is an investment in learning and wellbeing

Following research and consultation with both parents and students, The Queen's School, Chester, has recently announced plans to introduce a phone-free school day, supported by the use of pouches. Head of the school, Joanne Keville, explains how the decision has been driven by concerns around "focus fragmentation" and student wellbeing, with the aim of creating a more distraction-free learning environment.



Joanne Keville

Recently, Baroness Jacqui Smith confirmed that the government will amend the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to give legal force to a phone-free school day in England. Ofsted will assess school policies as part of every inspection. The direction of travel is now settled.

For colleagues who have not yet acted, the question is no longer whether to introduce a phone-free policy. It is how to introduce one that does more than satisfy a regulator. A ban delivered by statute will get phones out of pockets. Whether it delivers the benefit a school is hoping for is a different conversation and that is the one I want to have here.

At The Queen's School, we made the decision to go phone-free during this academic year, well before the most recent statutory direction was confirmed. Since the start of summer term, pupils place their phones in lockable pouches on arrival and unlock them on departure. The policy was the result of months of consultation with parents, staff and pupils and was championed by our Deputy Head of Pastoral, Ashley Eaton, who joined us in September.

We did not wait for the law to catch up because the case for action was already clear. A phone

in a blazer pocket does not need to buzz to take a girl out of her lesson. The research we drew on, including Jonathan Haidt's 'The Anxious Generation', made the point uncomfortably plain: even an unchecked notification can fragment focus and quietly raise stress. If a pupil has glanced at her phone at break, the cognitive residue follows her into the next period. A culture in which everyone is permanently reachable is, by definition, a culture in which nobody is fully present.

What this means in practice is that the benefit of a phone-free day comes not from the absence of the phone, but from the conditions a school chooses to build in its place. Two schools can implement the same pouch and end up with very different outcomes. The difference is whether the policy is adopted as compliance or as pastoral care.

We have built ours firmly as the latter. We are not anti-technology, far from it. Our girls need to be confident, capable users of digital tools when they leave us. That is precisely why we owe them an environment in which their attention is not being quietly contested all day long. Removing the phone is not about taking something away. It is about giving

something back: the space to think without interruption, to talk without performing and to be in a room with other people properly.

We expect this to matter particularly in an all-girls environment. Our pupils are already willing to put their hand up, try something new and back each other. The pressure that comes from constant online comparison sits directly on top of those instincts. Lift it for seven hours a day and the ceiling rises with it.

Our founding school motto, 'Honour Wisdom', is the lens we apply to all of this. Wellbeing and academic excellence are not in tension at Queen's: they reinforce each other and digital health is now plainly a part of pastoral care.

For colleagues planning their own rollout in the wake of the government's announcement, three things stand out from our experience so far.

Bring your community with you. Engage parents, staff and pupils early. Pupil focus groups in particular were invaluable. Our girls were more thoughtful about the question than we anticipated, and shaping the policy with them rather than for them changed the conversation at home.

Lead with purpose, not policy. Schools that introduce a phone-free day in response to legislation will meet more resistance than those that introduce it as a pastoral choice. The new statutory requirement is a floor, not a ceiling. The conversation heads need to have with their communities is the broader one about attention, wellbeing and learning.

Expect a settling-in period. Cultural change of this kind takes a term, not a week. Plan it as you would any significant pastoral initiative, with consistent staff messaging and a clear point of contact for parents.

A phone-free school day is not a step backwards. It is, in our view, one of the most considered steps a school can take right now. The technology is not going anywhere. Our job is to give the next generation the practice they need to be in charge of it, rather than the other way round.

Because when the noise drops, what is left is what we are here to provide: clarity, confidence, and the conditions to think.

Removing phones at night

As debate continues following Westminster's recent decision to ban mobile phones in schools, Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh, has announced it is taking its own approach to managing screen use.

The school has their younger boarders hand in their phones and tablets each evening before bed, removing the temptation to

scroll, message or game late into the night.

For Sixth Form students, phones remain with them but the school's Wi-Fi switches off at 11pm, marking the end of the digital day. The policy forms part of a wider effort to encourage healthier digital habits and better sleep routines.

The move comes amid growing concern about the impact smartphones are having on teenagers' sleep and attention.

The school has also introduced The Bothy, a deliberately screen-free social space where pupils can spend time together without devices, playing board games, reading, listening to music or simply talking.



Pictured: Pupils handing in mobile devices to house parent

A digital solution to a digital problem

RGS Worcester have been piloting an app which has been designed to reduce smartphone distraction while still allowing essential access when/ if needed. Now rolled out across the school, Assistant Head, Director of Innovation and RGSW International, John Jones, and RGS Worcester Senior Deputy Head, Lloyd Beecham, explain more about this new approach and what the outcomes from it have been.

At RGS Worcester, we have always been committed to helping pupils use technology responsibly. As mobile phones and social media continue to have a profound impact on wellbeing and development, we recognise the importance of reducing distraction, promoting balance and safeguarding our community, while also teaching self-regulation.

Our policy has long required phones to be switched off during the school day. Yet policy alone, as many schools will recognise, is not enough. Compliance varied, enforcement absorbed pastoral time, and in unsupervised spaces the rules were difficult to uphold. The issue was not a lack of expectation; it was a lack of consistency.

This is why, in 2024/25, we introduced Blackout, a mobile phone management app, initially across Years 7 to 9 before extending it to all year groups. The thinking was straightforward: Blackout provides a digital solution to a digital problem. It reduces smartphone distraction while still allowing essential access when needed.

We have not banned smartphones entirely, and for good reason. They matter for pupil safety when travelling to and from school, and provide reassurance for parents through tracking and collection arrangements. For older pupils in particular, phones serve as payment devices, proof of identification and access to bus and train tickets. A blanket ban or collecting in phones at scale is impractical, and alternatives such as pouches are a step in the right direction but open to misuse and hacks. Blackout offers a far more effective and manageable solution, one that enforces our existing policy while actively promoting responsible use.

Each day at 8.30am, pupils' phones enter blackout mode, restricting apps beyond basic native functions. Devices are also

switched off at registration. In the event of an emergency or a medical requirement, pupils can exit Blackout using a code, which is logged by the school for follow-up. Crucially, the app does not track location, monitor content or collect personal usage data beyond minimal metadata. In a landscape where digital oversight can quickly raise concerns, this distinction proved fundamental to building trust with families.

Open communication with parents and pupils was key from the start. We addressed misconceptions about tracking and data, completed a full Data Protection Impact Assessment prior to launch, and invited families to live webinars throughout the process. Following the pilot, we had universal parental support for continuation, and for incoming Year 7 families the transition was seamless.

The rollout now covers all year groups, with a clear zero tolerance expectation: phones are neither used nor seen during the school day. Staff have also been reminded not to use their own phones publicly, which matters. Expectations only carry weight when they are modelled consistently by adults. The Sixth Form operates within its own framework, with phones permitted only in the Sixth Form Centre, reflecting the greater autonomy that comes with that stage of education.

The impact has been both immediate and sustained. Across the year, there were zero recorded phone-related behaviour incidents in Years 7 to 9. Confiscations, once routine, became rare. Safeguarding concerns linked to filming in private spaces were eliminated entirely. The most significant changes were in the spaces a policy alone could never fully reach: corridors, registration, social time and the quieter moments between lessons. Pupils simply talked more. One parent noted, "Since there was no mobile phone accessible, my son spent time chatting with friends."

Staff also noted that pupils arrived to lessons less distracted, and lesson pace benefitted as a result.

Pupils retain agency throughout. They can exit the app, but staff are notified on the dashboard when they do. Legitimate needs are accommodated without friction, and misuse is addressed through established pastoral systems. The framework creates what we think of as agency within accountability, the conditions in which genuine self-regulation can develop.

This approach sits within a broader vision of what technology should look like in a school. RGS Worcester holds Apple Distinguished School status, was the first school globally to receive Apple's AI Gold accreditation and has a new Innovation Centre currently under construction on site. We are deeply committed to digital learning. That is precisely why we take seriously the question of when and how devices are used. The aim is not



John Jones



Lloyd Beecham

to remove technology from young people's lives but to ensure it serves, rather than competes with, their education.

We will continue to review the impact, but the early signs are very promising. What matters most is finding an approach that balances wellbeing, safeguarding and focus while also supporting pupils to develop responsible habits that prepare them for life in a digital age. And so far, Blackout is delivering a solution that really works.

Improving pupil wellbeing

Cokethorpe School, Oxfordshire, says limiting phone use is already helping to improve pupil wellbeing.

The school strengthened its mobile phone policy in February 2024, building on a no-phone-use rule that had already been in place for more than 13 years.

The decision was prompted by growing awareness of the impact of smartphones and social media on pupil wellbeing, online safety and screen time habits.

With pupils already using Microsoft Surface devices for learning, the school found there was no need for mobile phones during the day.

Since introducing the updated policy, staff have seen positive changes in the school environment, particularly in pupils' social interaction and

engagement during the school day. Jonathan Stevens, Deputy Head at Cokethorpe School, said: "Our primary focus has always been pupil wellbeing and online safety. Giving young people the opportunity to step away from their devices allows them to connect more fully with each other and engage with all aspects of school life."

Parents were broadly supportive when the updated policy was introduced, while pupils were initially more reluctant. However, the school says attitudes have changed as awareness of the challenges associated with smartphones has increased.

The school has also introduced guidance for new Year 7 pupils to have a non-smartphone, with that becoming a requirement from this September.

Mobile phone policy – positively impacting school life

St Edward's School, Oxford, has had a mobile phone policy restricting the amount of time pupils can access their devices for several years. Warden of the school, Alastair Chirnside, reflects on the positive impacts implementing this has had on school life.



Alastair Chirnside

Against the backdrop of government-promised legislation to take smartphones out of the school setting nationwide, at St Edward's we can reflect on how our own clear smartphone policy has had a profoundly positive impact on school life. In short, we have seen participation in school activities increase across the board, we find pupils are more engaged with their learning and each other, and disciplinary incidents relating to online activity are reduced almost to none. Our pupils are also very significantly happier.

In 2022, we introduced a mobile phone policy at Teddies (as our school is also known) which set very clear restrictions on how much time across the week pupils had access to their devices. Before this introduction of the new policy, phones were not allowed in lessons, but the boundaries were otherwise less clear. The groundswell of feeling among teachers and boarding house staff was clear though: phones were getting in the way of meaningful pupil interactions, and they were not helping pupils to take up the opportunities available to them outside the classroom.

Our mobile phone policy is probably among the most restrictive in the world, and we make no apology for it. For pupils in Years 9 and 10, the school week is entirely mobile-free. There are carefully controlled WhatsApp windows across the day in which all pupils can contact

friends and family using the app on their school-issued laptops. Year 11 have access to their phones for two hours on a Tuesday and on a Thursday after school activities have finished and before Prep begins. The amount of time pupils have with their phones and WhatsApp relaxes in increments as the children move up the school. Sixth Form pupils are allowed their phones after lunch, but even the top two years must hand their phones in overnight every night during the week, protecting the all-important sleep routine. Day pupils hand in their phones on arrival at school and collect them as they leave. The policy is informed by the latest research. Even more importantly, it has children's wellbeing at its heart. Communication is still encouraged and there are plenty of opportunities to call home and to talk with friends and family over Zoom or via 'brick' phones or even the landlines, which we have re-installed in all boarding houses, and which are surprisingly well used. In that respect, we have gone back to the future.

The statistics we have speak for themselves. Since we introduced the new policy, we have seen a 25% increase in music lessons. Participation in dance classes and performances is higher too, with 230 dancers regularly taking lessons (which is more than a quarter of the school, 20% of them boys). The number of pupils coming to dance shows, concerts and plays

to support their friends is up by 50%. The range of sports available to pupils at Teddies has increased over the last three years in direct response to pupil requests, basketball and fencing among them. In the pre-Sixth Form years, nearly 50% of pupils take three or more additional sports activities, on top of timetabled sport, and the number of Teddies pupils representing their school has risen by 15% since the policy was put in place. It's now nearly 95%. Library book loans have risen every year, and they are up by a third since the policy was first introduced. Housemasters and housemistresses tell us that boarding house life is livelier, more interactive, more fun – simply better. Singing can be heard on buses to matches, board games are being pulled out of cupboards once more, and children are learning to enjoy downtime more and to enjoy the human art of interaction at a slower, calmer pace. The default 'reach for the phone' habit is broken – most of the time it's just not an option. We are perhaps most heartened by the results of our latest pupil survey: in the four years since the introduction of the new policy, it showed a 15% increase in the number of pupils who say that they feel happy 'all or most of the time' at school. So much has changed at Teddies in the last few years that there could be many other reasons, but we firmly believe that less time spent online, and more time spent interacting with each other, is the likely cause.

Crucially, the policy is not just about restricting access to technology. We know we must give our young people the skills and knowledge to navigate the online world as they move through school and out into the world beyond where technology, AI and digital advancements will be part of their lives. Digital wellbeing and citizenship education is incorporated into our curriculum, with a focus on delivering relevant lessons in the first two years at Teddies. When we first introduced the phone policy, this education helped us to build support for it, but now we find we do not need to build support – it is accepted and the reasons for it are increasingly understood by our pupils. Pupils know the boundaries and, while we remain ever vigilant for changing trends, disciplinary action for second phones and other breaches of the policy have reduced almost to none. The education programme covers topics including wellbeing, privacy, relationships, communication, cyberbullying and hate speech. Our intention is not to shut our children off from the digital world. Instead, we want to give them the time and the tools that they need to navigate it in their own way, making the very best of the resources they have access to – and with confidence and control. Parents love the policy for helping them to regain control of their children's screen time. It is one of the many reasons for which parents choose Teddies for their children.

Mobile phone ban

The Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) has announced that all 25 of its schools will be mobile phone-free environments from September 2026 for pupils up to Year 11.

The new policy provides a clear and consistent approach to mobile phone usage during the school day and builds on current guidance

and practices, with many GDST schools already operating mobile phone-free environments by providing a locker system or secure pouches for pupils.

Director of Education at the GDST, Dr Philip Purvis, commented: "All GDST schools already strongly advise against mobile phone usage

during the school day. However, there is a growing body of research showing the potential harms of mobile phones and social media use, along with recent large-scale studies highlighting the specific impact on teenage girls, from addiction to poor mental health and wellbeing. Taken together, the evidence points to the need

for practical measures to protect young people from these potential long-term risks.

"The GDST will be working closely with head teachers across its schools to ensure the policy is implemented effectively in time for September in line with each school's unique environment."



THE INDEPENDENT CHOICE FOR SCHOOL MINIBUSES

NEW FOR 2026

PEUGEOT BOXER L4 AUTOMATIC MINIBUS

ORDER TODAY

Premium, fully compliant minibuses delivering safety, reliability, and fixed budget peace of mind

- Fully Type Approved minibuses meeting all UK safety and compliance standards
- A choice of high-quality 9 - 17 seat vehicles, including accessible options
- 6 speed manual and NEW for 2026, 8 speed fully automatic options
- Flexible funding options with predictable whole-life costs
- New and Approved used minibuses to suit capital or lease budgets
- Nationwide demonstrations and long-term after-sales support
- D1 and B Licence minibuses
- Supporting Schools across the UK since 1982
- Vehicle Telematic Data options

Call today to arrange a quotation or a demonstration

Tel: 01202 827678 redkite-minibuses.com sales@redkite-minibuses.com

PEUGEOT FORD VAUXHALL



VEHICLE
CERTIFICATION
AGENCY
APPROVED PRODUCT

BVRLA
Quality Assured

VOSC
Vehicle Occupant Safety Centre



Leaner learning:

Crafting a curriculum that cuts costs, not quality

With the sector facing increased financial pressures, curriculum reform and rationalisation are becoming more commonplace as avenues to potentially reduce operational costs. But how can a more cost-effective curriculum be balanced against continuing to optimise the pupil experience? Acting Head & Deputy Head (Academic) at Wrekin College, Shropshire, Ben Smith, shares some of the lessons learned from their recent reform process.

Never has the debate surrounding curriculum reform been more pertinent in the independent sector. The 'triple whammy' of financial pressures currently facing independent schools, namely the introduction of VAT on fees, the removal of charitable business rates relief and the increase in employer National Insurance contributions, has focused senior leaders' minds like never before on creating the most cost-efficient curriculum models.

As the most significant expense for the majority of independent schools, curriculum review and rationalisation have become commonplace across the sector in recent years and play a central role in schools' efforts to reduce their operating costs. Research published in October last year by the Independent Schools Council confirmed that one in ten independent schools had already reduced the size of their curriculum in order to cut staffing costs. This trend is only set to continue with a subsequent survey of independent school headteachers carried out by The Heads' Conference suggesting that approximately one-third of private schools were planning to remove entire subjects from their curriculum.

Reducing the overall cost of curriculum delivery poses serious challenges for any school, but many of these difficulties are perhaps felt more keenly in the independent sector. The most obvious problem is justifying a reduction in the number of subjects a school teaches while simultaneously increasing the fees parents are asked to pay for what many, erroneously, but nevertheless

understandably, perceive to be a diminished educational product. Then there is the difficulty of maintaining parental confidence that an independent education continues to add substantially greater value to a child's educational development than the average state school offering, and thus remains worth the investment. Class sizes are a perennial bugbear of many parents and maintaining existing pupil to teacher ratios while concurrently reducing staff numbers presents an almost insoluble quandary. There is also the problem of continuing to provide the robust and well-rounded educational package that independent schools have long prided themselves on, combining academic learning with myriad opportunities in sport, music and the creative arts, each of which draws on the finite time and energies of a school's most expensive resource: its staff.

