

October 2023

# *The Independent Schools Magazine*



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# In this issue...



## Going co-ed

The Kingsley School, Warwickshire, will become fully co-educational from September 2025.

The plan to introduce boys to its senior school has been designed to offer youngsters the opportunity for mixed-gender education up to the age of 18 for the first time in the history of Warwick Schools Foundation.

The Kingsley Preparatory School already takes boys up until age 11, which means they currently have to move to another school in the Foundation or elsewhere in the area.

Chair of Foundation Governors, Sally Austin, said the move will offer greater choice to parents in the area.

"We believe that it is important for all pupils, regardless of whether they are girls or boys, to interact as part of their school experience.

"This is happening on our Warwick Campus, in a 'best of both worlds' environment, where girls and boys have numerous opportunities to work together.

"That approach has been hindered at Kingsley due to location and we have concluded that offering a selective, co-educational school as part of the Foundation's charitable activities offers even greater choice to parents. This will function alongside greater opportunities for collaboration with our Warwick Campus schools."

The Kingsley School, which celebrates its 140th anniversary in 2024, will admit boys into Years 7 and 12 from September 2025, with the aim of achieving an equal gender split.

Pictured: Sally Austin (left) with Principal of Warwick Schools Foundation, Richard Nicholson outside The Kingsley School

## Cover background

## Making fireflies

Pupils from Felsted School, Essex, have been involved with expanding a charity art installation of glowing lights in the shape of fireflies, each one dedicated to the memory of a loved one.

To find out more about this and some of the other arts events that have been happening around the country see page 38.

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## Is Your School Mentioned?

## Schools featured in this issue include:

ACS International Schools; Ashville College; Ashville Prep; Bedales; Bishop's Stortford College; Bromsgrove School; Bolton School Foundation; Bolton School Junior Girls'; Burgess Hill Girls; Caterham School; Danes Hill School; Downe House; Eversfield Prep; Felsted School; Gordonstoun; Hunter Hall; The High School of Glasgow Juniors; Kent College, Pembury; King's Ely; Kingsley School; Latymer Upper School; The Leys School; Loughborough Amherst School; Loughborough Grammar School; Oxford International College, Brighton; Pangbourne College; Pattison; Roedean School; Rossall School; Sibford School; Solihull School; St Faith's, Cambridge; St Margaret's School, Hertfordshire; St Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen; St Mary's, Cambridge; St Mary's Senior School, Colchester; Thomas's London Day Schools; Truro School; Westholme School; Westonbirt School; Woodbridge School; Woodhouse Grove School; Wychwood School; York House

# To GCSE or not to GCSE?

## Making the case for change

Are GCSEs still the right form of assessment for 16-year-olds? With this question hitting the headlines again, the two schools that have announced plans to offer an alternative GCSE model along with their own qualifications explain why they are going down this path, how it will work and the reaction they have received.

### Head of Bedales, Hampshire, William Goldsmith:

Bedales has been in the press quite a lot lately (see report in Telegraph, 11 September<sup>1</sup>), an experience which is always quite intense but, in this case, has led to some constructive conversations and even resonates with the recent announcement by Rishi Sunak of plans to reform the 16-19 curriculum. While the ink is not yet dry (at the time of writing) on Sunak's plans, it is interesting to note how the way his proposals are reported is equally simplistic to the way the reforms we're bringing in at Bedales were presented. While The Times (18 September) suggested in their headline that we are "ditching GCSEs"<sup>2</sup>, The Guardian (4 October) wrote of Sunak's plans to "scrap A Levels"<sup>3</sup>. While I would not say that I have that much in common with our current Prime Minister, in this situation we are both victims of crude misrepresentation as our plans are actually to move to a two GCSE model and the Conservative Party wants to merge T Levels and A Levels into a broader baccalaureate-style leaving certificate rather than do away with A Levels. Obviously, this is a common problem when dealing with the mainstream media. Luckily, however, there are also more specialist media outlets like this one which allow for a more nuanced exploration of the case for reform of our curriculum and assessment system.

We decided 17 years ago to start to offer our own curriculum in some subjects – courses we dubbed 'Bedales Assessed Courses' (BACs) where students are able to study subjects without being constrained by the narrow limitations of the GCSEs. Instead of predominantly terminal examinations, our students are assessed in a variety of ways – vivas, coursework, projects, artefacts and timed essays / exams. It is the subject domain which drives the choice of assessments and we are also able to select curriculum content that is more stretching, challenging and engaging for our students who are destined for an A Level pathway in the Sixth Form. Contrary to what some commentators have said, these are not alternative external accredited courses to rival the GCSEs but our own internal courses. While they are externally moderated and recognised by UCAS on their list of courses that students can enter onto their university applications, they are not equivalents and, being internally assessed, do not require the endless drilling of mocks. Since we started gradually moving over to these subjects, our students have gone from strength to strength in their academic and professional careers. The next logical move is to move over the sciences and modern languages to BACs, retaining only English Language and Maths GCSEs which

we believe are important gateway qualifications and give our students enough of an experience of high stakes assessment at 16. In this, we have looked to models of school systems around the world including British Columbia in Canada and the Singaporean state system. This transition that we announced in September will now take several years of careful planning and gradual transition, ensuring that our new BACs are of the highest standard and prepare our students better for A Level (and life beyond Bedales) than the current GCSEs.

So, how has this gone down? Remarkably well! Our decision was one we took after considerable consultation and we will continue to work closely with colleagues, students and parents, as well as the wider educational establishment, as we go through the process of change over the next few years. There is a need, in some cases, for me to explain things in detail, either in parent briefings in our prep and pre-prep or one-to-one. However, once we talk things through, the reaction is extremely positive and this mirrors an overwhelming positive reaction we have received nationally from colleagues across all sectors and even in places like the Jeremy Vine Show on BBC Radio 2<sup>4</sup> (scroll to 1'04'44) where all but one of their listeners who called in was in favour.



William Goldsmith

We really hope that, in making our announcement as part of a wider 10-year strategic plan<sup>5</sup>, we are able to contribute to the national debate about education and to demonstrate that, with the independence we have, we are able to innovate in a way that could be of benefit to young people in all schools. For us, that is one of the most compelling arguments for the continued existence of an independent sector in the UK and I was heartened that Keir Starmer made it clear in a recent announcement that he wants the sector to "thrive"<sup>6</sup>. In turn, I hope that colleagues in the independent sector will grasp the opportunities available to us even more including when it comes to introducing alternatives to unnecessary high-stakes external assessments at 16. While we are going for the two GCSE model, other schools are looking to offer just one or two non-GCSE courses. This is an excellent place to start and, should any colleagues want to discuss this further, we are always happy to share our experiences and support others who wish to innovate.

1. The Telegraph, 11 September: [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/09/11/bedales-top-private-school-ditches-gcse-for-bacs-a-levels/](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/09/11/bedales-top-private-school-ditches-gcse-for-bacs-a-levels/)

2. The Times, 18 September: [www.thetimes.co.uk/article/inside-bedales-the-private-school-thats-ditching-gcse-wvm0vhf2x](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/inside-bedales-the-private-school-thats-ditching-gcse-wvm0vhf2x)

3. The Guardian, 4 October: [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/oct/04/our-panels-verdict-on-rishi-sunaks-speech-to-the-tory-party-conference](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/oct/04/our-panels-verdict-on-rishi-sunaks-speech-to-the-tory-party-conference)

4. The Jeremy Vine Show 14 September: [www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001q5rg](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001q5rg)

5. Bedales, Our Strategy: [www.bedales.org.uk/about-us/bedales-future/our-strategy](https://www.bedales.org.uk/about-us/bedales-future/our-strategy)

6. The Telegraph, 11 September: [www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/09/11/keir-starmer-private-schools-thrive-despite-vat-pledge/](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/09/11/keir-starmer-private-schools-thrive-despite-vat-pledge/)



## Deputy Head (Academic), Latymer Upper School, London, Ian Emerson:

At Latymer Upper School we have decided that students from 2027 (the new Year 7 students joining us in 2024), will no longer take GCSE exams, apart from the legally-required Maths and English Language. We believe the exams no longer meet the needs of our students. In a school where our students are staying through to 18 (we have no intention to touch A Levels) we no longer see them as desirable and in fact we know we can do so much better.

Currently we slow down the learning of young people at a time when their minds are undergoing serious neurological development and we push them through a one-size-fits-all examination system despite differences in development. We lose a vast amount of teaching time with examination, study leave, exam preparation, exam technique (teaching to the test or at least to jump through the hoops and mark schemes) and we prepare them poorly for A Level study where they need to be more independent and more original thinkers. We are also concerned that traditional (written) exams remain more or less the only way in which we assess our young people or ask them to prove what they know. And exam questions written by a faceless exam board years in advance are not the best way to show what our own students know. We also want to be able to stretch the most able – those who end up with all grade 8s and 9s, but who more or less got those grades months before in their mocks. What real learning have they done in the subsequent months?