These challenges become harder to overcome against a backdrop of falling pupil numbers with Julie Robinson, the CEO of the ISC, warning less than six months ago that the pupil 'exodus' from independent schools was "worse than the government predicted". The scale of this exodus varies between estimates of 11,000 and 16,000 and is only likely to grow amid compounding financial pressures on schools and families alike. Restructuring a curriculum is therefore a delicate balancing act between the removal of subjects to make much-needed economies in staffing costs and compromising the perceived quality of a school's educational offering to the extent that the pupil roll begins to fall. Overly

aggressive curriculum remodelling can thereby become self-defeating, while too conservative an approach will prevent a school from achieving operational sustainability and futureproofing itself against the slings and arrows of a hostile financial environment.

It is beyond the scope of a single article to provide a comprehensive guide to reforming a whole school curriculum in the interests of reducing operational costs. Instead, what is offered here are some of the key lessons learned by a senior leader who has recently navigated the contentions and complexities of the remodelling process to achieve a more cost-effective curriculum while continuing to optimise the pupil experience.

The starting point for planning any curriculum restructure has to be a carefully considered, strategic decision regarding the subject areas that have the potential to yield a school savings. A number of factors should inform such a decision – in particular the popularity of each subject at both GCSE and in the sixth form, its importance in attracting new students into the school, how integral it is to the school's ethos and identity, and whether it provides an essential stepping stone for students, enabling them to progress to their chosen university course, apprenticeship or training route.

The last of these considerations proved paramount in the restructuring process we undertook as it was essential to reassure both pupils and parents that none of the curriculum changes we implemented would close off any future career pathway. While compromises in subject



choice would inevitably have to be made, they would in no sense disadvantage any pupil in successfully taking their next step after leaving school. Our now discontinued A Level Politics course offers a good case in point here. This relatively popular programme historically attracted a similar number of Sixth Form students at our school as our A Level in History. However, the fact that a significant proportion of our History programme covers 20th century Britain means that there is a great deal of analogous content with A Level Politics. The savings made by collapsing A Level Politics were therefore by no means to the detriment of students who were strongly encouraged to opt for A Level History in its place. The fact that many Russell Group universities arguably prefer students to have studied History to Politics at A Level when applying to study PPE, Law or Politics as an undergraduate added considerable weight to this argument.

The same approach was taken with our A Level Law course, which was removed on the grounds that History offers an equally credible alternative that teaches many of the same analytical skills, principally the ability to build persuasive arguments around an often disparate body of evidence which must first be critically evaluated. Similarly, A Level Accounting was discontinued as students still had access to Business Studies and Economics in its place. Identifying cognate subjects and agreeing a rationale behind removing one or more

of them proved one of the most important stages in our whole curriculum restructure.

When sharing our plans with pupils and parents, we placed great emphasis on the alternative subject pathways available to those whose intended subject choices had been removed from the curriculum. Where a subject occupied a fairly niche position within the curriculum and no alternative was readily available, we made provision for this subject to be embedded elsewhere in the school timetable. For example, our removal of Drama as a discrete subject from the Key Stage 3 curriculum did not prevent pupils from accessing it. Instead, the subject is now delivered within pupils' English lessons. In the same way, we have revised our History and Geography schemes of work in Key Stage 3 to incorporate some of the core components of Religious Studies, allowing us to reduce our Humanities staffing while continuing to equip pupils with a knowledge and understanding of the major world religions. In our Sixth Form, a 'textiles route'

through our Fine Art A Level has also saved staffing costs, enabling the removal of Textiles as a separate subject without reducing the diversity of the creative arts on our curriculum. While rationalising the curriculum by asking our staff to embed the teaching of a second subject into existing schemes of work has involved some investment in upskilling to ensure they possess the required knowledge and expertise, this has proven far less expensive than continuing to employ a team of specialist teachers.

Where there is simply no capacity to offer a specific subject, such as French in Key Stage 3, the school has adopted a more creative approach to its use of co-curricular time, which was hitherto dominated by sport, music and drama. From joining the school, pupils keen to pursue French are able to opt for a co-curricular French club, delivered by a member of our Modern Languages Department, which provides a grounding in the language and will prepare them for GCSE study by the time they reach Key

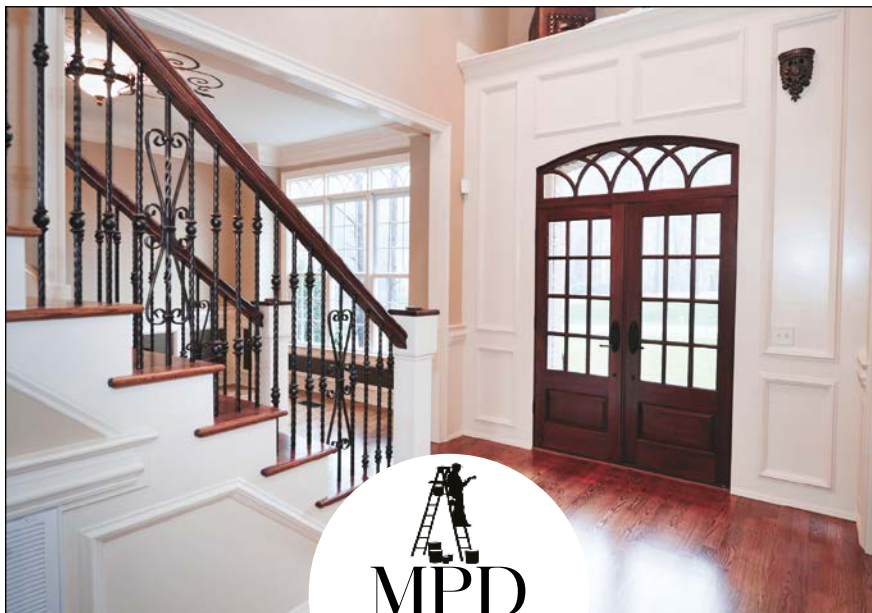
Stage 4. This arrangement has the advantage of costing the school nothing as all colleagues are expected to contribute to the school's programme of co-curricular activities outside their lesson allocation. It has kept French alive at our school at a time when we only have the resources to fund one modern foreign language, Spanish, on our Key Stage 3 timetable.

One of the most cost-effective strategies we have adopted in reducing expenditure on the curriculum has been the amalgamation of Lower and Upper Sixth classes in some of our less popular A Level courses, where this is logistically practicable and academically desirable. This allows the school to halve the staffing costs of running a full A Level programme and has worked particularly well in highly specialised subjects such as Computer Science, which lend themselves to this approach. This is because Computer Science tends to attract the most able, and a significant amount of learning in this subject is either self-

directed or done through bespoke feedback delivered via one-to-one exchanges with an expert teacher.

Cost savings have not been the only benefit of this initiative, however. It has also created fruitful opportunities for peer teaching and peer academic mentoring as more experienced Upper Sixth students share their subject knowledge and skills with their Lower Sixth counterparts.

Despite being necessitated by a less than favourable financial climate, curriculum restructuring does not have to be a wholly negative process. Nor does it have to represent the contraction of the academic curriculum or an educational product that is inevitably inferior to its predecessor. With careful planning, some lateral thinking and a willingness to mobilise the versatility of a school's teaching staff, a leaner curriculum model can still offer a compelling educational experience in which parents will remain keen to invest.



SCHOOL

PAINTING & DECORATING

SERVING WEST SUSSEX, EAST SUSSEX, SURREY & KENT

HIGH WORK STANDARD • GOOD COMMUNICATION • POLITE AND PROFESSIONAL • COMPETITIVELY PRICED • PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE • HEALTH AND SAFETY DOCUMENTS • DBS CHECKS AS REQUIRED

“ They carried out decorating works on a difficult and listed building. The project was completed to a very good standard with full and proper preparation and within a very tight programme. We had excellent feedback and are positive to use them in the future. ”

– Tonbridge School

**Mark Pinchin
Painting & Decorating Ltd.**

07932 848572

www.markpaintinganddecorating.com

quotes@markpaintinganddecorating.co.uk

VAT registration No. 176183685. Limited Company No. 10363337. Registered in England.

Key strategies for supporting teenagers through exams

With exam season kicking off, education consultant, Katharine Radice, offers some practical tips that teachers can use to help students better manage exam stress.

Exams are stressful for students: every teacher knows this, but it's not always straightforward to know how to help. There's lots of guidance out there, such as deep breathing, talking to a trusted adult, revision plans, positive re-frames, rest and relaxation. This guidance is well-known but we're still seeing problematic levels of stress on a regular basis. As teachers, we're left with this question: is there a better way to help our students?

I've spent the last two years researching and writing about exam stress because I believe that schools really can make a positive difference. After all, exam stress is a school thing. It's on our patch: students are looking to us for help. The guidance about deep breathing, revision plans,

positive re-frames and so on is all good advice, but it's much easier for students to follow it if we add the following three ingredients into the mix.

1. De-problematise stress

In the everyday speech patterns that surround stress, we often frame stress in a way that implies the student themselves is at fault. "Don't worry. You don't need to be this stressed." Responses like these are intended to be reassuring, but they inadvertently problematise the feeling by labelling it as inappropriate. The students who feel stressed are the ones who want to do well: their stress comes from a good place. "Stress is a difficult feeling, but remember that you feel this way because you care." "The stress you are feeling doesn't mean that

you're getting anything wrong." Many students feel ashamed of their stress: acknowledging that it's a natural part of trying to get something right will make it much easier for a student to open up to an adult and access the support that they need.

2. Realistic revision plans

"Make a plan." This is easier to say than to do. Whenever I do a workshop for students, I always hear that making a revision plan is like trying to pack lots of clothes into a tiny suitcase. Revision planning has become more complex as the quantity of resources available has increased. As a teacher, it's worth pausing to think about the revision guidance that you give: how many past papers do you share? How many resources are your students supposed to be using? How long would it take to do everything recommended? Multiply that by the number of subjects in the mix: is the guidance a realistic fit for the time available? It's much easier for a student to get going with revision if it is straightforwardly do-able. Starting with a realistic view of the study hours and then giving guidance that is time-appropriate will help students feel more confident and motivated about their revision plans.

3. Finding a route through

What percentage of our airtime is focused on how to make an exam go well? What percentage is focused on what to do if it goes badly? I'm asking these questions because all students have to live alongside the risk that the exam might not go their way: small or



Katharine Radice

big, the risk is there. When we help students prepare for exams, are we also helping them build the resilience to believe that a disappointing grade isn't ideal, but it's survivable all the same?

"Ok, so if you do miss your grades, what happens then?" I've found that very stressed students often find this question difficult to answer. They are so focused on trying to make the exam go well that they haven't thought about what they'd do if it didn't. Their stress levels are high partly because the exam feels like a cliff edge. Pausing to think about the other side of the cliff edge helps bring the stress levels down because it creates the space for a student to remember that there's always a positive next step, even if it's not the outcome they wanted.

Making a difference

Exam stress is an understandable concern in schools but we need to be positive about our capacity to help. The causes of exam stress go beyond what happens in the classroom – we all know that pressure at home or concerns about the job market feed into a student's relationship with exams – but we shouldn't underestimate the positive difference that schools can make in helping students learn how to be exam-healthy and resilient.

EXAM STRESS

HOW TO RESPOND IF A STUDENT IS STRESSED

1 CALM EMOTIONS

Let's just take a moment to breathe and stay grounded. Calming the body frees up the brain capacity needed to think or talk about the emotion.

2 REMIND STUDENTS THAT EXAM STRESS IS NATURAL

It's natural to feel anxious when you want something to go well. This will reassure students that their stress isn't a sign that they're getting something wrong.

3 CREATE SPACE FOR THE CONVERSATION

Tell me more: what would you like me to understand? This will help students process their feelings.

4 BE CALM & COMPASSIONATE

Mirror neurons in the brain often drive us to echo other people's emotions. Listening calmly and compassionately will help students find their own sense of calm.

5 HELP TO SEE BEYOND THE FEAR

Let's imagine the exam doesn't go well. What happens then? Seeing through to the other side helps reassure the student that there's a route through even if the exam goes badly.

Download more top tips posters from author Katharine Radice



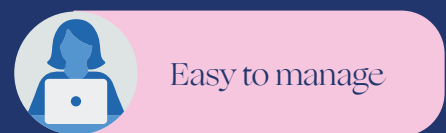
BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION

Katharine Radice is the author of 'Exam Stress: A positive and practical guide for teachers' and 'The Parent's Guide to Exam Stress'. Specialising in exam stress, she works with schools nationally and internationally, offering workshops for students, discussion groups for teachers and presentations for parents. www.katharineradice.co.uk



Every school day starts with trust

Zurich Municipal has over 30 years' experience protecting the public sector, and works closely with independent schools to build long-term partnerships. Our insurance offering is:



This allows you to concentrate on providing outstanding education, while we help keep your community safe and resilient.

We provide tailored insurance, protection, risk management, and expert claims handling to help keep the entire school environment safe, running smoothly, and thriving.

For more information on the choices available, please contact us on info@zurichmunicipal.com or, visit our website at www.zurich.co.uk/municipal/independent-school-insurance

The power of letting children build their own traditions

One of the most distinctive things about a school is its culture: the accumulated weight of what pupils do, what they pass down, and what they choose to care about. Culture, however, like trust, resists being manufactured. But how can it be grown? Deputy head at Dulwich Prep & Senior School, London, Piers Young, explores how handing responsibility for the school's Big Night Out charity event to pupils is doing just that.



Piers Young

Every independent school wants to be distinctive. The usual routes are familiar: the new sports hall, the AI programme, the partnership with a local school, or the rebrand. All are 'easy', in that they can to a large extent be built, but the most distinctive thing about a school is its culture. It is this that parents and staff sense within minutes of being inside the school. Culture, though, cannot be built. It can only be grown: slowly and unevenly, through what pupils do, what they pass down, and what they choose to care about. The difficulty, for those of us who run schools, is that none of this can be achieved by doing things well. It can only be achieved by letting go, and that runs counter to many of our instincts.

In 2019, a Year 8 boy called Matthew came to see me with a straightforward request: he wanted to do "more things with meaning". Not a bake sale, not a mufti day – something with weight. A colleague had recently suggested a charity sleepout and it seemed like the

perfect opportunity. I went to the Head of Section and explained the plan (or lack of it): a charity event that belongs as much as possible to the boys, not to the teachers.

So started what we now call the Big Night Out: a night each March when our Year 8 boys sleep rough on the school grounds, on cardboard, to raise money for charity. What gives it its heft is that it belongs almost entirely to the boys. They plan it, run it, debate, negotiate, and occasionally argue about it. We, as adults, try not to improve it. That turns out to be the hard part.

That first year, about 40 boys slept out. It fell on the same night as Comic Relief, and the then Headmaster suggested they might like to watch Lenny Henry and friends in the concert hall. A couple of boys asked to vote on the idea, so we gathered in the hall and the Head pitched his case. Not one boy voted for Comic Relief. One sensitive soul put his hand up and explained: "It's a very kind idea,

but we've been steeling ourselves to go through what it's like to be homeless for a night, so it doesn't seem right." He was 13. Viktor Frankl might have recognised it: meaning comes not from comfort but from voluntarily shouldering something difficult. You cannot manufacture that feeling by running a slicker event. You can only create the conditions for it.

Creating the conditions means tolerating the mess – and the mess, over seven years, has turned out to be the point. Each year a new cohort inherits the event and adds something, unprompted and often better than anything the staff common room would have devised. It is the boys who established the tradition of the late-night soup kitchen using the day's leftovers, the boys who thought to source the cardboard from kitchen deliveries, and it is the boys who write the letters home after choosing the charity. One year, a boy called Silas offered unprompted to handle the risk assessment. His mother was a teacher and, with a template from her, he produced a pitch-perfect document. To this day the boys are lead writers on it. The event is only possible because staff volunteer overnight – the boys' ownership means adults are not conscripted: they just show up.

The failures are just as instructive. One year, boys brought their own snacks: catnip for foxes in our part of London. Staff spent the night on fox patrol. That incident passed into oral lore: no personal food. The rule carries weight for having been learned the hard way and passed down rather than imposed from above. This year, debates about the charity took so long they risked delaying everything else. It was hard not to step in as they wrangled over SSAFA (the Armed Forces Charity), MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières), and

a rumoured third charity for which our current Head had offered to lose all her hair. MSF won narrowly, and just in time.

Over seven years, the Big Night Out has grown from 40 boys raising £3,000 to almost the entire year group raising over £10,000. The numbers, though, are not really the point. Last year I bumped into an old boy, now 16, who told me his secondary school had run a sleepout too. It was, he said, disappointing. It didn't feel difficult. And you didn't feel, as a year group, like you'd had a rite of passage.

The economist John Kay coined the term obliquity: the most valuable things are rarely achieved by pursuing them directly. If we as schools chase distinctiveness through initiatives, we risk ending up with something generic, because every other school is doing the same thing. As Margaret Mead supposedly told her students, "You're absolutely unique, just like everyone else." The schools that become genuinely distinctive have focused on something harder to name: a culture that pupils feel is theirs. You cannot put it in a prospectus, but it is what lasts.