At Latymer we propose to replace GCSEs with our own school-designed long courses, following traditional subjects, and yes, taking the best parts of the GCSEs because there are some very good parts. We intend to supplement and develop, encouraging deep and scholarly learning to challenge and develop able learners. Students will be required to take at least two sciences, a MFL, and a humanities subject as they currently do, on top of English and Maths. In addition we will develop

short courses, 10-week long courses similar to our current Sixth Form electives, which students will take across Years 10 and 11. These will be interdisciplinary in nature and will focus on aspects of learning that students currently do not have exposure to; some examples are AI, coding, climate change, indigenous cultures or literature in translation. We also want to bring subjects currently only taught at A Level (Economics, Politics, Art History, Photography) into the middle school curriculum. The third aspect of our reformed curriculum will be that we will offer a variety of assessment methods to the students, depending on the subject and how the department wishes to assess. There will still be traditional written assessments, but in addition we will offer collaborative group work assessments, vivas, presentations (like we do with EPQ), open-book assessments and online tests, to name but a few. We also want to incorporate into the learning, in particular but not exclusively in the short courses, the fusion skills that employers tell us they want to see developed in young people today – collaboration, creativity, communication and critical thinking. Finally, we are proposing to offer collapsed weeks in the timetable to allow time for projects, for example with authentic external audiences.

The proposals at Latymer are based on years of conversations, research and development of ideas. We have held workshops and focus groups with employers, universities in the UK and internationally, parents, other schools, students, alumni and recruitment consultants. We have based much on what everyone has told us directly. We have utilised other research, not least the HMC report, “The State of Education – Time to Talk”, the Future of Jobs Report from the WEF, the CBI’s “Getting Young People Work Ready”, the Times Education Commission’s excellent report, as well as our work as part of Rethinking Assessment and the School Directed Courses Consortium.

All of our findings chime with everything that others are hearing. Furthermore, the House of Lords will publish in November its findings on education reform. I am willing to bet what that report will recommend.

The process of coping with a huge change has been carefully managed and has not been easy. Information and keeping everyone informed is key. Updating key stakeholders and ensuring people know where you are up to with decisions are vital. We have worked with our Prep parents whose children will come through to the Upper School and they have been a very useful conduit for concerns or anxieties. Their questions and challenges have refined and developed our thinking, and our final proposals have been as a result of good work in unison with them. We have also been very up front with our prospective joiners and parents. Again, information has been key, promoting our ideas and assuring them that our proposals are robust has lent assurance. At our most recent Open Day we spoke to hundreds of prospective parents who are hugely supportive. Many are employers who say that they do not look at GCSE grades when they employ young people; some want an innovative school that is prepared to think outside the box and do something different; some are delighted that we are proposing to do something better than the perceived high-stakes exams at 16; some are excited that their young people’s experience of learning will be unimpeded by a stressful exam period which will be superseded by A Levels two years later; many tell us they are reassured by the “scholarship with skills” approach the school is taking; most tell us they trust us and know their children will be at the forefront of something new and exciting.

There are some who are ultimately conservative about education and know what they know. This reform seems a step into the unknown, and they are understandably nervous. They admire us and tell us it is not (yet) for them – this is fine.



Ian Emerson

But we have had a rousing and supportive response from so many quarters and we are so convinced in our convictions that it is time to move ahead with all we have planned, and the mood is one of excitement.

The Latymer Upper School staff are an innovative, inspiring and impressive bunch of colleagues to work with. Over 80 of them have signed up to be part of the working parties we have established to oversee our new courses; some working on the principles of our long and short courses, others on the fusion skills we want to develop across our learning, or on assessment methods or collapsed weeks where we want to teach projects vertically across year groups. It is a very exciting time for us and a great privilege to lead. I am sure it will attract wonderful teachers in our next recruitment round too.

I am aware I am writing in the Independent Schools Magazine. We are independent schools; at times we should exercise independence and lead the way. Our work with colleagues in the maintained sector chimes with their experience and many of them, too, want to see much-needed reform, to be free from the shackles of exams and exam technique and to get down to teaching and learning that excites our young people and prepares them for the future. We have a privileged position and platform, and with it, I feel, comes responsibility to innovate and lead where there is often a vacuum of leadership on curriculum from the government. In what other profession would we accept that we do things simply as they have always been done? As a large, successful, London day school we hope we can lead the way with bravery and integrity.

# VAT & school fees

The Labour Party has reaffirmed its commitment to remove the VAT exemption from independent school fees if elected at the next general election. Accountant Meera Rajah discusses the implications, and suggests some actions for schools to consider.

The UK's VAT treatment of different education providers is complex. Independent schools which are charities or not-for-profit bodies, unable to distribute profit, are currently classified as an 'eligible body' so that school fees and other closely related supplies are VAT exempt. The Labour Party, rather than challenging charitable status of independent schools, has said that it would simply remove that 'eligible body' status. School fees would become VAT standard rate rather than VAT exempt.

Of course, the Labour Party will need to win the next general election to implement its proposals.

Despite its promise to remove that 'eligible body' status within the first year of office, it is not possible to put a firm timeline on the proposals, meaning VAT on school fees may not be chargeable until 2026 or even later. Independent schools should not, however, ignore the Labour Party's promise and should take time to fully understand the consequences and plan for possible change.

Meera Rajah is a Partner and head of Indirect Tax services at James Cowper Kreston. With 15 years experience as a Higher Officer at HM Revenue & Customs, Meera has a range of skills and expertise in inspections, negotiations and complex VAT issues. Visit: [www.jamescowperkreston.co.uk](http://www.jamescowperkreston.co.uk)

Currently independent schools that are eligible bodies will have a significant restriction on the recovery of VAT on costs and expenses. Once fees become subject to VAT, this restriction will end or will greatly improve, so the net value of school costs will fall. Consequently, an independent school will not have to increase fees by a full 20% to remain with the same net surplus or "profit".

Schools will recognise the impact that a significant increase of school fees will have on parents, many of whom make significant sacrifices to educate their children. But mitigating that increase is an option to explore.

UK VAT rules are guided by the 'time of supply' that determines when the tax is to be paid to HMRC. A "basic tax point" is created when a service is complete, but an "actual tax point" is created when payment is received or an invoice issued before the basic tax point.

It may be possible for a school to invoice and take payment of school fees up-front and before

the VAT status of school fees changes to avoid the additional VAT charge for parents. Many schools already offer parents incentives to pay early and upfront, and an effective 20% pre-VAT discount might prove a powerful incentive.

There is however a note of caution. A Labour government could potentially choose to make the change effective not just from the date when law is adopted but from when first formally announced or alter the existing arrangements for deposits when a VAT rate changes. Schools need to consider well in advance fee increases, scholarships and academic bursaries, and the timing of fee payments.

A Labour government may proceed with these changes by way of consultation and school leaders should watch closely for further announcements and guidance.

## VAT recovery

Labour Party MPs and the Institute of Fiscal Studies have calculated that charging VAT on



Meera Rajah

school fees would generate an additional £1.7bn in additional tax revenues, but that is only part of the picture.

The Labour Party's proposals allow schools to reclaim much more VAT than currently, as these costs would in future relate predominantly to their taxable supplies. If recent major capital expenditure has taken place in the last 10 years costing more than £250,000, the Capital Goods Scheme will probably allow some additional recovery of the original VAT charged at the time of purchase. Any future capital expenditure that incurs significant VAT charges could also be reclaimed. It could provide a welcome windfall for many schools.

When independent schools are planning major capital works they may wish to consider deferring the start date until the VAT landscape is a little clearer.



## Empowering future female leaders

St Margaret's School for Girls in Aberdeen, welcomed pupils from across Scotland to a conference aimed at equipping the next generation of female leaders with invaluable skills.

The event, organised through The Girls' Schools Association (GSA), brought together the student leadership teams from all four Scottish Girls' Schools: St Margaret's, St George's, Edinburgh, The Mary Erskine School, Edinburgh and Kilgraston School, Perth.

A total of 24 students took part in the event.

Dr Susan Reid Elder of Aberdeen Business School, Robert Gordon University, hosted an interactive session on 'Leadership in 2023 and beyond' which explored the qualities and skill sets which are demonstrated by effective leaders. Students reflected on their own strengths and how they would maximise these over the year ahead.

Headteacher of St Margaret's School for Girls, Anna Tomlinson,



Students at the GSA Student Leadership Teams conference

said: "Hosting the GSA Student Leadership Teams conference highlighted the opportunity for strong female leadership at St Margaret's, and in girls' schools across Scotland where we see all our pupils as potential leaders,

whether in titled roles or as role models for others."

Other workshops included 'Hopes and challenges for the year ahead' and a session dedicated to public speaking.



# Netflix filming location

Westonbirt School, Gloucestershire, has been used as a filming location for the final season of popular Netflix comedy, 'Sex Education'.

Filming took place at the school during the summer holidays and in December last year, but staff were sworn to secrecy until the show was broadcast this September.

The school is used as the setting for the fictional Wallace University in the USA, which is attended by the show's heroine, Maeve Wiley (who is portrayed by Emma Mackey).

Exterior and aerial shots of the school were used, as well as scenes in the Great Hall, Library, boarding corridors, and the school office.



Pictured: Filming in the Great Hall and in the Library



Pictured: The cast on set in the office

Westonbirt School's headmistress, Natasha Dangerfield said: "It was fascinating to have the cast and production crew on site at Westonbirt and view, at a distance, the extent of the work involved..."

...The show is a great vehicle for our older pupils to have some conversations prompted by the themes and events covered during the turbulent teen years of those pupils based in and around the fictional Moordale High."

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# Strengthening a mobile devices policy

Gordonstoun, Moray, implemented a new mobile phone policy in 2017. Six years on, Principal, Lisa Kerr, reviews how it's gone and explains why they have decided to take the policy further.

Implementing change is part of the day job of school leadership. We are always seeking to improve how we educate and care for the children in our establishments. Sometimes changes are 'no brainers', other times we are less certain of the outcome. In the main, however, if we have considered the evidence and consulted those affected, things go well. Even though we had done both of these before implementing our new mobile phone policy at Gordonstoun, we did have lingering concerns that our students might react badly to the increased limitations.

It was in 2017 that Gordonstoun first implemented a formal mobile phone policy. It prevented students from using phones during the school day unless directed by an adult, with that rider to allow for the use of learning apps in classes.

The effect was immediate: the school was noisier, and children spoke to each other rather than scrolling through their phone as they gathered before our daily chapel. They held real conversations, catching up with each other face-to-face, not via social media. Concentration improved, and it was hard not to draw a link between the policy change and the upward trend in our exam results.

We could have considered our job done. But anyone running a school knows that's never truly the case, and we must always be alive to opportunities for improvement and also the sliding of standards that might not be immediately apparent. Increasingly, teachers spotted students sneaking a look at their phones in lessons, or as they walked around campus and phones began appearing at meal times.

So, at the start of this term, we went further. Following surveys and discussion groups, we decided that phones should be left in boarding houses during the school day and handed in overnight. Sixth formers have a bit more leeway but if they are getting it wrong, we take their phones away too.

Such bans are sometimes criticised, with opponents arguing that we should be teaching young people how to use technology responsibly rather than removing it completely. But that misses the crucial point that mobile phone apps are literally designed to be addictive, to create regular dopamine mini hits. I often say that asking children to have a phone in their pocket but not respond when it buzzes with a notification is like putting a bowl of M&Ms on their desk and asking them not to take one, even when no one is looking.

We only need to ask ourselves how hard we adults find it not to pick up our own phone, to understand how much harder it will be for a teenager whose pre-frontal cortex brain has not fully developed sufficient self-regulation.

So, has it worked? Our staff definitely think so. Stephanie Ottens, modern languages teacher reports "a marked difference in how the students engage with one another and ... improved concentration levels and student performance". Houseparent Dan McLean comments: "The response in the boarding houses has been overwhelmingly positive, with some students voluntarily leaving their phones for far longer than required".

This is about the responsible use of technology not a luddite approach. Digital learning is embedded within our school, not least because it's a great way to ensure academic learning can be maintained alongside our broad and challenging outdoor curriculum. We use AI, have online



guest lecturers, and students run a technical service which supports events all over campus and in the local community. But mobile phones are a different story.

Teenagers may argue that it's their right to have their phones. But we don't allow them unfettered access to other addictive substances, so why mobiles? I believe it's lazy, irresponsible, and dangerous not to place controls on young people's access to an online world which they, and we, simply don't fully understand and can't control.

So what of that student reaction? Well I needn't have worried: they truly love their new found freedom saying "the new mobile phone policy is a great opportunity for people to spend more time establishing healthy friendships and relationships with others and enjoy all that Gordonstoun has to offer" and "Social times are more interactive, and individuals appear to be immersed in their academics" and "Mealtimes are more sociable and across school, people are having more real conversations with actual depth as opposed to surface level".

Last week I was also able to tell them that the changes they had made had impacted people well beyond our school gates when I heard the priest delivering the BBC Radio Scotland Thought for The Day saying "The new rules at Gordonstoun have prompted me to rethink my relationship with my phone".

We'll keep checking how it's going, we may refine things, but I don't think we'll ever go back. Chatting, not snapping, and listening to birdsong, not AirPods, is here to stay!

## Fundraising for children's charity



Abseiling down Peacehaven Cliffs

Seventy-five Year 7 students and eight members of staff at Roedean School, East Sussex, have raised over £5,000 for the Rockinghorse Children's Charity.

Rockinghorse is the official charity of the Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital. It has been supporting children in Sussex for over 55 years, and the school overlooks the hospital from their site on Brighton Seafront.

Throughout the year, everyone pitched in with ideas to raise money and their fundraising attempts included a sponsored silence, bake sales, Easter egg donations and a cake-designing competition!

However, for their last fundraiser pupils and teachers took part in an abseil down Peacehaven Cliffs, 50 metres above sea level. This alone managed to raise half the total.





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# Managing difficult situations: A communications perspective

What can schools do when incidents happen beyond their control which can often lead to increased media and public attention? Education sector Public Relations specialist, Elisabeth Lewis-Jones, provides some advice...



Lis Lewis-Jones

Managing communications during a crisis is difficult for any business or establishment – an incident outside your control can see the reputation you’ve spent a lifetime building, lost in minutes.

Arguably, a crisis situation in the private education sector can be even more of a risk – those affected will most likely be students under the age of 18, making them more vulnerable and in need of support. Independent schools also attract their students and their income from their positive reputations, so a crisis could risk their good names being damaged and affect business.

So, how should schools manage difficult situations when it comes to communicating with the public and the media? And what support do communications teams need?

## Reputation management

Having a good reputation in the first place puts you in a strong position to manage a crisis and communicate effectively to reduce the damage. If people already trust your brand, then they’re much more likely to be forgiving in a crisis, allowing you to bounce back better.

Through your existing reputation and communications activity, you’ll have established channels and contacts, which you can use in a crisis situation to target exactly the right people and respond quickly.

Acting quickly is key in a crisis, but it’s also very important that all incidents are checked before you respond. Take five minutes and make sure you have all the correct details before communicating about the situation – has the information come from a trusted source or is it just a rumour? What’s more, in incidents where the police are involved and there has been a fatality, you need to be mindful about responding before the police have made a statement.

## Spokespeople are key

When communicating with the media and the public about a difficult situation, having a reliable, trusted spokesperson is essential. Having a consistent spokesperson for all communications, whether positive or negative, will ensure that person becomes a trusted voice for your school, conveying clear, consistent messaging.

In an independent school, this will most likely be the headteacher or someone else in a leadership position, such as the deputy head or head of year. Governors can also be used to speak on behalf of the school and it’s advisable to have a couple of governors on hand to support with communications.

To ensure your spokesperson is fully prepared and briefed for potentially difficult situations, it’s best to make sure they are media trained. Media training will help

make them aware of your school’s key messages, how to convey these and the best language to use. It will also prepare them on how to respond to difficult media questions in a calm and collected way.

## Think about stakeholders

Independent schools have many more stakeholders than the average business, including bodies like the Department for Education and the Independent Schools Association.

Because of this, schools should have a stakeholder map, which outlines stakeholders and their preferred channels, enabling them to communicate with each stakeholder quickly and efficiently in a crisis.

It’s also important to consider that independent schools are often the biggest employer in their area and are much more a place of community than the average business, so maintaining this community feel through effective stakeholder communication is key.

## Consider the spread of information

It’s important to consider how news travels amongst your target audience and those that your difficult situation may affect. In a school environment, this will likely be word of mouth and social media, so you need to consider this in your communications.

When it comes to word of mouth, the media and the public are much more likely to trust a student or member of staff’s story than any other source of information. Because of this, internal communications are just as important as external communications – it means that when students and staff are asked questions, they can respond with accurate and sensitive information.

You should also consider social media’s role in the spread of information (and misinformation!). According to Ofcom<sup>1</sup>, by the age of eight to 11, 55% of children own a mobile phone and by the time they reach 12, this jumps to 97%. The most common way of interacting is via messaging/calling apps, which are used by 79% of three to 17-year-olds.

With these figures in mind, it’s no surprise that information spreads fast on social media – and this information isn’t always accurate. To avoid the spread of misinformation, you should include social media in your own communications and ensure that the most accurate and up to date information is shared from your official channels.

<sup>1</sup> Ofcom, Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes 29 March 2023: [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0027/255852/childrens-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2023.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0027/255852/childrens-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2023.pdf)

Lis Lewis-Jones is CEO of Liquid Public Relations Consultancy. She is also a governor of Bloxham School, Oxfordshire, 2008 President of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, and a mentor for the Government Communications Service.

To find out more about how you can communicate effectively in a difficult situation, and how Liquid can support with this, visit [www.wearliquid.com](http://www.wearliquid.com)





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**Alexandra D'Arcy-Irvine**  
**School Business Manager, Godolphin School**



# Are independent schools too progressive?

Some commentators have repeated the suggestion that independent schools are embracing more liberal, progressive ideologies and becoming too preoccupied with providing state of the art facilities rather than the quality of teaching. Headmistress at Downe House School, Berkshire, Emma McKendrick, discusses...



Emma McKendrick

Over the summer, Downe House School hosted an academic conference for teachers on the topic of maximising pupil progress. It was an inspiring and thought-provoking forum, which saw hundreds of educationalists from a wide variety of different schools from across the UK come together to share and discuss their ideas on a topic that is at the very heart of what we do as teachers.