All schools have the conditions to create something like this. The shift is from "How do we create meaningful experiences for our pupils?" to "How do we create the conditions in which pupils create meaning for themselves?" In practice: identify something you could genuinely hand over. Tolerate imperfection. Resist the urge to improve it yourself. And understand that pupil-led does not mean unsupported. It means messy, imperfect, argued over – and a boy on a piece of cardboard with a sleeping bag covered in bin bags, grinning in the drizzle, telling you this is fantastic.



Year 8 sleeping rough during Dulwich's Big Night Out

‘Raising the Future’ conference

Highfield and Brookham School, Hampshire, have hosted a ‘Raising the Future’ conference, bringing together leaders from across the state and independent sectors, industry and policy to shape practical responses to forthcoming curriculum reform.

The event, which was hosted by Lawrence Deju-Wiseman, Professor-in-the-Field at the University of Connecticut, saw a line-up of speakers that included Sarah Clarke (COO, Media & Entertainment, ITV plc); Darren Coxon (Co-Founder, Kompass Education); Suzannah Cryer (Head, Highfield and Brookham School); Will Goldsmith (Head, Bedales School); Evelyn Haywood (Director of Education, Skills Builder Partnership); and Hannah Oertel (Founder, Delay Smartphones).

Timed ahead of the government’s planned 2028 changes, the conference moved beyond theory to focus on solutions – highlighting the need to embed essential skills in the national curriculum, rethink GCSE assessment, harness AI effectively and responsibly in learning,

respond to evolving employer expectations, and address the impact of social media on young people.

A key highlight was the contribution of former Education Secretary Gillian Keegan (2022–2024), who brought a national policy perspective, helping to bridge the gap between frontline education and government decision-making, and reinforcing the credibility and influence of the discussions as they move towards formal recommendations.

Head of Highfield and Brookham School, Suzannah Cryer, said: “This was about more than conversation – it was about creating momentum for change. The willingness to share knowledge, challenge thinking and collaborate openly was incredibly powerful. We are determined to ensure the insights



gained translate into meaningful action.”

The conference will now lead directly into the development of a White Paper, capturing key findings and recommendations to be submitted to Bridget Phillipson, the Secretary of State for Education, ensuring the collective

voice of educators, employers and policymakers helps inform national reform.

In addition, delegates will be invited to participate in future roundtable discussions, ensuring that the ideas generated continue to evolve into actionable strategies, and are shared.

Pictured: Speakers from the ‘Raising the Future’ conference

Advertorial Feature

Help your Year 12s utilise the upcoming summer to focus on their UCAS personal statement

As the summer holidays approach fast for Year 12 students, the focus for guidance counsellors should shift to the UCAS personal statement. We are now entering the second full cycle of the 3 structured questions, and our primary learning from the inaugural year is that the tightened format has forced a move away from generic “I love my subject” narratives toward a focus on the student’s supercurriculars.

Without the flexibility of the traditional personal statement, students must be more intentional in their selection of supercurricular examples. We have seen that successful applicants are those who explicitly categorise their activities by the distinct roles they play in bridging the gap between school and university.

Rather than prescribing rigid character counts, guidance counsellors should encourage students to view the 4,000 character limit as a finite resource to be spent where it adds the most value. Students should not feel tethered to a balanced distribution; they should instead divert the majority of their space to the sections that justify their academic preparedness.

The summer break represents a vital period for students to accumulate this evidence where it’s lacking. They have the time and cognitive bandwidth to pursue the independent research and wider reading that serve as the specific data points required for these three answers. By encouraging students to be more intentional about what they write about, the goal is for



them to conclude the summer holidays with an excellent personal statement draft, ensuring they

return in September ready to refine rather than begin.

www.crimsoneducation.org/uk



Campey Turf Care Systems celebrates 40 years of excellence

Honouring a legacy of innovation, leadership, and global impact in sports turf management.

Campey Turf Care Systems proudly marks its 40th anniversary in 2026, celebrating four decades of pioneering advancements and dedicated service in the sports turf industry. Founded in 1986 by Richard Campey, the company, based near Macclesfield in Cheshire, has grown from a local family business into a global force, renowned for its commitment to quality, innovation, and best practice in turf care solutions.

To commemorate its 40th anniversary the Company has created a dedicated website: www.campey40.com and will be holding various celebratory events throughout 2026, including a special 40th Anniversary Open Day on Thursday 9 July 2026. So please

save the date and come and join in the fun and festivities.

Richard Campey's nearly 50-year career in the sports turf sector stands as a testament to his passion, expertise, and unwavering drive for excellence. Recognised for his integrity and forward-thinking approach, Richard quickly earned a reputation as a trusted authority in sports ground renovation and maintenance. His outstanding leadership culminated in the prestigious IOG Lifetime Achievement Award in 2011, honouring his remarkable contributions and influence on raising industry standards.

Under Richard's guidance, Campey Turf Care Systems has consistently championed innovation, launching

groundbreaking products that have redefined turf maintenance worldwide. The introduction of the Koro Field TopMaker (FTM) revolutionised surface renovation and set a new benchmark for best practice sports ground management. Equally transformative, the Air2G2 soil aeration system has improved root health and playing conditions on golf courses across the globe. The development of the Campey Universe rotor has further advanced turf care, providing professionals with powerful tools for efficient and sustainable maintenance.

Campey Turf Care Systems has expanded its reach to serve clients worldwide, earning international accolades such as the Manchester Chamber of Commerce Global Star Award. The company's equipment is trusted by premier football clubs,



prestigious golf courses, and sports venues across continents, reflecting a legacy built on reliability and the pursuit of excellence.

The company remains dedicated to driving innovation, supporting the industry, and upholding the values instilled by Richard Campey. The future promises continued growth, new advancements, and an enduring impact on the world of sports turf management.



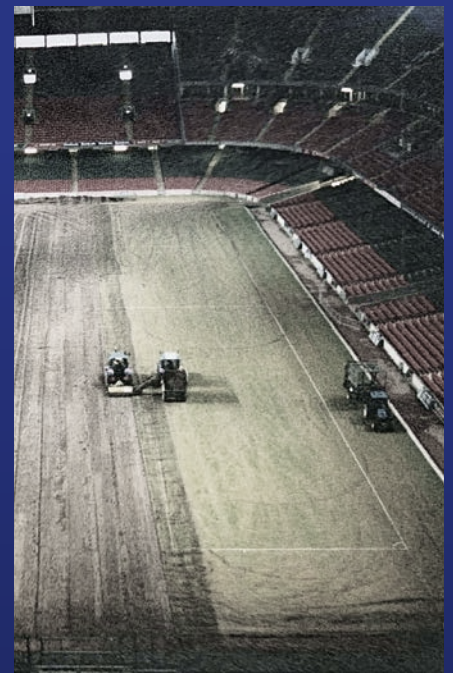
www.campeyturfcare.com

Join Us For A Special Open Day



Celebrate 40 years of turf care innovation

You're invited to our 40th Anniversary Open Day on Thursday 9 July from 10:00am - 6:00pm at Campey Turf Care Systems, The Crossroads, Buxton Road, Bosley, Macclesfield, SK11 0PS



Join us for this special day as we celebrate four decades of turf care innovation. This is a great opportunity to see the very latest in turf care technology, watch live machinery demonstrations, and connect with fellow industry professionals. Refreshments are available all day, a BBQ from midday, and ice creams from 2pm. We look forward to celebrating this special day with you.

Register at www.campey40.com or call us on +44 (0)1260 224568.



Recipe for success: inspiring young people through academic festivals

Since 2024, Solihull School in the West Midlands has curated a series of one-day festivals designed to inspire pupils in subjects as diverse as Shakespeare, modern languages, engineering and AI. As well as engaging Solihull pupils, children and teachers from the local community and across the country are invited to attend, building valuable and long-term education partnerships. Headmaster Charles Fillingham explains what first inspired the festivals programme and its ambitions for the future.

‘We are always exploring new opportunities to enrich learning and extend it beyond the classroom. We have excellent contacts at the UK’s leading universities and extraordinary expertise within our own staff, and the festivals idea was born from a desire to bring together leading minds to stretch, challenge and inspire our pupils.

I want Solihull School to be a force for good in education, so we have opened the festivals up to other schools. It’s good for our pupils and our staff; our senior pupils enjoy being with others who share their interests. It’s good for our reputation as a school with high academic standards and value-added education. And it’s good for the schools we partner with, giving them access to academic enrichment opportunities for their pupils at no, or little, cost. We also find that the guest speakers value the fact that a range of schools is represented.

Our biennial Shakespeare Festival is where it all began. Held in 2024 and 2026, plans are already in place for 2028. Led by our Head of English and academic scholars, it is held on a Saturday in March and features a series of academic lectures and workshops, aimed primarily towards Sixth Form students, and given by eminent professors from the country’s top universities. The intention is not to offer revision notes for A Levels, but rather to spark an intellectual curiosity. Beyond the talks, we have musical performances, play readings, a festival bookshop and a themed lunch. An additional element, which has lifted each event, has been an evening performance – in 2024 it was ‘Titus Andronicus’ and this year we had ‘Much Ado About Nothing’.

The Engineering Fair, held in June 2024, was a perfect fit for Solihull and our region, which boasts a rich heritage in manufacturing and engineering. Our Head of Science lent his passions to this one, organising it on a Wednesday afternoon, when two year groups were on study leave, creating a little more capacity in school. A series of lectures were followed by smaller workshops and the day concluded with an hour-long trade fair, where companies manned stalls and spoke about their work – we drew heavily on our alumni community for this. Around 100 pupils from local state schools joined us.

Our AI Symposium, held in November 2024, was a straightforward event to organise, with an external speaker, identified by our AI Co-ordinator, who

delivered five tailored talks to our Lower School (Years 7-9), Middle School (10 and 11) and Sixth Form during the school day, to teaching staff in the twilight session, and to parents and the local community in the evening. Pupils from other local schools attended in the day and their teachers joined us for the twilight event.

The 2025 Festival of Languages welcomed 400 pupils to Solihull and is already planned for 2027, this time running simultaneously across the country at a host of independent schools, with the ambition that we will collectively welcome 10,000 young people. As a languages teacher myself, I collaborated with our Head of Languages to curate a celebration of the power and importance of learning languages, offering lectures from university academics and career-oriented advice and inspiration. We focused on French, German and Spanish, but also included taster sessions in other languages – from Welsh to Urdu – and introductory talks on linguistics and translations.

There is no doubt that these festivals have strengthened our relationships with other schools and helped Solihull to demonstrate its academic credentials to current and prospective families. Importantly, the festivals have shown the valuable role that independent schools play in the life of regional communities, enhancing the learning of our own pupils while also providing enrichment opportunities for hundreds of young people from across the West Midlands.



Charles Fillingham

If the idea of launching your own festival piques your interest, these are what I believe to be the key ingredients:

- One dedicated head of department, with a passion for their subject, to provide academic leadership for the event.
- Heaps of support from the school leadership team and governors, and a modest budget.
- A bunch of enthusiastic teachers and support staff to help bring the festival to life.
- A generous measure of administrative know-how and lashings of creative marketing to encourage attendance.
- A full dose of perseverance; there will be setbacks, and you will have to be bold and resilient – particularly as you find your feet with the first one.

You can add extra flavourings and spices to make it your own, but if you follow this recipe, I am confident you will deliver an event which inspires your pupils – and those in partner schools – to lift their eyes towards new horizons.

Like many excellent recipes, it might seem daunting at the outset – but it’s easy to follow, you’ll find you already have the ingredients you need close at hand, and the end result will leave everyone asking for a second helping!



Pictured: Charles Fillingham, with Solihull Head of English, Dr Stuart Hart



New group launch

Three of the country's cathedral schools – Hereford Cathedral School; The King's School, Gloucester; and The King's School, Worcester – have come together to form the Three Choirs Schools Group.

The partnership has been created to enhance, rather than change, the identity of each school. All schools will retain their independence, legal status, governance and leadership. Rather than operating for profit or commercial purposes, the group has been founded on shared values and a belief that collaboration can deliver richer opportunities for pupils, staff and the wider communities they serve.

As part of the initiative, the schools will introduce enhanced

Pictured: The Three Choirs School Group (l to r) Dr Michael Gray, Executive Headmaster of Hereford Cathedral School; Mr Ben Charles, Head of Foundation at The King's School, Worcester; and Mr David Morton, Headmaster of The King's School, Gloucester

Family of schools

Sedbergh School, Cumbria, has announced the launch of the Sedbergh Schools Group, a charitable family of schools.

Rooted in the traditions of Sedbergh School, founded in 1525, the Group will bring together a growing network of schools, educational programmes and international partnerships, united by a clear purpose: to protect and strengthen high-quality independent education for the long term.

The Sedbergh Schools Group comprises Mulberry Bush Nursery, Sedbergh Prep School at Casterton, Sedbergh School, Sedbergh Fuzhou, Sedbergh Vietnam, Sedbergh Courses and the Sedbergh International Summer School. Terrington Prep

academic, pastoral and co-curricular opportunities. These will include joint enrichment events, challenge days and musical collaborations.

Staff across the three schools will also benefit from deeper professional collaboration, including subject networks, shared training and curriculum development.

In addition, the group will explore opportunities for operational efficiencies, such as shared procurement and services.

Any savings generated will be reinvested directly into teaching and learning, ensuring that pupils benefit from the effective use of resources.

School, North Yorkshire, will also be joining the Group as its second prep school in the summer.

As a charitable organisation, all financial surpluses are reinvested directly into teaching, facilities, bursaries and pupil opportunity.

Executive Head, Mr Dan Harrison, said: "The launch of the Sedbergh Schools Group represents a natural and exciting evolution of our 500-year story. This is about building on strength, bringing together like-minded schools and creating a future that is both ambitious and sustainable. It is not about changing what makes each school special, but about strengthening it through shared values, shared expertise and a clear long-term vision."

Merger

Two independent schools in North Wales have announced they are merging to create a "sustainable future for younger pupils".

Myddelton College, Denbigh, will soon be welcoming more pupils when Fairholme Preparatory School in St Asaph joins with Myddelton in the autumn.

Opening in September, the Prep School will be renamed Myddelton-Fairholme Preparatory School. It will be based on the Myddelton College campus.

Fairholme School, which was founded in 1900, is currently under the leadership of Headteacher, Mrs Elizabeth Perkins, who took it over with her late husband, Stephen, in 2009.

The two schools are working jointly to run a programme of "Together Days" and buddy support throughout the summer term to help children and their parents feel confident, familiar and excited about the changes ahead.


Pictured: Myddelton Head of Prep, Katie Gresley Jones; Myddelton Head, Lucy Davies; Fairholme Prep Head, Elizabeth Perkins; and Myddelton Head of Admissions, Carly Gilmour

Mrs Elizabeth Perkins said: "This decision has been a deeply personal one for me. My late husband and I devoted many years to Fairholme and after his passing I remained committed to preserving everything that has made the school so special.

"As I prepare for retirement, my priority has been to secure the very best future for our children, staff and families.

"I am incredibly proud of all that Fairholme has stood for, and I am reassured and delighted that its next chapter will be with Myddelton College."





Stress Free School Book Buying

Textbook Promotion

- Up to 35% discount on the bestselling textbooks for GCSE, A Level, and KS3.
- Browse by subject, publisher, and age level online via the QR code below, or contact us for a bespoke quote.
- UK and International curriculums included.

The only book supplier you need



- ✓ School Discounts
- ✓ Consolidate your orders from all publishers
- ✓ Free delivery to mainland UK schools
- ✓ Primary, Secondary & SEND
- ✓ Fiction, non-fiction, graphic novels, textbooks & class sets
- ✓ Full library set up or refresh with new titles
- ✓ Book jacketing and labelling

Quote 'ISM' when enquiring

☎ 0208 644 7788

🌐 www.heathbooks.co.uk

✉ orders@heathbooks.co.uk

How modular school buildings minimise disruption during term time

Delivering construction projects in live education environments is never straightforward. Schools and colleges must balance growing pupil numbers, ageing estates and urgent compliance issues, all while keeping students safe and learning uninterrupted.

This is why more education providers across the UK are turning to modular school buildings as a smarter, lower-disruption alternative to traditional construction.

The challenge: building while learning continues

For headteachers, estate managers and local authorities, disruption is often the biggest barrier to estate development. Traditional construction can bring months of noise and vibration, increased site traffic and safety risks, restricted access to outdoor areas, and delays caused by weather and on-site variables.

During term time, this level of disruption simply isn't acceptable. Modular construction addresses these challenges head-on.

How modular construction reduces disruption

Unlike traditional builds, modular classroom buildings are manufactured in a controlled factory environment. Teaching spaces are built off-site, not next to classrooms. Site works and manufacturing happen at the same time, and installation is completed in days or weeks, not months.

For schools, this significantly reduces the time spent with active construction on campus.

Faster installation, fewer site activities

Once modules are ready, they are delivered and installed in a tightly managed programme. Compared with conventional builds, modular school buildings involve fewer vehicle movements, shorter crane

operations, reduced groundworks duration, and minimal finishing trades on site.

This streamlined approach helps maintain safe, calm learning environments throughout the academic year.

Safer, more controlled school sites

Safety is paramount in live education settings. Modular construction supports safer sites by reducing the number of contractors on campus, limiting interaction between construction activities and students, and allowing clear segregation between learning areas and works.

With less on-site activity, schools can maintain normal routines with confidence.

Designed for learning, not temporary use

Modern modular education buildings are a world away from outdated temporary classrooms.

Today's modular school blocks are designed specifically for long-term educational use, offering high-quality acoustics and thermal performance, excellent daylight, ventilation and comfort, fully compliant layouts for modern teaching methods, and bespoke designs for SEND provision, science labs and sixth forms.