The conference was attended by outspoken state school Head and former social mobility tsar, Katharine Birbalsingh, who addressed the delegates as a keynote speaker at the event. Ms Birbalsingh is commonly known as 'Britain's Strictest Headteacher' and earlier this year, her school – Michaela Community School in Brent, North West London – achieved the highest Progress 8 (value-added) scores in the country.

Ms Birbalsingh explained that when she opened Michaela in 2014, she put a sign up outside the school which read 'Private School Ethos – No Fees'. She told delegates at the conference that she did this because she had always associated private schools with the best aspects of a traditional education. In short, this included: very high standards of

academic achievement, especially with maths, English and the core curriculum; excellent behaviour and conduct from pupils; and outstanding teaching from highly knowledgeable and authoritative teachers.

However, in her keynote speech, Ms Birbalsingh argued that she no longer associates these values with independent schools today, because she believes that many of them – especially those in London – now embrace more liberal, progressive ideologies and are too preoccupied with smart facilities rather than the quality of their teaching.

From my perspective, it is certainly the case that in recent years, many schools – both independent and state – have responded to movements such as Black Lives Matter, Everyone's Invited and identity politics by ensuring their pupils' voices and views are heard, by adjusting their PSHE and academic curriculum and by focusing on aspects of social justice. A sceptical media has shone a spotlight on this and so teachers have at times appeared more like social justice warriors than educators.

Competition between independent schools is also more prevalent

than ever before. In fact, parents will often consider up to five or six different schools during their selection process, and their final decision is often influenced by the views of other parents, their children and their friends.

It is perhaps inevitable that many schools respond to this by broadening their appeal to avoid alienating some families and by investing in their facilities to avoid being outshone, but this should certainly not imply a reduction in commitment to the highest standards of teaching.

My own view is that above all else, parents and pupils are attracted to a school which listens to them, but one which also has its own strong ethos and values. Each school's character will be unique, but at Downe House we believe we combine the best of tradition with the best of modernity. We have high expectations of our pupils and staff, but we also believe that they are more likely to reach their potential if they feel valued and listened to.

Many of the 'traditional' characteristics to which Katharine Birbalsingh refers do in fact remain central to all that we do, including very high expectations of behaviour

and manners; a focus on teacher-led, knowledge-based teaching; a rigorous, traditional curriculum; and a commitment to developing a culture of service.

However, I do not see any of the above as being mutually exclusive to some of the so-called "progressive" aspects of school life. These include listening carefully to our pupils and ensuring we respond appropriately; making modest adaptations to our curriculum to reflect our changing attitudes and society; responding appropriately to fee increases by investing in our campus; and adjusting some of our procedures to reflect and support hard-working parents who choose to send their children to our school.

Parents are increasingly – and rightly – discerning about what they are looking for when choosing to educate their children privately. Ultimately, they will select a school which impresses them because it provides the right kind of education for their child. A school is more likely to appeal to parents if it has a robust, demanding yet compassionate set of demonstratable values of which it is proud, without being complacent.



Pictured: Niall Harbison

## Paws for thought

Over 400 people from as far and wide as Switzerland, Paris, Dover and Edinburgh made their way to Westholme School, Lancashire, to meet dog rescuer Niall Harbison.

Niall, a social media sensation who has gained over a million followers documenting his stray dog rescues in Thailand, took part in a live Q&A at the school's Croston Theatre.

Niall, who also stayed after the Q&A to sign copies of his new book 'Hope' and pose for photographs with fans, passed on his knowledge to Westholme students in a pre-event interview.

After working in the corporate world as a private chef, and later running his own advertising and marketing business, Niall's mental health declined and he turned to drink and drugs.

His journey started when he moved to Thailand and started to feed a couple of strays dogs. Soon he was feeding upward of 80 dogs a day before starting to take them to the vets for check-ups and medicine.

Niall advised students to "live in the moment, because life can pass you by." Speaking about overcoming challenges in Thailand

when rescuing the dogs, he said the language barrier and cultural difficulties were the main hurdles.

His final advice to students at Westholme was: "Don't get hung up on your career choices. I was terrible in school and I failed the same year a few times. It doesn't define you.

"Embrace change and embrace opportunities and possibilities. If you have a core skill set that you've learned in school, you can apply that to a lot of things."



# Are you assessing international applicants equitably?

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Bill Prior  
Principal, King's Canterbury  
International College

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# Professional Review and Development: Regular feedback, with everybody's positivity welcome

Should school leaders ditch the yearly trial-by-paperwork to better develop their teachers and schools? Deputy Head of Sibford School, Oxfordshire, Phil Tattersall-King thinks so. But what can replace it and how can it make schools better?



Philip Tattersall-King

Annual reviews are increasingly a thing of the past in businesses across the world. The groans of teachers and shuffling of mounds of paper as the annual performance review inexorably cycles round can stifle creativity and monopolise much-needed bandwidth in any school. Do those hundreds (if not thousands) of grumpy hours represent time well spent? For all the good an annual review can do to reinforce accountability and improve people through targeted training, the system is broken in many of our schools. Our review process now takes place regularly and invites positive feedback from all staff members.

It is true that some highly diligent managers will spend evenings and weekends researching and preparing. They will take the time to talk to a range of colleagues to gather their views and they will work hard to interpret all available data from the previous year. Many will not. Maybe they simply don't have the time. It is also true to say some engaged teachers will work well with their line managers and trust their judgements, accepting them as fair and useful. But others will be afraid of these conversations. Conversations that do not come round often and carry far too much weight as a result. Waiting a year to be told you're a 3 or a C or some other arbitrary mid-ranked scale point can be debilitating. And is that judgement the school's view or just that one line manager's rushed

view based on a general feeling about the teacher? At Sibford School I looked at how we can do better than this infrequent, high-stakes meeting and its single point of failure in an individual line manager, who will have so many of these meetings all happening at once, which can be unmanageable.

I completed my National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) last year and those that have completed the course will know that the Education Endowment Foundation are advocates of an implementation system<sup>1</sup> that guides senior leaders through the process of making valuable change. We adapted it for our purposes, but, broadly speaking, I researched the problem, involved staff in the decision making process and delivery, and then kept monitoring the plan as it was rolled out and developed.

I created a working party involving a broad range of interest groups, and our research involved Cappelli and Tavis' Harvard Business Review 'The Performance Management Revolution'.<sup>2</sup> This provides useful research background and history for the annual review as more companies seek to replace it. It explains General Electric's (GE's) system of 'touchpoints'<sup>3</sup> between line managers and their team, which regularly revisit the questions "What am I doing that I should keep doing? And what am I doing that I should change?" I created a Microsoft Form<sup>4</sup> for each half-term that asked these

two questions, alongside an update on training needs. The working party felt this move to a paperless system was in line with the school's Quaker concern for environmental stewardship. The old method also meant that line managers could lose the valuable information, now kept safely for them in cloud storage.

The piece of research that allowed us to unlock concerns about the individual line manager's views representing a single point of failure was Eric Mosley's 'The Crowd Sourced Performance Review'.<sup>5</sup> He is another HR professional advocating substantial change to the broken system of annual reviews. One inspiring idea he proposes is setting up a system of social recognition, so that other people within the organisation can feed in positive recognition of their colleagues. This allows line managers to track these interactions as data points that show which teams people interact with and how impactful their actions are for others. At Sibford, I set up another Microsoft Form that allows people to say 'thank you' for people going above and beyond. They register their thanks and say how it relates to the school's value system. We send these in a weekly batch to people, copying in their line manager to share the good news. These are linked into the half-termly touchpoints, with the question "What are others saying I am doing that I should keep doing?" Responses are

then linked by managers to the school development plan. This created a change to the whole review system, injecting positivity and a more collegiate way of approaching the task.

Natalie, a fellow Senior Team member, summarised the changes this way in a review of the new approach at the end of last academic year: "The system this year has helped me develop my team and department in positive ways. Having regular touchpoints to talk to all members of my team has allowed us to set quick and achievable targets and have regular conversations about progression [...] What I have loved about the process is that it makes conversations with my team focused and meaningful, whilst also allowing us to work towards the bigger picture of the school development plan."

By making developmental conversations regular, by adding repeated moments of positive feedback and by making the system easily accessible online, our professional review and development has become more impactful. The energy-sapping groans have been replaced with the appreciative murmur of people congratulating each other for a job well done and making changes early, as soon as change is needed, for the good of the students.

<sup>1</sup> Putting Evidence to Work – A School's Guide to Implementation <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/implementation>

<sup>2</sup> The Performance Management Revolution. The focus is shifting from accountability to learning <https://hbr.org/2016/10/the-performance-management-revolution>

<sup>3</sup> Financial Post Apr 26 2017 'Why General Electric moved away from traditional HR review practices' <https://financialpost.com/executive/why-general-electric-moved-away-from-traditional-hr-review-practices>

<sup>4</sup> Microsoft 'Create a form with Microsoft Forms' <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/create-a-form-with-microsoft-forms-4ffb64cc-7d5d-402f-b82e-b1d49418fd9d>

<sup>5</sup> Workhuman Founder and CEO bio, Eric Mosley [www.workhuman.com/leadership/eric-mosley/](http://www.workhuman.com/leadership/eric-mosley/)



# Technology for 'gifted learners'

Does AI and cutting-edge tech present an opportunity for 'gifted pupils' in schools? Headmaster at York House School, Hertfordshire, Jon Gray, explores...

"Nurturing every individual child to achieve and to be the best they can be, is something that all good schools strive for. Parent expectation is for a bespoke and tailored version of teaching and learning, one which achieves excellence; but the demand is more for the 'boutique hotel' rather than the mass chain model.

With that in mind, I have always been a great fan of 'experiences' in education as having a much greater lasting power and benefit for children's learning outcomes than straight forward theory. One area that is continually evolving at the moment is that of technology, and in particular, AI (Artificial Intelligence). Every day the newspaper headlines tell us how the world of business is being disrupted, assisted and excited by the variety of cutting-edge advances in technology and their potential for the future. As such, smart organisations are seeing technology solutions taking the lead, where previously headcount was relied upon. Some of these evolutions will initially have a positive impact on profit margins, but potentially less so for employment opportunities. That said, longer term, new jobs will be created in their wake.

For those in education, and for parents and families, the implication is two-fold. Pupils will need to adapt and develop their skills sets to be of interest to the future job market. Those adults who care for these children will also need to change and evolve their offerings and mindset to ensure that the young people of tomorrow are suitably enabled.

One interesting view I heard recently is that you won't lose your job to

AI, you'll lose it to the person who uses that technology to a more advanced level than you do. For our exceptional performers – essentially those children that have always been in danger of being both "bright and bored", are in as much – if not more – need of this evolution than anyone else. They will be especially well placed and open to exciting new technologies and educational methods such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and robotics.

These technologies also create a new space for the gifted learner from a more active position in the classroom rather than as a passive receiver. The most able learners often have a greater tendency to question, hypothesise, synthesise, resolve anomalies and invent. That shift, which is well under way in many of the best schools across the country, challenges those tired teaching methods. With knowledge at our finger tips, new teaching methods must embrace the opportunity to include more immersive and multi-sensory content in the classroom – much of which will awaken the most able and gifted, whilst still being of real benefit to all learners.

Likewise, as technological change continues to rapidly evolve, it is key for our students to immerse themselves in the new possibilities that such change creates. The mainstream popularisation of AI and developing digitally connected platforms, are just two examples that give rise to a wealth of new opportunities. The application of apps, social media and remote learning are re-sculpting the landscape where we have traditionally worked and socialised.

Within a school context we must



ensure that our curriculum is sharply relevant and responsive. Fostering a creative, positive culture and a growth mindset for lifelong learning will equip our students to stay focused. We should share possible career paths and consider the implications of such advancements, working with real life examples from tech start-ups.

It is also important to work alongside tech organisations that can share knowledge and technology workshops with our students. This opens up opportunities for our students to engage educationally with cutting-edge technology, uncommonly found within a school setting. Such technology could include VR, AR and Educational Gaming Simulations.

As schools we should continue to challenge our students to solve real world problems through digital solutions, giving context to their programming skills. Open ended physical devices such as the BBC Microbit, for instance, presents a wealth of creative outcomes. By teaching the fundamentals of how AI works and related Ethical considerations, our students can look beyond the headlines that often dominate our world and begin to understand how such systems actually work and the impact they could have on our future society."

## Make mealtimes easy with Guide to Creating Ultra-efficient School Catering

The importance of providing nutritious and balanced meals to pupils cannot be overstated but with cost and labour pressures it's becoming increasingly difficult.

Leading meals provider, apetito is helping schools make mealtimes more efficient and launched a Schools Guide to Ultra-Efficient Catering.

The FREE Guide is the fourth in its series and is packed with useful information and guidance on how schools can deliver an efficient meals service. It looks at how to reduce time spent in the kitchen, as well as where to find hidden efficiencies that can make a big difference.

Furthermore, with the number of children living with allergens on the rise, it looks at how to make catering for allergens easy and efficient so that schools can have confidence in the safety of their meals.

This guide is a must read for Headteachers and Bursars explains apetito's Head of Education, Rupert Weber: "We know that it's becoming increasingly difficult for schools to deliver a high-quality, yet efficient meals service.

"To constantly deliver meals that pupils will enjoy, offer a great range of choice, yet secure increased efficiencies in the kitchen which can lead to notable cost savings is front of mind for many schools".

"In this Guide, we're sharing our knowledge and expertise on how to deliver an efficient meals service and introduces innovative strategies to streamline catering operations and minimise waste. It really is a must read."



Access the guide here:  
<https://apetito.link/Ultra-EfficientCateringGuide>

## Fairtrade award

The High School of Glasgow Junior School has been awarded the FairAware Award from the Fairtrade Foundation which recognises schools that are supporting Fairtrade.

FairAware is the first Fairtrade schools' award and is about finding out where your school is in terms of understanding Fairtrade and using Fairtrade products.

Pictured: Pupils with their FairAware Award

A number of Junior School pupils were involved in a Learner Audit to measure their understanding of what Fairtrade is and their habits around this. Questions included how often children spend their free time finding out about issues that interest them, who Fairtrade helps and which products are produced locally and which are imported from abroad.



The Junior School is now embarking on its next Fairtrade Foundation award, FairActive, and hopes to achieve this by the start of next session.

# Revising staff pension arrangements – risks must be assessed

A recent Freedom of Information request made by the Independent Schools' Bursars Association (ISBA) has revealed an ongoing trend of independent schools leaving the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS).

According to the data, as of 21 September 2023, 460 schools have left or are in the process of leaving TPS, an increase of 11% since 9 May 2023.

The trend comes at a time when schools are already facing challenging trading conditions due to the cost-of-living crisis, pressures on operating costs, and an anticipated increase in pension contributions in April 2024. Labour's announcement that it intends to add a 20% VAT to private school fees will exacerbate the situation.

In light of these pressures many more schools may quit the TPS and seek cheaper alternatives.

**Q. What are the relative merits between a phased withdrawal from TPS and a scheme withdrawal?**

**A.** It's important to remember there isn't a one size fits all. Every school is different. One of the interesting things about schools and their membership of the Teachers Pension Scheme and the Scottish Teachers Pension Scheme is that there are quite a few different options. It's not necessarily a case of are you in or are you out. There's a whole host of different avenues such as staying with the TPS as is, to cost sharing, offering an additional alternative, or exiting and setting up a new scheme altogether. With all these options come different pros and cons as well as implementation differences.

So first things to work out are what's affordable now and in the future, and what are the risks involved in the varying options available.

Looking at phased withdrawal e.g., closing the Teachers Pension Scheme to new hires, one of the things people don't realise is that if you're offering a choice of pension scheme, i.e. staying in the TPS but also setting up an alternative, you can offer more flexibility over pay – perhaps some of the school's pension contribution could be directed towards salary, or the minimum entry requirement for staff could be reduced because as good a pension scheme as the TPS is, there's quite a high level price of entry; offering an alternative might be useful for teachers who are perhaps at a point in their life that makes paying the cost of TPS a tough call.

Phased withdrawal will also take away the option for any existing member to come out of the scheme and subsequently rejoin. However, if you're offering a choice of pension scheme a staff member who exited TPS before

you switch on phased withdrawal can generally rejoin.

And so what this all comes back to is the financial position. If a school genuinely cannot afford TPS rates, phased withdrawal is not going to solve that problem because any impact on any saving is going to be generated over time. So if you need to make a saving straight away then phased withdrawal is unlikely to solve that problem. If, however, it's about managing future risk then perhaps phased withdrawal can solve that problem.

The other thing that's quite clear is that existing staff are likely going to be in favour of phased withdrawal because they get to keep what they've got. But it generates other challenges. For example, what contribution rates do you use for any alternative? Will it cost the same amount of money as TPS? If it does, you're not making a saving. If it's cheaper than TPS, there is likely to be a difference in benefit, a difference in remuneration and so effectively a difference in pay between people who joined after a certain date and people who joined earlier which can cause some tensions in the workforce. It can also potentially make it difficult to recruit. Serious consideration needs to be given as to how things can be made fairer to new hires or make things at least attractive to them.

Administrative challenges can be significant. You might be operating different pay scales, you might have two different pension schemes, TPS and a defined contribution alternative. And then on top of that, there might be different rates in the defined contribution alternative depending on whether someone was employed post phased withdrawal. Whilst this isn't unusual in the private sector, it is an additional administrative challenge for which school managements may need extra capacity.

Another consideration with phased withdrawal is whether a cap should be introduced as it can sometimes be seen as kicking the can down the road a bit. Whilst it's controlling how many people go into TPS and over time the number of people in TPS will reduce, what happens if TPS rates go up as is currently expected? For those people who stay in TPS or those people who were employed before at certain points, can we still say that there is effectively an upper cap on what is affordable? One of the challenges of affordability when it comes to finances is this is not about just whether an increase is affordable, it's whether the status quo is affordable as operating costs increase.

**Q. How significant a part do school finances and a competitive landscape play in considering the viability of TPS and what can be done to ensure they are well understood both in terms of present and future risk?**

**A.** There are many variables to the viability of TPS including competitor understanding. Coming up with a case and then communicating it are also probably the biggest hurdles to making any successful change in the sense that before you can get onto what an alternative might look like, you first need to figure out whether there needs to be change at all and if so how that can be evidenced and communicated?