The result is a learning environment that supports student wellbeing, without the disruption of a traditional build.

Flexible options for different school needs

One of the key advantages of modular construction is flexibility. Schools can choose the delivery route that best suits their circumstances.



Permanent modular buildings support long-term estate expansion, refurbished modular classrooms provide cost-effective, low-carbon growth, and modular buildings for hire offer decant space, seasonal demand or urgent RAAC mitigation.

Each option offers the same core benefit: rapid delivery with minimal disruption to learning.

Proven delivery in live education environments

Modular construction has already helped schools across the UK respond quickly to capacity pressures.

From expanding sixth-form provision to delivering urgent temporary accommodation, modular education solutions allow projects to be completed while schools remain fully operational, even during the academic year.

A smarter way to build for education

For education providers facing estate challenges, modular construction offers a practical, proven way to deliver high-quality learning spaces, without compromising safety, continuity or the student experience.

By reducing on-site disruption, improving programme certainty and offering flexible delivery routes, modular school buildings provide a future-ready solution for modern education estates.

Start planning your modular education project

Whether you need additional classrooms, specialist teaching spaces or urgent temporary accommodation, Wernick Group delivers tailored modular education solutions designed around your operational needs.



Wernick[®]
BUILDINGS

Modular spaces, designed for learning



CONTACT US TODAY

0800 18 18 22 | www.wernick.co.uk

buildings@wernick.co.uk

Hire and refurbished
options also available



MicroBotics: launching a national competition

Designed to promote inclusion, collaboration, and opportunity, Littlegarth School, Essex, has developed a Micro:bit and robotics competition for pupils across sectors. Head of Digital Learning at the school, Steve Pashby, explains what it is all about and how schools can get involved.

In a world where digital skills are increasingly essential, schools are seeking effective ways to prepare pupils for the future. Coding clubs, robotics kits, and STEM programmes are now common, but access remains uneven and many initiatives are short term. They often generate enthusiasm without creating sustained development.

Littlegarth MicroBotics, launching nationally in autumn 2026, has been designed to address this challenge.

Who are Littlegarth and why MicroBotics?

Littlegarth is an independent Prep School on the North Essex and Suffolk border. Following a successful regional arts project involving major retailers, businesses, and a city-wide exhibition of pupils' work – including a Banksy artwork – the school is now extending its vision nationally.

MicroBotics reflects this ambition. It is designed for schools across the UK, not only Littlegarth pupils, and is open to both state and independent schools. The aim is to promote inclusion, collaboration, and opportunity, ensuring children everywhere can access high-quality STEM experiences.

A year-long national STEM competition

Littlegarth MicroBotics is the UK's first national Micro:bit and robotics competition designed to run across an entire academic year. Unlike one-off events, it has been

designed to provide a structured learning journey that builds skills progressively over time.

The programme combines coding, engineering, creativity, and problem solving through three themed challenges:

- **Autumn:** Rescue Mission – pupils design and programme robots to complete disaster response scenarios.
- **Spring:** EcoQuest – teams develop technological solutions to environmental challenges.
- **Summer:** Robo Games Arena – a competitive showcase where students present their final creations.

All challenges are delivered online, enabling participation from schools nationwide regardless of location or resources. Each stage builds on the previous one, encouraging pupils to refine their ideas, deepen understanding, and develop confidence. The emphasis is on progression and mastery rather than isolated achievement.

Moving beyond one-off STEM experiences

While robotics workshops and coding days are valuable, they often lack continuity. Without sustained engagement, pupils may not fully develop understanding or confidence. MicroBotics addresses this by embedding learning across the academic year. Pupils revisit concepts, improve designs, and apply new knowledge in increasingly complex contexts.

This sustained approach develops genuine capability rather than short-term exposure.

Developing future-ready skills

At its core, MicroBotics is about far more than robotics. It is designed to develop key skills essential for future education and employment.

Pupils build:

- Computational thinking and coding skills
- Engineering design and systems thinking
- Creativity and innovation
- Communication and teamwork
- Problem solving and resilience

These skills are developed through hands-on challenges that reflect real-world problem solving. Pupils learn not just how technology works, but how to apply it purposefully.

Supporting schools and teachers

MicroBotics is designed to be accessible and easy to implement. It can be integrated into curriculum lessons, clubs, or enrichment programmes, making it flexible for different school contexts. Each school team enters the full year-long competition for £175, which includes all required kits. Schools may also enter multiple teams if desired. No prior robotics experience is required. Teachers are supported with structured guidance and resources throughout the programme, ensuring accessibility for all settings. The year-long format enables schools to embed STEM more deeply within their curriculum and build a culture of sustained engagement.

A national initiative with a social purpose

A defining feature of MicroBotics is its commitment to widening access. Through corporate sponsorship, state schools are able to participate free of charge, removing financial barriers. This creates a shared national platform where pupils



Steve Pashby

from different backgrounds can take part in the same challenges and access the same opportunities. Independent schools pay a modest fee, contributing to the wider mission of inclusion and supporting social mobility within STEM education.

Building confidence through sustained learning

Extended engagement in STEM has a significant impact on pupil confidence. When learners are given time to experiment, improve, and succeed, they begin to see themselves as capable problem solvers. MicroBotics is structured to support this development. Over the year, pupils experience progression, reflection, and growing ownership of their learning. Their ideas evolve alongside their confidence and technical skills. Entries are submitted via video each term, with points awarded towards a national league table. In the summer term, national winners are crowned in both U11 and U14 categories.

Looking ahead

As the UK focuses on preparing young people for a rapidly evolving world, initiatives like MicroBotics play an important role. They connect classroom learning with real-world application and encourage meaningful engagement with technology. For schools, this competition offers an opportunity to enhance STEM provision, inspire pupils, and participate in a national programme with a strong educational and social purpose. Littlegarth MicroBotics is not simply about robotics. It is about developing confident, creative, and capable learners who are ready for the future, while ensuring these opportunities are accessible to all.



Pictured: MicroBotics in action

For more information or to discuss participation, contact Steve Pashby, Head of Digital Learning, at spashby@littlegarth.org, visit www.microbotics.org or register your interest here:





EAL data that drives decisions, provision, and progress

It seems to me that EAL provision doesn't begin in the classroom, rather it begins with the admissions decision to offer a place. What follows depends on how well that decision was informed. Most schools recognise this. However, from my conversations with colleagues across the sector, it is less clear whether the data backing those decisions is holding up under ever greater scrutiny and tighter timelines.

I hear the same stories again and again of a mish-mash of systems. A CEFR score at entry sits alongside in-house exam papers, perhaps combined with a SAS Reading Age, CAT4 or MidYIS data, with all the incumbent difficulties those bring for multilingual learners. Busy heads of EAL writing their own termly tests, or struggling with the administrative burden of the Bell Framework, as authoritative and respected as it may be. Each piece has a value, but together they rarely form a coherent system – and even if they do, it is a messy one to maintain.

At the same time, expectations have shifted. ISI Inspection teams want more than a single score on entry. They want to understand how EAL provision links to that starting point, how multilingual pupils' language develops over time, and how this connects to overall progress and attainment. As Matt Norbury at King's Ely puts it, "Assessment isn't simply about deciding whether to offer a



Pictured: Shelley Vink (Head of University Partnerships), and Dr Helen Wood (Head of School Partnerships) chat to Password partners at BBSW, March 2026

place. It's about deciding whether the school is genuinely prepared to support a student once they arrive, and having the necessary pathways."

The conversation has therefore moved from wanting a reliable CEFR-aligned test of academic language proficiency – to judge ability to access an English medium curriculum – to a whole-school requirement for something which provides all of the above AND informs teaching and learning.

In response, the team at Password English Language Testing have been focusing on making assessment data usable at whole-school level. Not more data, but

better organised data. Cohort-level CEFR reporting provides a clear overview of an intake. Diagnostic breakdowns highlight gaps in vocabulary, grammar and discourse. Detailed Student Profiles make the implications interpretable beyond the EAL department. Progress tracking shows how language develops over time, not just at a single point.

Schools can move from multiple disconnected data points to something practical that integrates into day-to-day processes, informs EAL led conversations with subject departments, and stands up in front of inspectors.

I will be attending a number of events this May – if any or all of the above resonates, come and find me for a chat!

- **COBIS Annual Conference** – Sunday 10 May
- **AMCIS Annual Conference** – Monday 11 May
- **BBSW Networking Day** – Tuesday 20 May



Dr Helen Wood

If you are reviewing your admissions process, your EAL provision, or how you evidence progress, get in touch: helen.wood@englishlanguagetesting.co.uk | www.englishlanguagetesting.co.uk



Profile

In conversation with Mike Godwin

Born:
Stockport

Married:
To Mabelle. She is an English teacher who now also teaches yoga. We have been together since 2001

Children:
Jack – he is 12

Schools and Universities attended:
Werneth High School, Marple College, Manchester Met and UCL

First Job:
Football Pink newspaper delivery boy

First job in independent education:
Harrow International School Bangkok

Appointed to the current job:
2024

Favourite piece of music:
Anything by James or The Stone Roses

Favourite food:
Nepali Cuisine

Favourite drink:
Coffee. But I do love a mojito

Favourite holiday destination:
Corfu

Favourite leisure pastime:
Scuba diving

Favourite TV or radio programme/series:
Currently watching The Capture – wow

Suggested epitaph:
"They may not remember what you said... but they will certainly remember how you made them feel" – I hope I have always tried to make people feel valued and been present for them.

Q You qualified as a teacher in 2007. Was teaching always what you wanted to do? Who or what inspired you into the profession?

A I finished my A Levels, signed up for a Journalism degree and went on a gap year where I travelled through the Middle East and by chance ended up working at a summer camp in the USA solely because I could drive a ski boat. I had zero interest in or knowledge of working with children; however that experience, coupled with colleagues telling me I was good at getting the most out of young people, made me realise that working with children was what I wished to do. I did not return for my degree course and instead worked as an outdoor education instructor. I then returned to the UK and studied Primary Education.

Q Your degree saw you specialise in primary education and this has remained the focus of your career. What do you see as being important in an Early Years Foundation Stage education today, and how do you think this has evolved since your initial training?

A Primary education and the science of learning has always been my passion. This, coupled with my dedication to collaboration, understanding emotional intelligence and enabling pupils to link learning, has been at the forefront of my thoughts. When I started in education, I had no understanding of the power of EYFS but this changed once I spent time in that area. The way in which EYFS is structured, supported and assessed is powerful and this is an area I believe deserves to be harnessed in older year groups. Now, I am strong on utilising EYFS structures and provision as the springboard into prep education. Ensuring holistic, play-based learning, full of nurture but with a solid academic core, enables significant progress over time.

Q Thinking more widely about the sector, you are passionate about changing perceptions of what an independent education is. How are you doing that? And how are you measuring your success in getting your message across?

A I am determined to show that an independent education does not need to be all about one element. Academics – vitally important; life skills – vitally important; application of knowledge and skills – vitally important; rich pastoral care – vitally important. My determination is that we do NOT have to focus on just one, that a prep education can be all the above when created and balanced correctly. At Radnor we do this through our Archway Curriculum, our Pillars and our Values, all of which are very much part of day-to-day life.

Q You wrote about a project to redesign the curriculum at Radnor House Prep in the Nov/Dec 2024 issue of this magazine. With the Archway Curriculum now in place, how impactful would you say this change has been and what benefits have you seen for staff and students?

A Archway is in place and the impact has been staggering. This includes academic development, connection between subjects and employing essential skills for life.

Education must prepare students for a future that we cannot yet envision. Therefore, the main priorities of the Archway Curriculum are the students' happiness – which breeds a love of learning – and their future employability. Values such as adaptability, creativity, and grit are valued just as much as the transmission of information, equipping students to deal with whatever challenges and opportunities they may face in the future.

There have been successes related to engagement and academic outcomes in core subjects. For example, we are now part of a programme aimed at developing our pupils to improve their writing and achieve greater depth. As a result, our expectations have increased, we have developed a broader curriculum and there is greater enthusiasm for learning. At the centre of this are our Project books – individual records which detail a pupil's learning journey. These consolidate their knowledge, celebrate the individual and are a great source of pride as they allow them to showcase their Excellence.

Mike Godwin is Head of Prep at Radnor Sevenoaks, Kent. In post since 2024, he has been at the school since 2022 when he took on the role of Deputy Head. He was previously Deputy Head of Lower School at Harrow International School Bangkok.



Q What role does service and community play in a Radnor education and developing global citizens? Radnor House Sevenoaks holds a Make a Difference Day (MADD) every year that involves the whole school, but what does it entail for Prep students and how do you go about organising it?

A We all want our children to grow into thoughtful, capable adults who see beyond their immediate surroundings. Global citizenship is about helping them develop this wider view. It's about teaching our young people that their actions – no matter how small – can have an impact, and that empathy, respect, and responsibility should guide the way they move through life.

Charity and service are a large part of our learning journey. Every topic has a community focus and our House groups are linked with local charities and community organisations. We expect our pupils to engage in service and be active members of our community outreach. Through our charity connections we have raised the profile of global education needs. The students of Radnor House take the lead and choose the causes we support. While we run service and partnerships activities throughout the year, MADD guarantees that there is one whole day when everyone in the school parks everything else and comes together to make a contribution. From tree-planting and conservation work to helping out at food banks and residential homes, Sixth Form students champion the efforts and guide younger pupils to be part of the making a difference. This activity builds leadership skills and relationships between older and younger students; it is crucial for students' development into global citizens.

Q The school is set to launch a nursery / early years addition which will see the age bracket extend from your current offer of 2-18 years to 6 months-18 years. This type of expansion seems to be becoming ever more popular in the sector. What is the reasoning behind it and do you have any advice for other schools thinking about developing a similar offering?

A Little Raddies is a new play-and-stay structured play offering, which supports children and families' entry into education and introduces them to learning at Radnor House Sevenoaks. Run by a qualified and experienced Early Years teacher, there are two age groups on offer – the first is 6-12 months and the second is for 1-year-olds. Parents will join the sessions and each week will focus on engagement in different sensory activities and skills. The range of activities is directly linked to learning that they would encounter in our full nursery, which starts for children when they turn 2.

While it is an opportunity for parents to get to know our school and help prepare their child for nursery, it offers quality experiences that benefit child development. We know how valuable the first five years are to a person's development; some of the most important skills developed in early years endure throughout life. These include language learned through storytelling and conversations, curiosity, resilience and social confidence. Little Raddies aims to nurture these skills, which underpin all future learning.

Q This year celebrates Radnor House Sevenoaks' 10th anniversary. How are you commemorating the event and how important is the milestone for the community?

A We see this very much as an opportunity to bring our school community together. We have planned a 10-week programme of activity celebrating multiple aspects of school life and engaging everyone. Each week in the build-up to our 10th birthday, on 4 September 2026, focuses on an area of school life, including: reading, sport, art, pastoral, music, service, internationalism and kindness. The weeks are designed to engage all in an element with a specific goal including targets to create 1,000 images, read 10,000 pages and walk a combined million steps. The ultimate aim is to celebrate who we are and what we do.

Q You have recently been elected as chair of the IAPS Head's Group for your local district. What does this appointment mean for you and the school?

A I have always been of the opinion that if there is a way I can support, I always will. I also believe that we are always stronger when we work together. The role is ambassadorial, collaborative and centred on raising the quality of provision for pupils across the entire district. This is my main driver as Chair of D2 – to support as many schools and colleagues as possible to ensure that independent schools in the area have the connections they need, the CPD collaborations to be part of and the ability to bring schools together to celebrate the elements we do so well, including debating, sport and music.

Q You are a keen hiker, paddleboarder and outdoor enthusiast: what is it for you personally that being outdoors gives you? Do you have a favourite expedition?

A I have always been an outdoor person, ever since childhood. Whether that be on the water or land there is something about the fresh air and new places which excite me and in many cases bring me such peace, whether I'm on my own or with my family or friends. There is something uniquely special about stepping away from the structure and bustle of school settings to engage in open discussions in a relaxed environment. Walking side by side through the scenic parkland allows conversations to flow naturally. I truly enjoy exploring places on foot, taking the time to explore nature at a slow pace. My perfect afternoon is spent exploring National Trust sites!

That's why it's lovely to work at a school that is set in such beautiful grounds. I truly believe that nature provides the best classroom, and you can see the children's confidence grow exponentially when in Forest School. Our Outdoor Education programme has been designed to nurture hands-on activities that build resilience, self-reliance and practical skills. It is a joy to be able to pass on my love of the great outdoors to my students.



Raising the bar without raising the burden: Oakworth Juniors FC and the case for autonomous line marking

Across the country, grassroots clubs are quietly wrestling with the same problem: too much to do, and never enough hands to do it. Many assume autonomous line marking is out of reach for a club of their size and budget. Oakworth Juniors FC is proof that it isn't.

Oakworth Juniors FC is a community-driven football club where volunteers play a central role in maintaining the pitches. Like many grassroots organisations, the team is responsible for keeping pitches match-ready while working within limited time and resources. Presentation matters, not only for players and coaches but also for visiting teams who expect a professional standard on matchday.

Sebastian Watts, Head Groundsman & Welfare Officer, and his team had an established routine for marking pitches, but maintaining a consistent standard across all fields remained a challenge. At the same time, paint usage and the time required for marking continued to add up, placing ongoing pressure on volunteers.

The challenge

The initial trigger for change was not time, but quality.

Manual line marking, even when done carefully, has its limitations. Achieving perfectly straight and uniform lines across an entire pitch is difficult, and small deviations become visible over time, especially with frequent re-marking.

For Oakworth Juniors, this affected the overall presentation of the facility. The club wanted pitches that looked sharp and professional every time.

In addition, paint usage was higher than expected. With pedestrian marking, the club was using approximately one and a half to two tubs of paint per pitch, requiring frequent replenishment. Combined with the effort required from volunteers, it became clear that the current approach was not sustainable long term.

The solution

That's why Oakworth Juniors introduced Turf Tank to improve both consistency and efficiency.



The key advantage was repeatability. Each pitch layout could be applied with the same level of accuracy every time, removing the variability that comes with manual marking.

At the same time, the system optimised paint application. By controlling how paint is distributed, the robot ensures even coverage without overuse, improving line quality while reducing consumption.

It also simplifies the process. The robot takes just five minutes to set up, and once it starts, it runs without supervision. This allows volunteers to focus on other tasks instead of being tied to line marking.

Finally, cost had been a concern, but the subscription model made the decision straightforward. Rather than a significant upfront purchase, Oakworth Juniors could get a Turf Tank for a manageable fee.

A new level of reliability

"I would recommend it without a second thought. It's not just about looks, it's about your presentation, your time saving, your paint saving. There's just so many benefits."

Sebastian Watts
Head Groundsman & Welfare Officer, Oakworth Juniors FC

The impact of introducing Turf Tank at Oakworth Juniors goes well beyond the visual improvement of the pitches. One of the



most noticeable changes is the consistency it brings. Every pitch is now marked with the same level of precision, ensuring accurate and consistent results each time. This level of reliability removes the variation that naturally comes with manual marking and guarantees that every pitch meets the same standard, regardless of who is responsible for the setup.

Reducing waste while increasing confidence

For a club run largely by volunteers, the time savings have been just as

important. Tasks that previously required significant effort can now be completed with far less manual input. This has reduced the overall workload and allowed volunteers to focus on other responsibilities around the club. The shift has not only improved efficiency but has also made the role less physically demanding and more manageable within limited schedules.

The improved presentation has also had a clear effect on the matchday experience. Well-defined, professional-looking pitches create

a stronger first impression for players, coaches, and visiting teams. It reflects positively on the club and contributes to a more polished and organised environment.

In addition to these operational benefits, the club has seen a noticeable reduction in paint usage. By applying paint more efficiently, the system helps extend purchasing cycles and reduce ongoing costs, supporting a more sustainable approach to pitch maintenance.

Equally important is the confidence it brings to the team. Volunteers are no longer second-guessing their work. Instead, they can rely on the process to deliver the same result every time, giving them peace of mind.

Conclusion

For Oakworth Juniors FC, the shift has been about more than improving lines on a pitch. It has created a more efficient, reliable, and supportive way of working for the people behind the scenes.

By combining consistent results with reduced workload and smarter resource use, the club has been able to raise its standards while making everyday operations easier to manage.

www.turftank.com





St Antony Community Award

Leweston School, Dorset, a Catholic co-educational day and boarding school, has announced the introduction of the St Antony Community Award, offering Catholic families a £3,000 annual reduction on Full Boarding fees from September 2026.

Named after the school's patron St Antony of Padua, the award is an initiative introduced by The Catholic Schools Trust, which Leweston joined in December 2025, and reflects the school's founding mission.

It is available to a limited number of families each year. Catholic families joining Leweston as Full Boarders in 2026–27 will pay £10,793 per term for Years 7 and 8 and £11,880 per term for Years 9 to 13 against a Full Boarding fee of £11,793 and £12,880 respectively.

Leweston's Headmaster, John Paget-Tomlinson, said: "Leweston was founded as a Catholic school, and that remains the foundation of everything we do, how we care for children, how we run our boarding, and the community our families belong to. The St Antony Community Award is our commitment to ensuring that Catholic families always have a genuine path to Leweston. Faith should not be a footnote to a school's identity. Here, it never has been."

Applications for the St Antony Community Award are open now for September 2026 entry.

Pictured: Leweston School

Early Androvian Award

St Andrew's Prep, East Sussex, has announced the launch of its Early Androvian Award (EAA) for children joining Reception in September 2026.

The Award has been made possible with the help of an external donor who recognises both the impact VAT has had on affordability and the lasting value of an independent education.

The EAA provides a 30% reduction in school fees each year from Reception through to the end of Year 2, offering access to the school's Pre-Prep provision.

The EAA is open to any family with a child joining Reception in September 2026.

Headmaster Tom Gregory said: "We are delighted to introduce the Early Androvian Award, widening access to a St Andrew's Prep education for families who might not otherwise consider it possible."

we will provide clear, joined-up expertise and top-quality services for school governing bodies and leadership teams."

ISBA and AGBIS to merge

The Boards of the Independent Schools' Bursars Association (ISBA) and The Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools (AGBIS) have announced their intention to merge into a professional association for independent schools.

Chair of the Board of ISBA, Amanda Webb, said: "The sector has changed significantly in the past few years, and nowhere is this clearer than in school finance and governance. By aligning great governance, finance and business support,

Chair of the Board of AGBIS, Charlotte Marten, said: "Our association will provide the services currently provided by ISBA and AGBIS in a more effective and cost-efficient manner for members and provide a platform to expand business and governance services to the whole independent education sector in the UK and internationally."

Advertorial Feature

PHVC introduces the EV16 and EVWAV² electric minibus range

A new generation of zero-emission transport for schools

As schools continue to balance sustainability with operational efficiency, PHVC has expanded its zero-emission offering with the launch of the EV16 and EVWAV² electric minibus range.

Designed to meet the evolving needs of education, the new range combines fully electric performance with flexible, real-world passenger transport solutions.

EV16: practical 16-seat electric minibus

At the centre of the range is the EV16, a 16-seat electric minibus built on the Ford eTransit platform. Designed for everyday use, it offers a practical solution for organisations

requiring reliable, higher-capacity transport. With updated licensing regulations, the EV16 can be driven on a standard Category B car licence (subject to conditions), helping make the transition to electric fleets more accessible.

Delivering up to 196 miles of range on a full charge, the EV16 is suited to a wide variety of journeys, from daily school routes to longer-distance travel. Inside, it features a spacious saloon, modern digital dashboard and is equipped with Ford's advanced safety features which earned a Gold Award from Euro NCAP.

EVWAV² & EVCompact: accessible, inclusive by design
Alongside the EV16, PHVC has also introduced the EVWAV²



and EVCompact. Both can be configured to support a wide range of accessibility requirements. The EVWAV² can carry up to 15 occupants (including driver) and can accommodate two wheelchair users due to the flexibility of removable seats.

The quiet electric drive also creates a calmer environment and smoother journey, which can be

especially beneficial for passengers who are sensitive to noise and movement.

Together, the EV16 and EVWAV² reflect PHVC's commitment to future-ready transport that balances sustainability, practicality and passenger experience.

Backed by PHVC's support team, the range is available with tailored leasing and purchase options.

Call: 01489 580 333 Email: sales@phvc.co.uk

Putting heart into local community partnerships

Art Teacher at Sevenoaks School, Kent, Emma Delpach, discusses developing service activities that are meaningful for both students and the community.

Service teaches young people so much about the world and their place within it. It is a valuable part of our school's education as well as the IB curriculum that we exclusively follow in Sixth Form. In 2024/25, Sevenoaks School students dedicated more than 36,000 hours of voluntary service to local and global communities. This includes collaborating with 32 primary schools, supporting over 6,000 young people and raising more than £25,000 for charity through student-led concerts and events. With such a wide range of initiatives within our Service and Partnership work, philanthropic activity could easily become a box-ticking exercise. However, we are dedicated to developing meaningful projects that truly benefit student volunteers, partners and members of our community.

Creating lasting partnerships

One of our successful, long-standing projects is run in partnership with Hospice in the Weald, a local charity which supports adults and children living with life-limiting illness.

Every week a group of Sevenoaks School students from Years 10

to 13 spends time with people attending art sessions at the Hospice, to spark creativity and offer companionship. The art class is one of the Hospice's free Living Well activities, including exercise classes, singing, and reflexology.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of our project, confirmation that this partnership is mutually valuable. We currently work with adults at the Pembury site but we are looking at the possibility of broadening this to include working with children too.

Listening to your partners

To get the most out of partnerships, we must understand the objectives of the Hospice and attendees. The Hospice strives to create a quality programme of activities that are accessible and exciting, using limited resources. Our role as their partner is to help them regularly deliver consistently high-quality experiences.

As regular attendee Niki described it: "The Living Well programme is not about what you can no longer do, but about discovering what is still possible."

We must therefore cater for those who need extra support to bring their creative ideas to life.

Ceramics is a wonderful medium for this. There are no barriers: working with clay allows everyone to express themselves in a calming way, building confidence and a sense of achievement. For each group, the students and I adapt our role to help attendees explore what they can accomplish. This may involve shaping clay in a different way or taking things a little slower, ensuring participants can continue to be creative and find new ways to express themselves.

Keeping it fresh and meaningful

We often use the theme of nature to inspire our work. This topic is familiar to everyone and enables us to use our surroundings and the changing seasons. For example, rolled leaves collected from the Hospice's gardens are frequently used to imprint onto clay, producing beautifully textured handmade dishes.

The finished pieces also have a purpose. Some are taken home by the creators or gifted to their loved ones, while others decorate the walls of the Living Well area. These vibrant, life-affirming works capture a moment in time when teenagers at school and those facing life-limiting illness work towards a shared goal to make something stunning and uplifting.

Developing empathy and connection

The sessions are a much-loved part of the week for all involved. There are always fantastic levels of creativity and productivity, as well as plenty of laughter. Through shared enjoyment of art and the surrounding conversation, you can see students connecting on a deeper level with participants. This helps young people to develop empathy and a greater

appreciation of other members of society, all of whom have different life experiences and challenges.

As the Hospice's Creative Arts Co-ordinator says, "It's an opportunity for the students to see the person, not a 'patient!'"

Student Andrew Wang said, "Volunteering at the Hospice showed me that art is not confined to galleries but lives in every shared moment. Through collaborating with the Hospice patients, it has made me see the power of creativity and understand how lives can be changed significantly through creative flair."

Combining service and fundraising

To commemorate the partnership's decade anniversary, the group is working on a special collaborative piece, which they plan to auction to help raise vital funds for the Hospice's ongoing services.

The new collaboration features a painting of a pond with floating ceramic flowers, all created by the group. It will be a real showstopping piece!

Raising a socially responsible generation

Our objective is to support our students to become rounded and grounded young people with a true social conscience. Service activities develop communication skills, confidence and leadership experience which are invaluable when entering the workplace. However, it is projects such as the Living Well Art Sessions that develop socially-engaged, responsible students who truly understand how their actions impact others. It gives them a sense of purpose that cannot be found in the classroom.



Pictured: The Hospice's Living Well art group with Emma Delpach and students from Sevenoaks

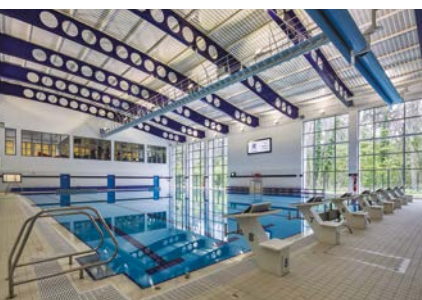


The view from the studio

Way back in the 1990s I joined BHM Architects. The ‘M’ stood for Miles Mallinson, our late founding partner who still occasionally wore a smock (!) at his drawing board. During his lunch break in the White Hart, practice comedians installed a PC and screen on his desk. Upon his return the look on his face suggested he’d seen a crocodile in his bathwater.

Very funny, but time always has the last laugh. I’m now of a similar age, and if someone switched my AutoCAD icon for a Claude Mythos Design Tool icon, I would very likely pull that same face.

Having invested £10K in an early Mac, CAD software and pen plotter back in ‘88, I have never been a technophobe, but with one’s head down in the trenches delivering complex construction projects it can be hard to keep up with the latest developments. Every day my inbox is bombarded with emails demanding to know whether we are using AI for everything yet.



Fortunately there are young people, digital natives, who now come to us with pre-installed ability to produce great-looking information in the blink of an eye. Hugely beneficial for exploring designs and presenting them to clients and stakeholders.

BHM have never just been ‘design architects’, and have always taken pride in working through the technical aspects of our buildings to produce comprehensive construction drawings and specification documents. We follow through on the tender and contract administration phases to ensure we retain control of the aesthetic, build quality, cost and programme for the schools we serve.

This means we have vast practical knowledge and experience to pass on to those young members of staff, and doing so has been one of the unexpected pleasures of my career. Anecdotally, something we have noticed is that behind all the IT competence, design flair and enthusiasm for sustainability, current students fresh from university seem to have somewhat less understanding of construction methodology, contracting and business communication protocol than previous generations.

As a father of two young people myself, I supported them through disrupted exams, and the first

year at university with no Fresher’s Week, being locked in study bedrooms, tutored online and having to socialise on social media and dating apps rather than at pubs, gigs and parties. To an extent we have all retreated behind screens, and the consequences of that are still playing out.

The impact of VAT on school fees has been hugely consequential for our practice. We are still busy with additional classroom provision, sports pitches, landscaping, maintenance and refurbishment of all kinds: Grands Projets not so much. We work all over Britain, and because of the advent of Teams and Zoom, in-person meetings have become a bit more of a special occasion. When they happen, in almost every case one of the first things the leadership



Ray Poulter

team wants to know is “How are your other schools doing?” It’s the same for us, and we are always keen to understand what our competitors are offering clients.

It is heartening to see schools now re-emphasising the value of human interaction and some quality time away from technologies that, as we change them, are simultaneously changing us in ways we may not have planned.

My daughter’s take on this report? “Ha – you should’ve got ChatGPT to write it.” Maybe.

Ray Poulter is Director at BHM Architects T:+44 (0)20 8878 4667 E: info@bhmarchitects.com W: bhmarchitects.com

Uniting on one campus

St Andrew's Prep and Eastbourne College, in East Sussex, have unveiled plans for a new chapter in their shared history, with proposals to relocate St Andrew's Prep to a new purpose-built home within the Eastbourne College campus by 2029.

Since coming together in 2010 as a single charity, Eastbourne College Incorporated (ECi), the two schools have created an increasingly connected educational journey for their pupils. Next year

marks a major milestone, with Eastbourne College celebrating its 160th anniversary and St Andrew's Prep its 150th.

The next chapter in that shared story is ECi310: a vision to

bring the two schools together on one campus. It represents the culmination of a long-term strategy to strengthen the relationship between the schools, reflected through shared facilities, staff working across both schools, a Bridge Curriculum at Key Stage 3, and the progression of pupils from St Andrew's Prep to Eastbourne College.

The new Prep School will combine the restoration of historic buildings with new facilities, creating a self-contained environment at the heart of the Eastbourne College campus.

It will have its own dedicated entrance and age-appropriate learning spaces for every year group, alongside specialist

facilities including SEND provision, a wellbeing hub, secure outdoor play and learning areas, and a new multipurpose hall.

Initial design concepts for the relocated Prep School have been shared with pupils, parents and staff across both schools, and with the community, who have been invited to share ideas and feedback at the earliest stage of the design process.

Further information about ECi310, including initial designs for the new buildings and spaces, the project timeline, frequently asked questions and a dedicated suggestions and feedback form, is available at www.eci310.co.uk



Pictured: Early stage artist's impression of the proposed Prep School on the Eastbourne College site

BH & M

BHM Architects - Design for Education

Whether you are masterplanning, considering a specific project or reimagining your existing buildings, enlist our vision, enthusiasm and unparalleled experience in design and construction for the education sector. Contact us at:
BHM, Unit P04, Old Power Station, 121 Mortlake High St, London SW14 8SN
T: +44 (0)20 8878 4667 E: info@bhmartchitects.com W: bhmartchitects.com

Music, Drama, & Dance



Back to the 60s

The music department at Wycliffe College, Gloucestershire, has held a spring concert, uniting past and present students and staff in an evening of music, art, drama and nostalgia.

The show was a celebration of both the 1960s and the 60th anniversary of the Boarding Schools' Association (BSA).

Highlights included live musical performances by Wycliffe students, an exhibition of pupil artwork,

Pictured: Back to the 60s spring concert at Wycliffe College

and drama students in full 1960s costume performing improvised theatre, transporting guests back in time.

There were also photographs and memorabilia from The Wycliffian Society, evoking the school's own 1960s history, video footage of Wycliffe in the 1960s, audio recordings of Wycliffe pupil bands from the 1960s, and the reading of poems written by Old Wycliffians recalling their memories of the college during that time.



Choral and orchestral concert

Haberdashers' Monmouth School have welcomed alumna and Patron of Performing Arts, Dame Jane Glover, to Hereford Cathedral for a choral and orchestral concert.

The concert brought together musicians from across the school alongside a professional orchestra, filling the cathedral with sound, colour and energy. Highlights included Copland's 'Fanfare for the Common Man', a performance of Sibelius's 'Finlandia', and Malcolm Arnold's 'The Padstow Lifeboat', complete with foghorns.

Pictured: The Choral and Orchestral Concert at Hereford Cathedral
Photo credit: Haberdashers' Monmouth Schools

The evening concluded with a performance of Vivaldi's 'Gloria', sung by the Chapel Choir and all of Year 7, with solo contributions from pupils Claire C and Elin P.