There are challenges around communication as well. How much information do you provide? You need to provide enough information to make it clear that there needs to be a change if that's the case. But at the same time some of this information can be sensitive and understandably you'll not want to provide more information than you need to get it out into the public domain.



Considering the challenges, Martin Willis, Partner and Head of Independent Schools at Barnett Waddingham, advises independent schools to consider their situations carefully, and to make informed decisions before making any potentially risky pension changes. Here he answers some of the questions schools need to think about from the outset.

You've got all these different cost pressures including loss of charitable status with implications for corporation tax, the business rate tax relief and then VAT. And it then comes down to how are you doing compared to others. Tools like the Data Navigator are useful here and can show a school if they are running profitably and if there are areas that would benefit from change. It can also benchmark against others.

There's the projection side of things as well. It's not just about what's happening today, if trends continue, and if the things that we think might happen do happen, they need to be planned for. Modelling of finances is therefore so important. Once the financial position in the present and the future can be determined then you can start coming up with a business case and shared so that people understand it, comment on it, and even critique.

**Q: What are the key considerations in the choice of a new pension scheme?**

**A:** The first thing is to recognise that it's not just about a pension provider. Picking a pension provider is one element but that's only half of it. The first stage, before even thinking about who is going to be the provider, is to consider how to structure the scheme.

With defined contribution schemes, schools have the freedom to effectively set the contribution structure how they want. They have to meet government minimums for automatic enrolment, but how can the structure ensure best use of the spend available?



Work out what the spend can be now and in the future and think about how it would be spent in the best way? That could be a choice of staying in TPS, but if you wanted to offer an alternative to TPS, it's about making the most of the key characteristics of those defined contribution pension schemes.

Then think about the other benefits such as dependence pensions and other death benefits. It's important to remember pensions often provide not just in the event of finishing work and living after work but also in the event of ill health and in the event of death. Some schools are starting to use benefit platforms so that people can use that spend in the way that most fits them.

Finally, you might need to make a change, you might not, but if you do, make it as good as it can be and try and find the best possible balance of the various interests in relation to that structure.

**Q: What steps can schools take to ensure engagement with staff goes smoothly?**

A: It obviously helps to have a good proposal but it's also important to help people understand that proposal, the benefits of it and also indeed any differences. You don't always have to consult but

you should always communicate. Engagement isn't something to dodge, it should be embraced. Bring people on the journey, help them understand why something is being considered, why the school believe it's the right option but also invite comments. Get feedback. It might well be but there is an alternative or a modification of an option and by listening to people you can make something the best it can be.

Also don't surprise people. Engage people in the build up even if maybe a change isn't necessary in the present. If it's a possibility in the future then communicate that fact. Give people education around how these benefits, whether it be pensions, death or illness benefits work to help them not only understand the benefits they currently have, but also, should things need to be discussed in the future, they will have a starting point of knowledge.

Give it the time it needs as well, and be willing to listen. Rushing is unlikely to work. Make it a collaborative process as far as it can be collaborative. Recognise that there are different angles and if it feels like communication isn't working effectively, it's important to act as quickly as possible to make sure that's corrected.

**Q: Should the governing body determine to leave the TPS, what is the usual timeline for so doing?**

A: Realistically as a guide you'd want to allow a year but that will depend on the specifics.

Breaking it down, it's broadly three terms worth of process. It's a good term to design something as an alternative and understand the business case. Then another term to communicate the proposal, and then potentially it could take at least a term to give notice to leave the TPS.

But there are some options whereby things can be done a lot quicker. For example, introducing an alternative could be brought in reasonably quickly. You would still want to communicate it but you wouldn't necessarily need to consult formally and you wouldn't need to give any notice. You would just need to spend the time designing something fit for purpose and setting it up, picking a provider and communicating it.

Then you've got options such as cost sharing. Here you wouldn't need to give any notice to leave TPS because you're still in TPS. But if that cost sharing necessitates a consultation, that's going to take a bit longer than if the cost sharing is done through adjustment of future pay changes rather than

considering pay that already exists, which changes the consultation requirement.

Overall, it's vital to allow enough time to cover all the elements of writing a business case, design of a new scheme and communication, engagement and consultation. Essentially as much time as needed to ensure a good outcome should be given.

**Q: Do teachers have the right to insist they remain in the TPS rather than join the new one?**

A: As long as a school offers the teachers pension scheme to new joiners, then all teachers have a right to join it. If however, the school activates phased withdrawal, then people who exit don't have the right to come back in nor do the new hires or anyone who chooses to come out, although there are some protections for people who might have come out before e.g. for those on a career break.

The difficult thing is if a school wants to come out of TPS entirely then ultimately that comes down to the consultation process as it would with any change in terms of conditions of employment.



Please note that these are opinions only, seek legal advice where appropriate. Schools should always seek support from experts in the right places, be it legal advice or for HR matters. Martin Willis is Partner and Head of Independent Schools at Barnett Waddingham, an independent professional advisory consultancy. Tel: 01494 788121



## Analysing and benchmarking business operations

Barnett Waddingham and ISBA's sophisticated yet simple tool allows school business teams and governors to analyse business performance in comparison to an absolute standard and with other similar schools.

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# Breaking the mould: from outreach to partnerships with impact

In a focus on cross sector collaboration and how a new partnership model is having a positive impact beyond the campus boundary, Headmaster at Caterham School, Surrey, Ceri Jones, explores the establishment of the East Surrey Learning Partnership and how its developed since 2018...



"All school leaders share a common goal to inspire and transform the lives of their students. This common, shared purpose is the foundation that underpins a new model of cross-sector collaboration. It comes at a crucial time for the independent sector and a critical time for the state-maintained sector.

Breaking the mould and moving away from traditional outreach work has been a key priority for me since I joined Caterham seven years ago. Much of my career has been spent in the independent sector, but I've also had the opportunity to work in the state sector, and this inspired me to establish the East Surrey Learning Partnership five years ago. It comprises a group of state-maintained and independent

primary and secondary schools who share the goal of improving educational outcomes for all young people and children in East Surrey.

## How it works

Unlike traditional outreach work which focuses on loaning facilities and resources, we collaborate as equal partners with a focus on strategic school improvement and improved educational outcomes for all pupils locally. Our facilities, from laboratories to minibuses, are still an important part of enhancing opportunities but they are part of a wider strategic plan for East Surrey.

Leaders from every ESLP school meet several times each term to identify particular areas of educational need and opportunity, which can range from curriculum

support to staff training and from facilities to logistics and transport. Each school has equal standing and representation, as a partnership we develop strategies and solutions to problems together.

The last few years, and particularly those affected by Covid, have demonstrated how important, (and how powerful), local collaborations can be. Although we had launched ESLP in 2018 the pandemic was a catalyst for our work together. Caterham was able to flip to being an online school in the first lockdown almost overnight, because of the digital infrastructure and the digital expertise teaching staff had already. This enabled colleagues to quickly support our ESLP partners with their challenges – everything from hardware to teacher training. Working intensively together throughout this time undoubtedly increased trust, and certainly respect amongst ESLP schools, and a shared confidence in what can be achieved together.

## Projects and initiatives

Since the pandemic ESLP has focused on a wide range of projects. This summer ESLP primary schools led a session training teachers, from across the partnership, in a programming package they had used with great success in their setting. We've also produced curriculum extension packs to support more able learners in maths and English within their primary school setting, provided additional teacher training for computer coding for primary school teachers, and a Saturday 11+ preparation programme for Pupil Premium children applying to state grammar and independent schools on bursary places.

Sharing our facilities is still a part of the ESLP but is closely aligned to each school's curriculum to maximise the impact on children's learning. Instead of the typical occasional visits to a 'big' school down the road, we have worked with our partner schools to develop term-long programmes of weekly

science laboratory sessions which build on the KS2 curriculum.

## Involving parents and carers

Our parents and carers have played an important role in supporting the ESLP. The model was new to everyone in the partnership and we needed to champion the benefits of allocating the school's time and resources.

Communication was key and we shared our vision with our own school's parents, and also opened up channels with parents across the partnership. Our parents now share the same sense of purpose that we do as a school and are actively engaged in helping to raise funds for ESLP work. This has included creating a STEM resource library of technology kit for loan to ESLP schools, and this year the mobile planetarium for use by partner schools.

As a leader in the independent education sector, the ESLP model is a positive way to use our sector's much cherished independence to have a positive impact beyond the campus boundary. As we move towards the next general election, the value of independent education will be coming under greater political scrutiny. ESLP projects are measured and assessed using ImpactED to ensure we can track how activities impact educational outcomes. I know we are not alone in championing work of this sort, and I urge colleagues to share the work they are doing and its impact."