Among those in attendance was Dame Jane Glover, conductor and a former pupil of the school. Reflecting on the evening, she said: "To see young people working together on superb music in such glorious surroundings was uplifting. They had obviously all prepared well, and were reaping the rewards of their labours. But they were clearly having a great deal of fun too, as were we in the audience."



For all your
music education
& *performance* equipment

**FREEPHONE
0800 072 7799**

**to join the
education discount
programme and
save money on
your purchases!**

Music Stands,
Lights & Accessories
Music Folders
Music Chairs &
Accessories
Instrument & Sheet
Music Storage
Conductor's
Equipment
Staging & Risers
Theatre Products
Acoustic Products

www.blackcatmusic.co.uk



National Concert Band Festival Awards

Young musicians from Wrekin College, Shropshire, have scooped their 10th top title in seven years at a national festival celebrating the UK's top wind and big bands.

The Wrekin College Jazz Band clinched its fifth platinum award in seven years, at the National Concert Band Festival in Manchester, while the school's Concert Band took its fifth consecutive platinum in a clean sweep from five years taking part.

The school also picked up two additional awards this year, given

Pictured: The successful musicians with their awards

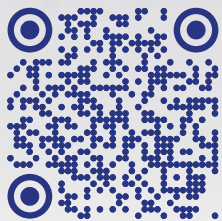
at the discretion of the judges.

The Concert Band was praised for having the most innovative programme, while Sixth Form percussionist Beau Rous scooped the outstanding soloist award.

The Concert Band's award-winning programme included 'The Spirit of the Falcon' by Richard L. Saucedo, featuring Beau's xylophone solo, together with 'Belonging' by Tom Davoren and the 'Arabian Dances' by Brian Balmages.

Introducing the new EV16

Now with 16 seats: our fully electric minibus, designed for schools.



Learn more at
phvc.co.uk/electric-minibuses

Call: **01489 580 333**

Email: sales@phvc.co.uk

Developing geospatial learning to support sustainable futures

Back in 2023, Dr Claire Evans, Head of Geography at Bloxham School, Oxfordshire, co-created the Bloxham Sustainability Challenge (BSC), a student-led programme designed to connect education, industry and geospatial industries to tackle climate issues. Here she explains what it is all about and how the BSC is helping to model green skills development, student agency and career readiness for a rapidly changing world.



As the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Learning Compass 2030¹ makes clear, the challenge for education is no longer simply what students should know, but how learning should help them navigate a world shaped by climate change, technological disruption and growing interdependence.

If young people are to thrive in and shape the future, they need more than subject knowledge alone; they need opportunities to create new value, work through complexity and act with responsibility.

The Bloxham Sustainability Challenge responds to that need through enquiry-led learning that connects curriculum, sustainability and career readiness in ways that are both policy-aligned and educationally purposeful.

The Bloxham Sustainability Challenge

Launched at Bloxham School in 2023, the Bloxham Sustainability Challenge was designed as a structured model of enquiry-led learning rooted in authentic industry partnership. Through collaboration with Dalcour Maclaren, a land and environmental consultancy, students engage with real-world sustainability and infrastructure questions using the same geospatial tools, data and ways of thinking that shape professional practice.

At its core, the Challenge is intended to help students grapple with complex environmental issues while developing the digital, analytical and transferable skills increasingly needed in a changing economy. It reflects a simple but important premise: that climate literacy alone is no longer enough. Young people also

need opportunities to interpret data, weigh competing priorities, communicate evidence clearly and understand how sustainability-related decisions are made in practice.

For Year 12 students, this takes the form of authentic project briefs that mirror professional decision-making (for example, routing underground cables for renewable energy infrastructure or evaluating land use in relation to environmental and planning constraints).

In working through these challenges, students are not simply learning about sustainability in the abstract; they are encountering the kinds of tensions, trade-offs and judgements that increasingly define the transition to a greener economy.

This learning experience, powered through Esri's ArcGIS Online for Schools programme, is both intellectually demanding and outward-facing, helping students see how classroom knowledge connects to real questions, real sectors and real futures.

The next generation

What began as a single-school initiative is now evolving into something much larger. Most notably, Coventry City Council will soon roll out the Bloxham Sustainability Challenge across over 120 schools and colleges in the region. The Council has also committed to funding the Pearson Edexcel exam entry fee for every participating student.

More broadly, the Challenge is designed with access in mind: learning resources, geospatial technology and industry mentoring are provided free of charge. This matters not only in terms of scale,

but equity. It signals a model of sustainability education that is not reserved for a narrow group of learners but can be widened deliberately and inclusively.

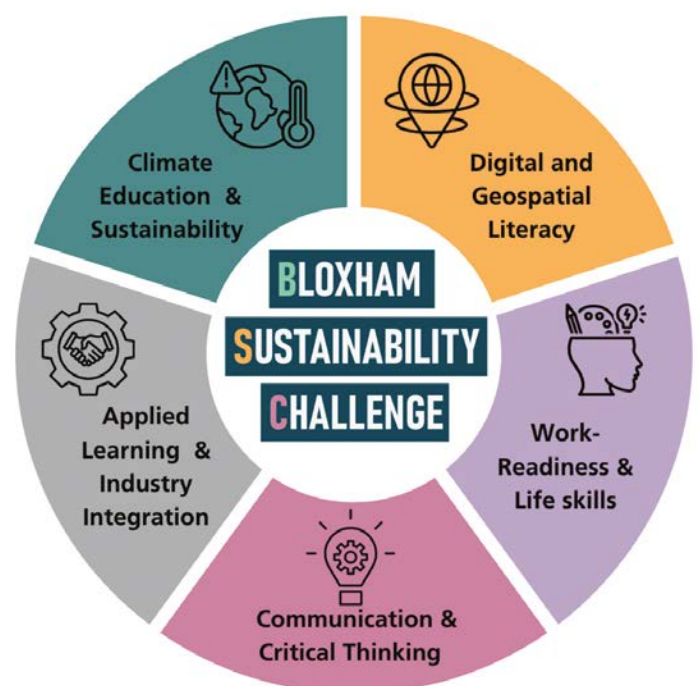
The same principle underpins the Challenge's annual launch event at the Royal Geographical Society, offered free to schools and livestreamed so access is not determined by travel budgets or location.

This widening of access is significant because young people are already acutely aware of the environmental challenges shaping their futures. Yet awareness alone does not automatically translate into confidence, capability or informed progression. For many students, there remains a gap between concern about climate change and a clear sense of how that concern might connect to action, further study or meaningful work. It is precisely this gap

that the Bloxham Sustainability Challenge is designed to help bridge.

By embedding sustainability within structured learning, authentic assessment and real industry engagement, the Challenge helps make future pathways more visible and more tangible. It enables students not only to explore complex environmental issues, but also to see how those issues relate to real forms of expertise, decision-making and employment. In doing so, it helps shift young people from being passive recipients of information to active participants in shaping sustainable futures.

With the right educational design, professional partnership and long-term investment, this generation has the potential not simply to respond to change, but to lead it – with greater confidence, stronger capability and a clearer sense of purpose.



¹ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Learning Compass 2030, OECD, <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/tools/oecd-learning-compass-2030.html>

Find out more about The Bloxham Sustainability Challenge at www.bloxhamsustainabilitychallenge.com



'Challenge the Chancellor' competition

Two Lower Sixth students from Exeter School, Devon, Jacob and Toby, have won the National Finals of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) 'Challenge the Chancellor' competition.

The competition is designed to stretch economics students while giving them an insight into the real workings of economics policy.

Students were tasked with producing an alternative Budget for the UK government. Jacob and Toby submitted a 5,000-word report, which they'd developed after research into the current economic climate, outlining their proposals for taxation and public spending.

Pictured: Sixth Formers Jacob and Toby at the IEA National Finals

Their report was shortlisted by the IEA, earning them a place in the Regional Finals, where they impressed the judges to progress to the National Finals last month (April).

At the final stage, Jacob and Toby presented their alternative Budget to a panel of economists from the IEA, and then defended their proposals under questioning. Competing against other independent schools, their ability to justify and defend their policy recommendations ultimately secured them the national title.

Coding Challenge

Two students from Loughborough Grammar School, Leicestershire, have won the Perse Coding Team Challenge, a national competition, claiming the top title in the Selective Schools and Clubs category with a winning score of 120 points.

Held online, the Challenge requires participants to apply computational thinking to a series of increasingly complex Python coding problems. It focuses heavily on algorithmic thinking, problem solving and programming logic, becoming more demanding throughout the rounds of the competition.

Out of around 3,000 teams from across the country, Year 10 students Artin Ghadar and Shaan Sisodia were awarded first place on a tie-break.

Teacher of Computer Science and Head of Year 10, Mrs

Pictured: Artin Ghadar and Shaan Sisodia



Karen Alexander, said: "This is a brilliant achievement in a very competitive national competition. Full marks alone are impressive, but to go on and win on a tie-break against some of the top schools in the country really shows their problem-solving ability, resilience and attention to detail. They are a great example to their year group and beyond, and it's brilliant to see them inspiring younger students to get involved in coding competitions."

Advertorial Feature

Creating the perfect first impression with Haddonstone

We all know that first impressions count, and this is especially important in an independent school setting. Children, their parents, visitors, and prospective families often form opinions long before they even enter a classroom. That's why well-designed and carefully maintained outdoor spaces communicate care, pride, and a commitment to excellence: setting the tone for everything that follows.

For over 55 years, Haddonstone has been synonymous with elegance and heritage, producing the finest British garden cast stonework. Handcrafted to order with the utmost care and attention, our extensive collection includes planters, water features, statuary, stone furniture, and much, much more. Each design transforms outdoor spaces into inviting, inspiring environments for students and visitors alike.

Complementary architectural and landscaping elements, from façade stonework and garden buildings, to wall dressings, paving, and steps, are also available from our range. There is something to suit every school's character and vision.

Whether enhancing formal gardens, pathways, or recreational areas, our handcrafted designs blend practicality with style, elevating school grounds with timeless sophistication. Plus,

because all our designs are carefully made using the finest materials, they're durable, frost-proof and low maintenance.

This summer, discover how Haddonstone can help your school make the right first impression to its whole community. Our garden and landscaping designs bring elegance to any outdoor space, reflecting your school's values while creating welcoming and inspiring environments.



Visit haddonstone.com to purchase online, or for information or assistance, call our friendly and experienced team on 01604 770711 (Monday to Friday). Discover how our handcrafted cast stonework can elevate your school gardens and landscapes today.

Nurturing hidden talent: broadening how schools recognise every child's potential

With skills shortages and the evolving needs of the modern workforce continuing to be discussed, Group Director of Inclusive Learning at Outcomes First Group, Andrew Hammond, considers why broadening how schools define and monitor talent is critical for both pupil confidence and future employability.

For generations, our education system has centred around the Victorian framework of reading, writing and arithmetic. While these skills are important, they tend to be overemphasised because they provide comparability. However, this narrow view can limit how children's unique talents are recognised and nurtured.

Beyond academics, young people require a wide range of life skills to thrive. In school, work, relationships and everyday life, they must draw upon creativity, judgment, empathy and collaboration. These attributes are present in classrooms but often overlooked as they do not easily align with standardised assessments.

Defining talent

When pupils are evaluated through a limited set of metrics, they begin to perceive themselves accordingly. Achievement becomes synonymous with grades, and education risks becoming a pass-or-fail experience rather than a process of growth.

This has consequences as young people increasingly arrive at university with strong academic results but feel underprepared for the independence, resilience and self-direction required. At the same time, research from the World Economic Forum¹ found that creativity, critical thinking and collaboration are among the most in-demand skills.

This raises an important question: are schools nurturing the full range of young people's potential and equipping them to succeed in later life?

Inclusive classrooms

If a young Leonardo or Leonora

were in a classroom today, would we recognise their talent? Leonardo da Vinci described himself as a man without letters, reminding us that ability does not always present itself in familiar ways.

Across our schools, multimodal teaching plays a central role in identifying and nurturing hidden talents. We have found that when pupils are given opportunities to engage with learning through a range of approaches, such as discussion, writing, performance and digital media, they are better able to access content and demonstrate understanding. This not only enhances learning and outcomes, but brings different strengths to the surface. For example, after embracing creativity at school, a Year 5 pupil at Oakfields Preparatory School, Essex, recently secured a leading role in a regional production of 'Annie'.

Equally important is how we develop 'future-ready' skills. Critical thinking, collaboration and communication should be embedded across the curriculum, rather than taught in isolation during pastoral time. These skills are most effective when developed through the subjects that pupils are already studying, so they feel relevant. Whether analysing a historical source, constructing an English debate, or solving a scientific problem, these skills come to life.

Underpinning all of this is the need for inclusive classrooms that support all learners and ensure every pupil develops self-worth through a genuine sense of belonging. That self-worth

underpins self-discipline and is an essential foundation for both strong academic performance and long-term personal growth. Pupils must also feel able to take intellectual risks without fear of failure. Customised approaches, such as our ACTIVE Framework, support teachers in designing learning that balances challenge with support, with a focus on discovering and nurturing each child's talents, ensuring that every pupil can participate and succeed.

Enrichment

Opportunities beyond the classroom also provide vital spaces for pupils to discover talents that may not be immediately evident in academic settings. Sport, the arts, outdoor education and co-curricular programmes all offer opportunities for pupils to experience success, build confidence and develop a sense of identity.

The impact of such experiences can be transformative. Gio, a pupil at Beech Hall School, Cheshire, arrived with low self-confidence, but when he joined the school swim squad, training in cold water required perseverance and mental resilience. These qualities soon carried through into his academic work. Not only did Gio complete a record-breaking English Channel relay, but he went on to pass all his GCSEs, showcasing the value of recognising and championing achievement in its broadest sense.

Assessment and observation

To develop and nurture a richer array of talent, we must reconsider how we define, recognise and monitor it over time. Written exams, while important, offer only a snapshot of academic



Andrew Hammond

performance and cannot fully reflect a pupil's development, learning journey or wider abilities.

A more balanced model retains the rigour of exams while complementing them with more continuous forms of assessment. By shifting from assessment to observation, and from outcomes to learning processes, we gain a clearer understanding of how pupils think, approach challenges and collaborate, allowing us to provide more personalised support.

Teacher observations and pupil self-evaluations enable our schools to recognise individual trajectories and progress over time. Monitoring platforms, such as Portraits, provide a digital record of each pupil's development. By compiling examples of work across subjects, and reflections from the pupils themselves and teachers across the school, these offer a broader picture of each child's strengths, interests and progress, capturing and celebrating achievements that extend beyond traditional measures.

A shared responsibility

Ultimately, this is about a shift in mindset and practice. Small changes, such as providing pupils with multiple ways to demonstrate understanding and participate in truly enriching opportunities, can have a lasting impact. At the centre of this must be the conviction that every child is unique, possesses talent and ability, and has a remarkable future ahead.

¹ *New Economy Skills: Unlocking the Human Advantage*, World Economic Forum White Paper December 2025: https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_New_Economy_Skills_Unlocking_the_Human_Advantage_2025.pdf

Can schools expect lower TPS pension contributions?

As part of a cost review of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), a new employer rate will take effect from April 2027. Early signs of a reduction are encouraging.

Employment costs have ballooned in recent years. An increase of almost 75% in the TPS employer contribution rate since 2019 has been particularly impactful.

However, the worst may well be behind us – a fall in the TPS employer contribution rate looks promising.

Improved long-term GDP forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) point to an increase in the SCAPE discount rate – the biggest single determinant of TPS employer costs. To explain, a lower discount rate requires more money to be set aside today, increasing pension costs. A higher discount rate may allow for lower contributions.

Of course, this is not a given. The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) will draw on a range of

factors – including salary growth, inflation and longevity – to calculate the new TPS employer rate.

It's worth noting though that GAD has previously indicated that a 0.25% pa increase in the SCAPE discount rate would reduce the TPS employer rate by around 7% of pay. Last year's long-term OBR forecasts improved by more than this, suggesting meaningful downward pressure on costs if other factors remain broadly stable.

What can independent schools do now?

Keep planning flexible: Continue sensible governance through scenario planning, budget stress testing, and clearly documented decisions.

Review your TPS strategy:

Options include continuing the TPS for all teaching staff, closing



to new joiners, closing to all, and even reopening. Schools that left the TPS on the basis of financial savings may need sensitive communications if costs start to fall.

Check hybrid arrangements:

Schools that offer a hybrid pension option of TPS + Defined Contribution (DC) should review the impact of a lower TPS employer rate.

Optimise other pension and benefit spend:

Away from the TPS, other value for money measures include salary sacrifice, DC reviews, and adjusted contribution levels for support staff.

Whether or not TPS employer rates fall in 2027, schools should continue with disciplined planning and governance.

First Actuarial offers all the pension advisory services needed to help you get the best value from your investment in pensions. To find out more please contact dale.walmsley@firstactuarial.co.uk

Helping schools with pension challenges

First Actuarial helps independent schools understand and manage the costs and risks of their workplace pensions. We can help with Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution schemes. Our 15 Teachers' Pension Scheme specialists help schools with clear and jargon-free advice. We also provide specific support on employee consultations and the design and implementation of new pension schemes.

For more information, please visit

www.firstactuarial.co.uk/nfp/independent-schools



"First Actuarial's pension advice proved invaluable during a challenging period for our school. The specialist expertise and practical know-how of the First Actuarial team gave us a solid basis for taking our pension strategy forward."