East Surrey Learning Partnership science lesson

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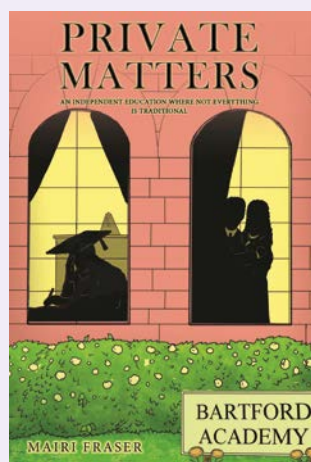


## 'Must read' for staff

Private Matters, first published last month (September), is a novel following an academic year at a fictional British boarding school and the complex web of colourful characters within.

Summer Term at Bartford brings myriad surprises with 'tiger mums', Chairman of the Board, hapless teachers and wayward off-spring, finding their own 'true north'.

It's the debut novel from journalist Mairi Fraser, who worked in the communications departments of two long-established UK independent boarding schools. Entertainingly written, the descriptions of school staff and the challenges they face from parents – leave alone pupils Primrose, Tabitha et al – will ring a bell with everyone in the sector. When we first meet the head, for instance: "Charles Hamilton, was, he had to privately admit, feeling the strain of age. The large, oak-panelled study in which



he now sat, shrouded him in silence, providing a barrier to the cacophony of daily school life. Fingers steepled, he wondered, had the portraits of former incumbents always look so pleased with themselves?"

A must-read light-hearted romp around school life – the ideal escape after a stressful day in reality.

Review by LJP.

£10.99

ISBN 9781035809028 (Paperback) ISBN 9781035809035 (ePub e-book)

Paperback available from Waterstones and elsewhere.

[www.waterstones.com/book/private-matters/mairi-fraser/9781035809028](http://www.waterstones.com/book/private-matters/mairi-fraser/9781035809028)

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## Free Econ Club

The Economic Council (ERC) have developed a bespoke 'Econ Club' programme for Sixth form students across the UK. It creates a dedicated space for in-depth economic discussion and learning.

After running the program for a year the ERC is now offering access to the programme to all schools across the UK for free.

In launching the free access, the ERC said: "Economics teachers work incredibly hard up and down the country ensuring their students are not only prepared for their A-level examinations, but for life ahead. Traditional curricula often do not cover the practical complexities and real-world implications of economics, leaving a gap in students' understanding. The Econ Club aims to fill this gap by offering targeted events for Sixth form students, going beyond textbooks to delve into current events, nuanced theories, and critical evaluations of economic paradigms."

To find out more visit [www.ercouncil.org](http://www.ercouncil.org)

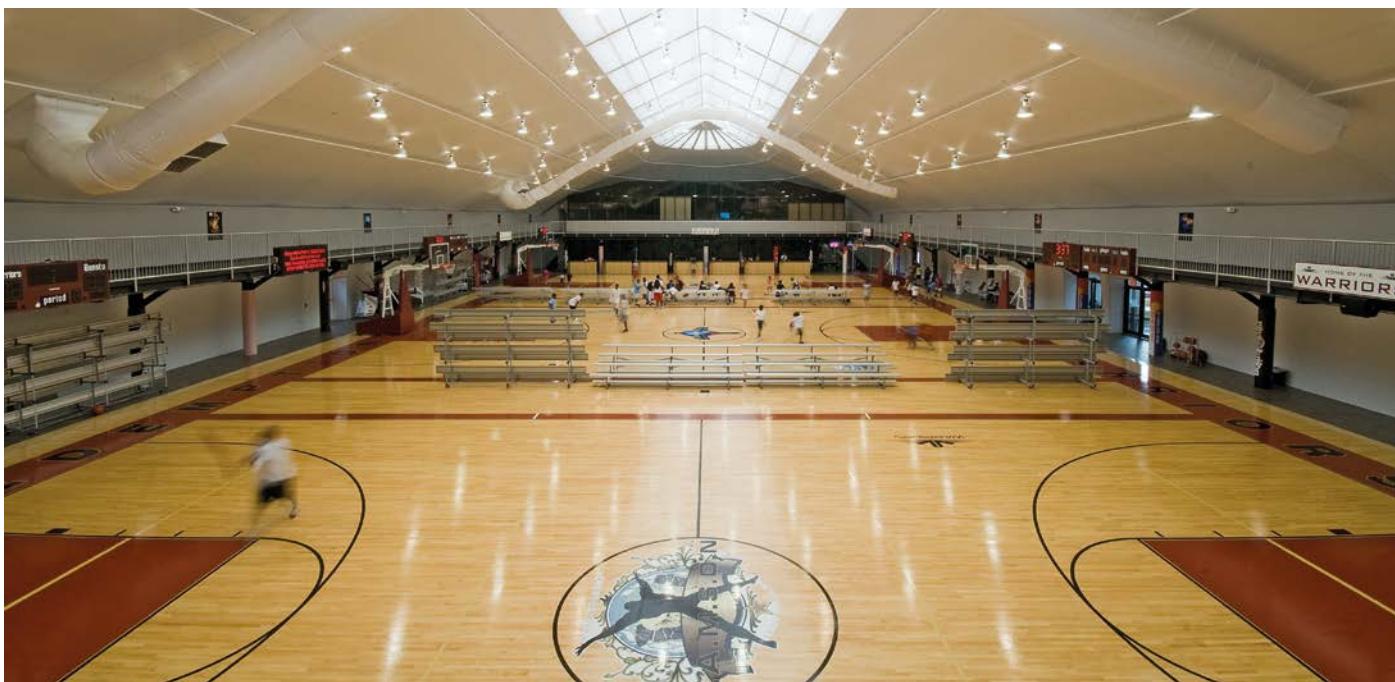


Former speakers for the programme include Sir Vince Cable, Dame Margaret Hodge, Ehsan Masood, Rain Newton-Smith, Sir Charles Bean and Ben Gardiner.

Programme Director at ERC, David Dike said: "The Econ Club is more than just an educational supplement; it's an enriching experience that opens new doors for students from all walks of life... Whether it's understanding the complexities of monetary policy or diving into pressing topics like climate change, we're equipping the next generation to be thoughtful contributors to our world's economy."

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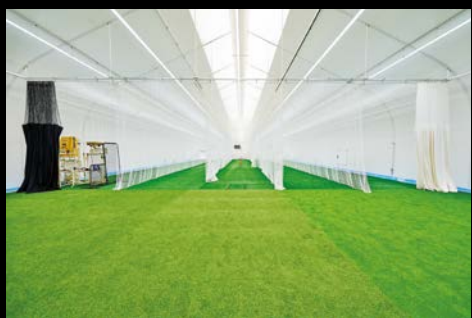


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# Can anyone speak Korean, Arabic and Portuguese?

With an influx of international non-English speaking students, headmaster of Eversfield Preparatory School, West Midlands, Robert Yates, talks about the approaches the school has taken to help and support those students coming to the school and the advantages of having such a diverse school community.

"Independent schools, particularly those with boarding facilities, are accustomed to welcoming international pupils. As a preparatory school, situated in an affluent suburb of the West Midlands, the majority of Eversfield Preparatory School's students reside within a 10-mile radius. However, our location also places us near to many commercial businesses whose executives and directors choose to live in Solihull. Many of these international companies deploy employees from abroad on UK projects and offer schooling for children as a part of the employees' relocation package. Consequently, we usually enrol one or two pupils from such families each year and, following the Brexit referendum, we expected international pupil numbers to decline.

However, recent large-scale civil engineering infrastructure projects in the West Midlands have attracted families from across the world seeking schools for their children. Consequently, the school experienced an influx of new pupils aged 3 to 10 years from countries including France, Spain, Germany, Brazil, India, Pakistan, Algeria, China, Russia, Taiwan, South Korea, Ukraine, Estonia, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Notably, many of these students had little to no proficiency in English.

Our school delivers a robust language programme that includes French, Spanish, and Latin. However, the diverse range of languages presented by our new students at the start of the academic year caught us off guard and teachers' GCSE language knowledge was put to the test. While we had a specialist teacher fluent in French, Spanish and Portuguese, it wasn't possible for

her to be in every classroom at all times. Some staff had a basic understanding of certain European languages but not enough for teaching all subjects. We needed a swift plan of action.

All of our teachers and assistants are actively engaged in research projects as part of their ongoing professional development, so our first step was to review recent research on language acquisition for non-native speakers. We quickly developed visual resources to illustrate processes, procedures, and vocabulary. We structured Form classes to pair students who shared a foreign language for improved communication. Others were paired with teachers who had a basic understanding of the student's language.

Our immediate priority was to ensure that the children did not feel overwhelmed or isolated. The emotional challenges of joining a new school in a foreign country were daunting enough without the added hurdle of language barriers. Supporting wellbeing and orientation, both inside and outside the classroom, became a primary focus. Similarly, teachers required material and emotional support to equip students with the necessary tools for engagement at the required level. It was vital that language barriers did not diminish the student's intellectual needs. However, assessing each child's ability level when they were not tested in their own language presented an additional challenge.

During this initial phase of acclimatisation, our existing pupils emerged as the best educators. We assigned "buddies" to each of the new students, whose role was to act as hosts during break and lunchtimes, offering guidance and companionship. They played a pivotal role in helping new students adjust and integrate into

the school community. Children have a remarkable ability to communicate across language barriers, and their kindness and enthusiasm was admirable. It was essential to encourage and actively support relationships between new and existing pupils to avoid any tendency to self-isolate or solely interact with peers who shared the same language. As the new students rapidly acquired English vocabulary, integration improved further. Lessons became smoother as students were more responsive, although teachers remained aware that many students appeared to comprehend more than they actually did.