Fay Davenport-Thomas, Bursar, Bridgewater School

First Actuarial LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England & Wales. Number OC348086. Registered address: Mayesbrook House Lawnswood Business Park, Redvers Close, Leeds LS16 6QY.

First Actuarial LLP is not authorised under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 but we are able in certain circumstances to offer a limited range of insurance and investment services to clients because we are licensed by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries. We can provide these services if they are an incidental part of the professional services we have been engaged to provide.

Contact us



Dale Walmsley

dale.walmsley@firstactuarial.co.uk
Tel: 0161 348 7464



Peter Norman

peter.norman@firstactuarial.co.uk
Tel: 01733 447 681



John Ingoe

john.ingoe@firstactuarial.co.uk
Tel: 0113 818 7365



first actuarial
A Gallagher Company

7 factors that affect the price of leasing a minibus

There are several factors that will affect the cost of leasing a minibus. This article goes through those factors so you have a better understanding of how your minibus leasing quote is determined and what decisions you can make to affect your monthly cost.

It might also help you understand why some quotes for vehicles are lower or higher than others, so you can make like-for-like comparisons.

Firstly, let's make sure we understand what leasing a minibus means, as opposed to hiring or renting, hire purchase or outright purchase.

What is minibus leasing?

Leasing is a finance option that gives you the use of a brand-new minibus for a set monthly fee for a pre-determined contract length, five years for example. You are not buying the minibus, and at no point will you own it; at the end of the contract term you return the minibus and discuss a new contract for another brand-new bus.

Comparing minibus quotes

When comparing minibus quotes, it's important to make sure you are comparing like-for-like as there are many factors that make up a quote. If they are not all the same, you may not be able to make a reasonable comparison.

1. Specifications on your minibus

Just like cars, there are higher-spec options on minibuses. The Ford Transit minibus has a Leader and a Trend option. The Ford Transit Leader is the cost-effective, entry-level model. While both options have a reversing camera, sensors and reverse alarm, the Leader doesn't have air conditioning, any privacy options, and has a keyed start. Whereas the Trend includes privacy glass, front and rear climate control, and a keyless start.

It is important to know what comes as standard with the minibuses you are choosing and

what additional specifications, like air conditioning or privacy glass, your quote includes.

2. Length of minibus leasing contracts

Typically, leasing contracts run from two to five years, or 24 to 60 months.

A longer minibus leasing contract will generally result in lower monthly payments. This is because the primary cost of a lease, the depreciation of its resale value, is spread over a greater number of months.

3. Initial payments and payment profiles for minibuses

Payment profiles are how the initial payment and monthly payments are split. A payment profile of 3+59 means that the initial payment required for the minibus is three times the monthly payment, then 59 monthly payments will need to be made.

So, for example, if the minibus is quoted as £584 + VAT per month on a 3+59 payment profile you will pay a £1,752 + VAT initial payment, and then 59 months at £584 + VAT.

If you wish to make a greater initial payment, this may reduce your monthly payments. This is something you would need to discuss with your minibus broker. At Rivervale Minibus we tend to keep initial payments low so that our clients are not faced with large upfront costs.

It's important to understand that the initial payment is not a deposit, it is not refunded at any stage, and you are not buying the vehicle. This is just the lump sum payment you need to make at the beginning of your contract.

4. Annual mileage allowance

Every leased minibus or vehicle has a mileage allowance, a cap of the number of miles you expect to drive each year for the duration of your contract. Anything over this allowance will be chargeable, per mile, when you return the minibus. Mileage allowances exist because increased mileage means increased depreciation and, as we have mentioned, one of the main costs of the lease is the depreciation of the value of the minibus. Higher mileage, or excess mileage, also results in higher maintenance costs. The more miles it does, the more value it loses.

As standard, most minibus quotes will be based on an annual mileage allowance of 5,000, because the majority of schools and organisations leasing vehicles stay local and do shorter runs.

An increase in the mileage allowance will mean an increase in the monthly costs and the initial payment. You can ask Rivervale Minibus for quotes with different mileage allowances, 8,000 or 10,000 for example, if you are concerned that 5,000 would not be enough.

5. Funder or customer-maintained contracts

A funder-maintained contract, sometimes called a fully maintained contract, is where the costs of your annual MOT, regular services and replacement tyres (due to wear and tear) are included in the monthly payments.

If you choose to have a customer-maintained contract, you will be responsible for paying for your MOTs and services and any replacement tyres you might need over the course of your contract.

A customer-maintained contract is typically less per month than a funder-maintained contract, but you will have to also budget for vehicle maintenance.

Ten-week minibus safety inspections are not usually included in leasing contracts; you will also need to budget for these to ensure your minibuses remain roadworthy under the requirements of either a Section 19 Permit or PSV Operator's Licence.

6. Livery and logo, half or full wraps

Rivervale Minibus often include standard livery and logo in their leasing quotes, so you can have your minibuses delivered ready to go and advertise your organisation to the local community.

If you require a full or half wrap, to completely change the look or colour of your minibus, this will affect the price: whether it is a one-off payment for the wrap, or the additional cost is spread in your monthly payments.

7. Fair wear and tear at the end of your contract

Without a clear understanding of fair wear and tear, you may face unexpected additional charges when you return your minibus at the end of the contract, particularly if accidental damage, lack of maintenance, or negligence has been mistaken for 'wear and tear'.

There is a fair wear and tear policy set out by the BVRLA that gives visual and detailed explanations to help you understand any issues you might need to address before returning your vehicle, so you don't face additional charges.

Rivervale Minibus are happy to answer any questions you have about minibus leasing, and we will work with you to find the best minibus for your needs and the right finance option. Give our friendly team a call on 01869 253744 or email minibus@rivervale.co.uk

The Ultimate Combination

Ford Transit minibuses
& D1 driver training



Ford Transit 12 & 17-seat
minibuses from only
£584 +VAT per month*



D1 driver
training only
£1,999 +VAT

01869 253744

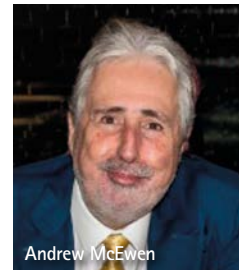
www.rivervaleminibus.co.uk

minibus@rivervale.co.uk

*£584 +VAT based on 12 seat Ford Transit Leader. Initial payment £1752 + VAT. Payment profile 3+59 months. Annual mileage allowance 5,000. Fund-maintained contract. Business users only, subject to status, guarantees and indemnities may be required. Excess Mileage charges apply. Unfair Wear and Tear and Damage Charges may apply. Full terms and conditions below. Rivervale is a broker and not a lender. Rivervale Minibus Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (registration number 3723474). We do not provide independent financial advice. We will receive a commission and/or quality-derived bonus for introducing you to one of our panel of leasing companies or finance providers. The commission we receive may be preset but can vary and will impact the amount payable by the customer.

From choice to controversy – private education and the new parental dilemma

Educationalist, Andrew McEwen, explores how public and political perception of independent education has changed since the turn of the century, the influence this has had on parental choice, and what this means for the sector.



A quiet consensus

For much of the early 2000s, private education in Britain occupied a relatively untroubled place in public life. Under Tony Blair's New Labour government, it was neither celebrated nor seriously threatened. Many within the political class quietly made use of it, even while advocating for stronger state provision. The prevailing assumption was that independent schools were part of a mixed ecosystem – imperfect, perhaps, but tolerable. For parents, the decision to pay fees was largely straightforward: if you could afford it, you did so in pursuit of advantage, without much sense of moral complication.

That consensus did not collapse overnight. During the years of David Cameron's government, the debate remained relatively muted. The emphasis was on raising standards across the board through competition, with academies and free schools designed to inject dynamism into the state sector. Private schools, in this framing, were less a problem than a benchmark – evidence of what might be possible. Parents continued to weigh practical considerations: class sizes, facilities, university destinations. The ideological temperature remained low, and the lines between differing viewpoints were often blurred rather than sharply drawn.

From markets to morality

Yet something more fundamental began to shift in the years following the 2016 Brexit referendum. As Britain became more politically polarised, questions of inequality and social mobility moved to the centre of national debate. This

polarisation was not limited to the UK; similar tensions began to manifest themselves following Trump's election in the USA. Studies from organisations such as The Sutton Trust drew attention to the disproportionate influence of privately educated individuals in public life. Private schools were no longer just educational institutions; they became symbols of a wider imbalance. The language changed – from choice and diversity to fairness and structural advantage. At the same time, the ideological lines began to harden: what had once been a spectrum of views started to resolve into more clearly opposing positions.

This reframing reached its sharpest expression under Jeremy Corbyn, whose party openly entertained the abolition of private schools. While such proposals never materialised, they shifted the boundaries of debate. It became acceptable – even common – to question not just the benefits of private education but its legitimacy. Crucially, the debate became more binary. On one side sat those who viewed private education as inherently incompatible with a fair society; on the other, those who saw it as a legitimate expression of parental choice and pluralism. The space for nuanced, middle-ground positions began to narrow.

The politics of fairness

Today, under Keir Starmer, the tone is more measured but no less consequential. The introduction of VAT on school fees and the removal of certain tax advantages are framed as matters of fairness rather than ideology. The message is

clear: private schools may continue to exist, but not on preferential terms. Yet even this ostensibly pragmatic approach sits within a more clearly delineated ideological landscape. Supporters view such policies as necessary corrections to systemic imbalance; critics see them as punitive measures that risk undermining choice and diversity.

The new parental calculation

For parents, this evolution has transformed what was once a relatively simple decision into a more complex and, at times, uncomfortable calculation. Cost is the most immediate factor. Rising fees, compounded by taxation, are forcing many families to reconsider whether independent education remains viable. But the financial question is now intertwined with something less tangible: perception – and increasingly, alignment.

To choose private education today is, more than before, to be situated within a visible ideological divide. In some circles, it invites questions about values, about commitment to the state system, about complicity in wider inequalities. Parents who might once have viewed the decision as purely pragmatic now find themselves navigating a landscape in which their choice can be interpreted as a statement of belief. The delineation of ideologies – between fairness and freedom, equity and choice – has made that interpretation more pronounced and, at times, more uncomfortable.

This does not mean that demand will disappear. For many families, concerns about standards, resources, or stability in the state sector continue to justify the cost. Indeed,

in areas where those pressures are most acute, the appeal of independent schools may even intensify. But the psychology of the decision has changed. It is no longer simply about securing the best outcome for one's child; it is about making that decision in full awareness of the ideological context in which it sits. These additional pressures on the decision-making process create extra stress within families.

A sharpening divide

At the same time, expectations of the sector have risen. Parents who are asked to pay more – financially and reputationally – are demanding clearer evidence of value. Academic results alone are no longer sufficient. There is greater scrutiny of pastoral care, character development, and the extent to which schools contribute to the wider community. Independent schools, in turn, are under pressure to demonstrate public benefit in more visible and credible ways.

What emerges is a more fragile equilibrium. Private education remains a powerful draw for those who can afford it, but it operates in a climate of heightened scrutiny and increasingly polarised opinion. The debate has moved on from whether such schools should exist to how – and on what terms – they justify their place.

Two decades ago, the choice to go private was largely a question of means and ambition. Today, it is also a question of values and identity – made more acute by a society in which those values are more clearly, and more sharply, defined.

Andrew McEwen MA, FRSA, has been Director and Chairman of IES (International Education Systems Limited) responsible for the development of schools in new markets, and Trustee and Director of three independent schools in the UK and two in South Africa, and is a member of BELMAS (British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society). He has also served on the Board of ISA (the International Schools Association) and the Advisory Board for the MA programme in International Education at NHLStenden University in the Netherlands. For nearly 20 years he has worked as a partner with National School Transfer where he helps buyers and sellers achieve their goals in the schools acquisition market.

LOOKING TO BUY OR SELL A SCHOOL OR NURSERY



National School Transfer



For a Professional – Confidential Service

www.nationalschooltransfer.com Email: info@nationalschooltransfer.com Tel: +44 (0)1980 621251

Investing in the future of school estates with impactful timber frame buildings

Independent schools in the UK are constantly striving to provide exceptional educational environments while balancing budgetary constraints and sustainability goals. In this context, TG Escapes' modular timber frame buildings emerge as an ideal solution, offering a compelling combination of speed, quality, flexibility, sustainability and cost-effectiveness that aligns perfectly with the unique needs of these institutions.

Accelerated expansion without disruption

One of the most significant advantages of modular construction is its speed. Independent schools often face the challenge of expanding facilities to accommodate growing student numbers or evolving curriculum needs. TG Escapes' modular buildings are manufactured off-site in a controlled factory environment. This drastically reduces on-site construction time compared to traditional methods, minimising disruption to the school's daily operations, thus maintaining a consistent learning environment. Projects that might take months with conventional construction can be completed in a matter of weeks, allowing schools to quickly adapt to changing demands.

Bespoke design for unique educational needs

Independent schools pride themselves on offering tailored educational experiences. TG Escapes' panelised modular approach offers remarkable design flexibility. Whether a school requires new classrooms, a state-of-the-art science laboratory, an early years provision, a dedicated music room, or a versatile sports hall, the modular system can be customised to meet these specific requirements. Internal layouts, external finishes, and architectural features can all be tailored to create inspiring learning spaces that reflect the school's unique ethos and brand, blending with estate aesthetics.

Sustainability at the core

Sustainability is increasingly important for independent schools, both from an ethical standpoint and as a conduit to engage environmentally conscious students and parents. Timber is a naturally renewable resource, and TG Escapes prioritises sustainable sourcing and responsible forestry practices. Modular construction

inherently generates less waste than traditional building methods, as materials are precisely cut and utilised in the factory setting. Timber frame buildings offer excellent thermal performance, contributing to reduced energy consumption and lower operational costs, a significant benefit for schools managing tight budgets. A focus on biophilic design, incorporating natural light and materials, further enhances the learning environment.

Cost-effectiveness, leasing and long-term value

Without sacrificing quality or longevity, modular construction can offer cost savings compared with traditional building methods. The controlled manufacturing process allows for greater efficiency, reduced labour costs, and minimised material waste. The speed of construction also translates to quicker occupancy and a faster return on investment. In partnership with a funding specialist, TG Escapes buildings can be leased with no requirement for upfront capital. This means that the capital cost can be spread over a 10-year term, reducing



pressure on CapEx. All buildings are designed to be carbon neutral in operation for regulated energy, over a 50+ year lifespan ensuring they are a long-term asset.

Enhanced learning environments

Beyond the practical benefits, TG Escapes' buildings create inspiring spaces that enhance the learning experience. The natural warmth and aesthetic appeal of timber create a welcoming and calming atmosphere. The fundamental biophilic design ethos integrates features that promote student wellbeing, such as ample natural light, improved acoustics, and connection to the outdoors. These factors contribute to a positive learning environment that fosters creativity, engagement, and academic success.



For more information call 0800 917 7726, email info@tgescapes.co.uk or visit www.tgescapes.co.uk

CHANGING FACES... CHANGING PLACES...



The High School of Dundee has announced the appointment of Irfan Latif as its new Executive Rector.

He will take up the position at the start of the Autumn Term 2026, following the retirement of Lise Hudson at the end of this academic year.

Mr Latif has nearly 20 years' experience in senior leadership positions in both state and independent schools, with previous headships at Sexey's School,

Somerset; DLD College London; and the Royal Hospital School, Suffolk.

A co-founder of the ISC (Independent Schools Council) Inclusion and Diversity Group, he currently serves on the Board of Trustees at AGBIS (Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools) and sits on the ISA (Independent Schools Association) National Executive Committee. He also holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Leadership and Management and is completing an MA in Educational Leadership at the University of Buckingham.

Queen's College Prep School (QCPS), London, has announced that Georgia Habanananda and Ailsa Buddle have taken up their roles as Co-Heads.



Georgia Habanananda, originally from Sydney, Australia, holds a Bachelor

of Arts/Education and has taught across diverse London communities including Islington, Tower Hamlets and Hackney. Her experience spans all prep year groups from EYFS to Form VI, and she has recently completed a master's level Postgraduate Certificate in Specific Learning Differences (SpLD) Dyslexia. Since joining QCPS in 2019 as Head of Learning Support, she has also served as Head of Inclusion and Deputy Head.

Richard Tillett continues as Principal of both Queen's College and Queen's College Prep School.



Ailsa Buddle began her career following a joint honours degree in Hispanic Studies and Drama at the University of Birmingham and a PGCE in Spanish from Nottingham Trent University. She has taught across a range of schools in Nottingham and London. Since joining QCPS in 2014 as Head of Modern Foreign Languages, she has held several senior roles including Head of English, Head of Prep and, most recently, Deputy Head Academic.



Windermere School, Cumbria, has announced the appointment of Jessica Sheldrick as its new Headteacher, effective this September.

Mr William Doherty has formally taken up his post as Head at Stonyhurst, Lancashire. He joins the school from Xavier College, Melbourne, and has over 30 years'

An advocate for outdoor learning and the International Baccalaureate, Jessica will join the school following a 24-year tenure at Rishworth School, West Yorkshire, where she rose from trainee biology teacher to Head.

experience in education, including extensive leadership within Jesuit schools.

Founded in 1593, Stonyhurst is the oldest continuously active Jesuit school in the world and is part of a global Jesuit network.



This term, Somerhill Independent Prep School, Kent, has welcomed Rhian Thornton as its new Head.

Rhian brings over 20 years of leadership experience to her new role, having led both co-educational and single-sex schools in Surrey and Berkshire, including nine years as Head of Upton House School in Windsor.

Alongside her school leadership roles, Rhian is a governor at a London prep school and an active

member of the IAPS Education Committee, contributing to national conversations on curriculum development and the future of independent education. Her professional interests include digital innovation, engineering education and the development of confident, articulate learners who are well prepared for life beyond prep school.

Rhian joins Somerhill with her family – her husband, Marcus, and their three children, Joseph, Lily, and Martha, all of whom attend senior independent schools in the South East – along with their fox-red Labradors, Elmo and Ernie.



Stuart Shelton has been appointed new Principal and CEO of The Princethorpe Foundation, with effect from September 2027.

Mr Shelton will take over from current Foundation Principal, Ed Hester, who will be retiring at the end of the next academic year after 18 years' service leading the Foundation.

The Princethorpe Foundation comprises of Little Crackers Nursery and Crackley Hall School in Kenilworth, Warwickshire; Crescent School in Bilton, Warwickshire; and its senior school, Princethorpe

College, located near Princethorpe, midway between Leamington Spa and Rugby. Together the schools provide co-educational, independent day schooling with a Christian ethos from age two to 18 years.

Currently Headteacher of St Peter's Catholic School in Solihull, West Midlands, a role he has held for the past four years, Stuart also has senior leadership experience in both the state and independent school sectors, and was previously Deputy Headteacher of The Priory School in Birmingham, Head of Secondary at the Doha British School in Qatar and Executive Headteacher of Four Dwellings Primary and Secondary Academies in Birmingham.



How good is your provision for pupils with SpLD?

We exist to help you find out and then we tell parents.

We offer:

- For your school: a visit by an SpLD expert to assess your provision
- For parents: a free Register of schools accredited for their Learning Support Provision

Contact CReSTeD via email: admin@crested.org.uk
Or visit our website: www.crested.org.uk
Registered Charity no. 1052103
Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic pupils







Have a new head you would like mentioned?
 Please email: changingfaces@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

Reconnecting young people with nature

Haileybury, Hertfordshire, has recently opened a new Outdoor Education Area, a purpose-built space designed to bring learning to life for all year groups. Master of the school, Eugene du Toit, explores why the opportunity to experience learning outside of the classroom is so essential for pupils' personal and academic development and the impact it can have on their growth both within and beyond school life.



Eugene du Toit

Research confirms the benefit to children of learning and being in nature. Sadly, research also confirms that children today are spending less time outdoors than previous generations did. A marked increase in online activity, the loss of readily accessible outdoor spaces and a narrowing curricular focus have, over a sustained period of time, combined to reshape childhood experiences and opportunities for so many young people.

Technology has expanded access to knowledge and transformed how young people learn. However, excessive screen time is also causing increasing concern amongst parents and educators. It is essential that the right balance is struck between classroom learning, the use of technology and time spent outdoors. Schools increasingly recognise the importance of outdoor experiences as part of a well-rounded education.

Engagement with nature can support children's wellbeing and spark curiosity, while structured outdoor learning also encourages social and emotional growth, collaborative learning and character development. The challenge is how to meaningfully embed these experiences into daily school life.

Haileybury is an academically selective school and our adoption of technology which effectively supports pupils' learning has been recognised by both Apple and Google. However, we have long believed that education should go beyond the classroom. Our purpose is to develop the mind, body and spirit of every pupil and we are committed to ensuring that young people leave school equipped with the values, skills and credentials they need to thrive. Outdoor learning contributes to these core priorities. Natural environments

complement academic study and provide opportunities for pupils to think practically and develop confidence in their own judgement.

Creating opportunities for learning outdoors

We recently strengthened our commitment to outdoor learning by opening a new Outdoor Education Centre in woodland on our campus. The site features a covered outdoor classroom, a large cooking area, a sheltered firepit which can accommodate a House or a number of classes, a camping area, and composting toilet facilities. Here, pupils can enjoy taking part in lessons and activities that connect learning with the natural world, all within a dedicated space.

One of the most noticeable features of our outdoor learning programme is how much our pupils enjoy it. Activities such as preparing food over a fire or constructing shelters require perseverance, creativity and co-operation. Pupils approach tasks with focus and a feeling of collective endeavour and shared responsibility.

Experiences like these support the development of resilience in pupils. In daily life, digital devices often provide immediate answers. Outdoor learning, by contrast, introduces situations in which pupils must experiment, reflect and fine-tune their approach. Lighting a fire, cooking a meal and preparing a place to sleep require preparation and careful attention. Learning through some trial and error sees pupils succeeding in the end and, in doing so, they build confidence in their ability to solve problems through persistence.

Intellectual curiosity and engagement

Outdoor environments also encourage observation. Woodland settings invite pupils to notice seasonal changes, wildlife and patterns within the landscape.

These experiences prompt reflective questions and help pupils deepen their understanding of the scientific ideas they are studying in class.

Concepts explored in the classroom often gain clarity when observed in ecosystems and habitats first-hand. In this way, outdoor learning transforms knowledge into something tangible.

At Haileybury, these opportunities are integrated into the regular rhythm of school life. Pupils use the outdoor site for woodland sessions, outdoor lessons and co-curricular activities throughout the year. Regular engagement with the natural environment ensures that time in nature is seen as a routine aspect of school life rather than an occasional enrichment activity.

Shared challenge and personal development

Our wider co-curricular offering supports the development of skills, resilience and character. Through Haileybury's Coghill Programme and Adventure Skills courses, pupils participate in activities including climbing, mountain biking, canoeing, bushcraft and first aid training. These experiences develop practical skills while encouraging responsibility and leadership.

Outdoor education complements established initiatives such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the Combined Cadet Force. Shared challenges in these programmes have long helped pupils strengthen independence and self-belief. With the addition of our outdoor learning area, younger pupils can now enjoy similar experiences as an embedded element of their educational journey.

The new space will also support our commitment to partnership within the wider community. Local primary schools and pupils from our partner academy, Haileybury Turnford, have access to the facilities; we want to extend the benefits of outdoor learning far and wide.

A wider perspective on education

Outdoor learning at Haileybury meaningfully enhances the academic curriculum. Direct observation of landscapes and habitats reinforces classroom lessons and provides pupils with the opportunity to apply theory to practice. Time outside also supports executive functions such as cognitive flexibility and sustained attention; pupils return to the classroom with restored concentration after spending time in nature.

There is a vitally important pastoral dimension to the priority we place on outdoor learning. School life can be demanding for young people, but time in natural surroundings offers necessary space for quiet thought and personal reflection. The slower pace of being and learning in nature provides a healthy contrast to the constant flow of information that defines much of modern adolescence.

As educators, our responsibility stretches well beyond preparing pupils for examinations. Time at school should also equip young people with the ability to think creatively and critically while collaborating to solve complex problems. It should foster curiosity, deepen resilience and develop character. In an increasingly digital age, experiences in nature strengthen those qualities which make us all distinctly human; they play a key role in preparing pupils to face their future with confidence and optimism.

I encourage schools across the UK to consider how their curriculum and learning environments can harness the benefits of outdoor settings to support pupil development and wellbeing. Reconnecting young people with nature and making outdoor learning integral to school life can help build personal qualities and lasting memories that endure long after pupils leave school.



Westminster Canoe race

Pupils from Kimbolton School, Cambridgeshire, have secured a victory at the Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race.

The race, which is run over a 125-mile course, spans four days, beginning in Devizes (Wiltshire) and finishing at Westminster Bridge, opposite the Houses of Parliament. Attracting competitors from across the globe, the event tests both physical and mental endurance.

The Kimbolton canoeists – known as the Purple Paddlers – faced strong winds of up to 26mph caused by the southern tail of Storm Dave but it didn't deter them, with pupils Tom and Theo claiming first place in the Junior Doubles category. Kimbolton were also, for the second consecutive year, named as the fastest school

Pictured: The Purple Paddlers

crew, as well as the fastest mixed junior.

The full Kimbolton Purple Paddlers team comprised:

- Tom and Theo
- Aimee and Isaac
- Hayden and Laura
- Emily and Hannah
- Aaron (Old Kimboltonian) and Jake.

In addition to their sporting success, the pupils used the challenge to raise funds for the charity YoungMinds.

Old Kimboltonians (OKs), Harry and Matt, also took on the non-stop 24-hour version of the race. Battling fatigue and the elements, they completed the full 125-mile course in 23 hours, 28 minutes, and 58 seconds.

British Horse Society Approval

Chedington Riding Academy at Leweston School, Dorset, has achieved British Horse Society Centre Approval, recognising excellence in welfare, safety and education.

As a BHS Approved Centre, the Academy will follow the BHS learning pathway, giving pupils access to structured, nationally recognised progression routes that support learning at every

stage. From September, this will include the launch of a two-year Equine Studies programme for Year 10 pupils, delivered alongside the established BTEC Level 3 Equine Management course in Sixth Form. Both programmes are aligned with the BHS Challenge Awards, enabling students to work towards BHS Stage 1 qualifications, with opportunities for some learners to progress to Stage 2 as part of an extended programme.

Younger riders will also benefit from the Academy's BHS approval through the introduction of Pony Stars – the BHS Junior Challenge Awards – offered as an after-school club. This ensures that equestrian education, skill development, and an understanding of horse care are accessible from an early age.



Pictured: Lorraine Robert, Director of Riding at Chedington Riding Academy at Leweston School



Cricket club signing

A 16-year-old student from Malvern College, Worcestershire, has signed his first professional contract with Warwickshire Cricket Club.

Charlie Taylor, who is studying for his GCSEs, has signed a two-year rookie contract which comes into effect from July 1, and will then be extended by a full-time professional contract until the end of the 2028 season.

A bowler, Charlie was previously selected for the

Pictured: Charlie Taylor

England U19 squad at the age of just 15.

Charlie's development has been supported by coaching both at Malvern College and within Warwickshire's professional setup, where he trains alongside former professionals and elite players.

Charlie's ultimate ambition is to establish himself in the Warwickshire first team and pursue a long-term professional career in cricket.



National Shield win

A girls' football team from Lord Wandsworth College, Hampshire, has made history by winning a national trophy.

The Girls' U15A Football Team beat Hertfordshire's, Queenswood, 4-1 to lift the Independent Schools Football Association (ISFA) U15 Girls Shield.

The game concluded a successful season for the girls, who also finished semi-finalists in the ISFA U15 Girls' Cup.

The team is the most successful

Pictured: The winning U15A football team Photo credit: Lord Wandsworth College

girls' football side that the college has ever produced. Co-captain, Hollie, commented: "It's incredible to think that we are the first girls' team in 100 years to achieve this at LWC. For a group of girls who may not have had the opportunity to play football elsewhere because of the limited availability of girls' teams, we've built something truly special. For me, this wasn't just about winning, but showing people who we are, what we're capable of and why girls' football deserves to keep on growing."



Water Polo

The Under 15 Girls' water polo team from Bolton School Girls' Division, Lancashire, have been named ESSA National Champions for the third time.

The team produced a series of dominant performances throughout the competition, progressing through the preliminary rounds and knockout stages to reach the National Finals.

Pictured: Some of the Girls' Division Under 15s team playing water polo
Photo credit: Annie Clapperton

At the National Finals, the girls faced strong opposition in the group stages and semi-final but made it through to reach the Final against Alleyn's School, London.

The Under 18 Girls also became National runners up after their Final, while the Under 15 Boys' team finished third in the country. The Under 18 Boys placed fourth in the National Plate competition.



Kickboxing

Annabel Cooper, a 12-year-old pupil at Durham High School, has qualified for her sport's world championships in America after winning two medals at a national competition.

Annabel, who recently competed in the WKA (World Kickboxing Association) Scottish International Open Championships, gained a gold medal in Creative Forms and a silver in Traditional Forms in front of 650 other competitors.

Her success at the competition means she will join Team England

Pictured: Annabel Cooper

at the WKA 50th Anniversary World Championships in Delaware in October.

Headmistress at Durham High School, Michelle Hill, said: "Annabel has consistently shown her dedication to her sport and we're delighted all her hours of training and learning have paid off with a place on Team England. We're so excited to see how she'll fare at the world championships. The Durham High School community will all be cheering her on!"

TARAFLEX®

— SPORTS FLOORING —

COVER EVERY INCH OF THE HALL.

It's...Where Champions Play.

Taraflex® is the most widely specified indoor sports surface in the world. Its unique construction and technical performance is unrivalled, it has been fitted at every Olympic Games since 1976.

Taraflex® delivers optimum safety and comfort for all users, and is widely recognised and installed in the education sectors. Over 8 million pupils every day enjoy the benefits of Taraflex® sports flooring.

If you have an education facility and require more than just sports flooring, Gerflor have other resilient floor coverings for your project, including Vinyl, Carpets, Linoleum, and Rubber finishes.

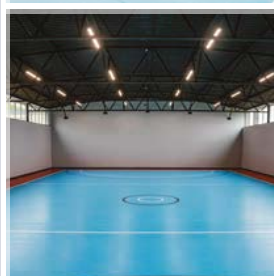
CONTACT US FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

☎ +44 (0) 1625 428 922

@ contractuk@gerflor.com

🌐 www.gerflor.co.uk

Gerflor





The Independent Schools Magazine online

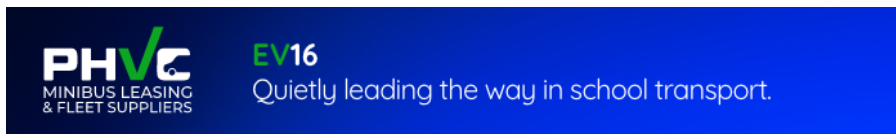


This magazine, and back issues, are available to read online or download, visit:
www.independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk/view-issues.html

You can receive notification of future issues as soon as they are published – simply register your email address here: www.independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

(Your email address will never be sold on or otherwise made available to third parties and you can cancel at any time.)

There is no charge for these online eMagazines, thanks to the support of:



ADVERTISE WITH US

Unrivalled Print & Digital Opportunities



Visit www.independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk for our Media Pack.

Call Sean McKeon 01242 259249 or email ads@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk



The Independent Schools Magazine

Vires per Verum – Strength through Truth

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

Editorial Advisory Board

The publishers are grateful for the interest, advice and support of a distinguished Editorial Advisory Board whose members currently include:

Elisabeth Lewis-Jones: a governor of Bloxham School, Oxfordshire; 2008 President of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations and Director of Liquid Public Relations, a consultancy with expertise within the education sector

Emily Roberts: Communications Officer, Independent Schools Council (ISC)

Darren O'Connor: Partner specialising in independent schools and not-for-profits at Accountants and Business Advisors James Cowper Kreston

Alex Beynon: Media Co-ordinator, Independent Schools Council (ISC)

Will Dixon: Chief Operating Officer at Lord Wandsworth College, Hampshire

Jesse Elzinga: Head, Sevenoaks School, Kent

Ceri Jones: Head, Caterham School, Surrey

Deborah Leek-Bailey OBE: Head of Independent schools, Education Development Trust; Education Advisor Child Bereavement UK; Consultant DLB Leadership

Natalie Sanderson: Managing Director of Sublime Public Relations – journalist and independent PR specialist with particular expertise in the independent education sector

Advertising Sales & Accounts:

Sean McKeon, Fellows Media Ltd, The Gallery, Manor Farm, Southam, Cheltenham GL52 3PB
T: 01242 259249
E: ads@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

Editor & Publisher, Distribution:

Angharad Jones T: 01635 201125
E: editorial@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

Design Studio/Pre-press Production, Website:

Andrew Wicks T: 01635 201125
E: studio@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

Consultant:

Kimble Earl
E: consultant@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

The Independent Schools Magazine
Serif House
Blake Road, Hermitage
Berkshire, RG18 9WN

eMagazine: Free, please register at:

www.independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk

All rights reserved. Any form of reproduction of this magazine in part or whole is prohibited without the written consent of the publisher. Any views expressed by advertisers or contributors may not be those of the publisher. Unsolicited artwork, manuscripts and images are accepted by the publisher on the understanding that the publisher cannot be held responsible for loss or damage however caused. All material, copy, and artwork supplied is assumed to be copyright free unless otherwise advised in writing. Advertisement bookings are accepted subject to normal terms and conditions – see website.

The Independent Schools Magazine is published by ISM Publishing Ltd
Reg in England No. 15757051 © Copyright ISM Publishing Ltd

Printed by Micropress Printers, Reydon, Suffolk.



Inspiring buildings for sport and leisure



Our net-zero timber frame buildings are manufactured offsite for minimal disruption, using natural materials. Over 800 buildings UK-wide accommodating sports and well-being hubs, changing facilities, pavilions, dance studios and sports halls. 100% lease funding available. Fully inclusive design and build for permanent buildings that won't cost the earth.

0800 917 7726
info@tgescapes.co.uk

biophilic
by nature



**UK leisure
framework**

A photograph of two young women standing on a balcony with a metal railing, laughing and looking towards the right. The woman on the left is wearing a dark blue sweater over a white collared shirt and dark blue trousers. The woman on the right is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt with a red collar and a dark blue skirt with a red grid pattern. The background shows a clear blue sky and greenery.

TAILORED, NOT UNIFORM

We work in partnership to forge strong relationships to truly understand your school's community and what sets it apart.

Creating uniforms that students are happy and proud to wear.

Call us on 0113 238 9520 or email info@perryuniform.co.uk
perryuniform.co.uk

Perry
UNIFORM