Despite progress, language remained a barrier, particularly in crucial areas such as reading. Reading is vital for vocabulary development, but most students found speaking and listening an easier route to improve their knowledge of English and struggled with reading. Consequently, many students received individual or paired reading lessons daily. Selecting appropriate reading material was important to cater to individual interests while maintaining the correct vocabulary level.

While there have been challenges, the advantages have been substantial. Our school community



Robert Yates

has become incredibly diverse, not just in terms of language but also culturally. Students and families have brought a wealth of unique viewpoints, attitudes and customs. Parents contribute by sharing their traditions and celebrations, and links have been fostered with families who, after completing their contracts, move elsewhere. Last year's charity fundraising for a township school was initiated by a family that had returned to South Africa.

Most importantly, our school has expanded its capabilities and expertise – something that was recognised when we secured the Tes Schools Award of Independent Prep School of the Year. Similar to our approach during the coronavirus epidemic, we demonstrated that every challenge is an opportunity to be embraced fully. With over 21 different languages spoken within our school, a common goal unites us; creating a caring, patient school community where learning is enjoyed by all through hard work, preparation and determination."



Eversfield Prep accepting the Independent Prep School of the Year Award at the Tes School Awards 2023



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# Profile

## In conversation with Maxine Shaw

**Born:** 1969

**Partner:**  
Paul, who I first dated when I was 15! We have been back together for four years now, and he is a politician

**Children:**  
Molly, James and Lottie. Molly and James have flown the nest and live in Paris and London respectively. Lottie is at Bristol University

**Schools and Universities attended:** Bedford High School, Pilgrims Upper School and Queen Mary University of London

**First Job:**  
Primary teacher at Silsoe Lower School

**First Management Job:**  
Head of Upper Key Stage Two at Latchmere Junior School

**First job in independent education:** Deputy Headteacher at Pilgrims Pre-prep in Bedford

**Appointed to current job:**  
April 2022

**Favourite piece of music:** One Day Like This by Elbow

**Favourite food:**  
A good roast

**Favourite drink:** Champagne

**Favourite holiday destination:**  
I dream of visiting Costa Rica

**Favourite leisure pastime:**  
Spending time with good friends and my family

**Favourite TV or radio programme/series:**  
Gardener's World

**Suggested epitaph:**  
I hope it would be what I always try and instil in the children I work with, 'a thoroughly decent human being'.

**Q** After leaving school your initial degree was in Environmental Science before going on to take your PGCE. Did you have another career in mind before opting for teaching? Who or what inspired you to get into teaching?

**A** I think it is fair to say that I had a difficult time as a teenager and my school career was bumpy. I left home before I had finished school and wrote the essays for my A levels on a skateboard across my knees. Poor A levels led to clearing and I stumbled into studying Environmental Science, which I loved. The combination of geography, biology and chemistry was really interesting and enjoyable. The draw to teaching was strong though and I completed my PGCE straight after graduating.

My mother was a Headteacher for over 25 years and I grew up in her classroom, so got the bug quite early on. She worked in some very challenging schools in Toxteth during the uprisings in the 80's so her career was very different to mine. When I first moved from the maintained sector to the independent sector she described the transition as a move to the 'Dark Side'. She has forgiven me now and is very proud of my achievements.

**Q** When encouraging people into teaching and retaining them, which is known to sometimes be a challenge, what would you say has been the key factor that has kept you in the profession?

**A** The variety of your day is huge and that is what keeps me motivated. I love working with children, I love the lightbulb moments when something falls into place, I love watching fixtures and cheering the pupils on, I love being there when they need someone to talk to. I enjoy leading a staff team and supporting people as they plan their careers, one of the best parts of my job is seeing progression as staff are promoted to new roles. I know of six individuals who I have worked with, who have gone on to Headships, and I feel like a proud mum to all of them! I also enjoy working with the parents. My fundamental aim is to help the pupils I work with to become thoroughly decent human beings, and when parents share that vision, educating in partnership is an exciting journey.

**Q** The school recently celebrated its 75th anniversary. It began as a boarding and day preparatory school for boys aged 8-13. Boarding ceased in 1975 and the school later became co-educational. Would the school survive if VAT were imposed on fees? If it did, how would it change?

**A** We are not complacent but we recognise the need to ensure we use our income wisely and prepare for any changes imposed upon us. We will do all we can to minimise the impact of any fee uplift on parents. We are fortunate as a large school that we will be able to use economies of scale to keep our cost increases as minimal as possible. However, the whole sector is preparing for what appears to be an eventuality and one that saddens me immensely. I have educated some amazing children whose parents have really had to budget carefully to afford independent education. The potential uplift in fees as a result of the VAT will have a significant impact upon families who already sacrifice a lot to educate their children privately. Very affluent parents will not be affected and those whose children access bursaries will also be able to continue to provide an independent education to their children, although with less schools operating, the number of bursaries available will also dwindle. It is the band of parents in the middle who will have to rethink their plans.

In our school alone we have the same number of pupils in our primary years as the local state primary has across the whole school. It is not a case of simply recruiting new teachers. Where are these children going to be physically taught?

I agree that all children should have access to the same quality and breadth of education as the pupils at Danes Hill. I have taught in some fantastic maintained schools, where the pupils had the very best teachers and their outcomes were amazing both academically and emotionally. The key is more money being invested into the sector. But with predictions of up to 20% of independent prep schools likely to close if the proposed taxation is implemented, I suspect the additional cost of building work and staff costs will outweigh any income from VAT. We will see more pressure on maintained schools without sufficient funding to compensate.



Maxine Shaw has been Head of Danes Hill School in Surrey since April 2022. Previously, she was Head of St Paul's Junior School, London; Hazelwood School, Surrey; and Pilgrims Pre-Prep, Bedfordshire. She has recently been elected to the IAPS Board.



**Q** You have had experience teaching in both the maintained and independent sectors. Have you developed any particularly successful ISSP partnerships during any of your headships?

**A** Whilst in Bedford I worked with Bedford Prep School to set up a maths academy for gifted mathematicians. We received funding from The Harpur Trust and over the three years that it ran, we touched the blue paper for hundreds of children. They were nominated by their schools, and we were able to provide maths specialists with a passion to inspire and to work creatively with the pupils. I loved being involved in this even though juggling my own three children every Saturday morning was a challenge.

**Q** Heads who teach for a few hours every week say it is an important way of keeping in touch with the sharp end of education. Do you still teach?

**A** I love teaching and have managed to keep a timetabled commitment throughout my career. Maths and science are my passions but that is quite tough as the demands of being a Head mean that there are days and sometimes weeks, when you are needed elsewhere. This year I am dusting off my swimming qualifications and enjoying being part of the Games Department. I love teaching the Year 2 children, who are brilliantly exuberant and I also love the challenge of stretching the Year 8s whose skills in the pool are, in many cases, far surpassing mine.

**Q** Your dog Freddie is very much a part of school life. How has having him on site benefited the pupils, staff and school community?

**A** Most people love Freddie and I have to say he is brilliant therapy. Being young, he is still quite naughty and loves attention, so at times meetings can be interrupted with him systematically pulling my books, one at a time, off the bookshelf! For the children, my door is always open and they will often come to see Freddie at breaktime and either chase him around my office or sit quietly with him.

He really comes into his own when I need to have difficult conversations with a child. We will head off to the fields and chat as we walk. A conversation side by side is so much easier than face to face, and throwing a ball provides punctuation for the pauses that are necessary to allow children to formulate their thoughts. When you are really sad, lying on the floor with a gentle Labrador and whispering to him about what is bothering you is the ultimate comfort for some.

**Q** Two of your interests are gardening and cooking. A gardening club is part of the extra-curricular activities on offer and you have a productive kitchen garden. What positives have you seen as a result of these initiatives?

**A** Apart from the obvious opportunity to improve the children's knowledge of the world around them, the biggest positive is the opportunity to develop their social and interpersonal skills. They have to work cooperatively to ensure that the ground is cleared and planted successfully. Negotiation as to who is digging and who is harvesting can be animated, but not as much so as who gets to eat the last tomato or corn cob.

**Q** In the past you have contributed to local newspapers writing about school life. If you were to pen another piece about how school life today differs from when you were at school, what key point would be your focus?

**A** Technology. It has quite simply changed the world and whilst the positives are significant the unintended consequences are huge for children and for adults. The inability to ever disengage yourself from work is a battle I am constantly fighting and for our youngsters, the intrusion that they invite into their lives when they are too young to understand the ramifications, is incredibly distressing. It impacts upon their ability to focus, their willingness to pick up a book and their engagement with discussions at mealtimes. The mistakes they make are permanently recorded and the impact on mental health significant and devastating.

**Q** One of your favourite analogies involves an octopus on a zipwire. Sounds intriguing. Tell us more.

**A** Every child who joins a school is unique, and as educators we need to ensure that what we offer to our pupils is holistic. I use the octopus to explain this. I ask the pupils to imagine they are the octopus and that they have two arms on the zip wire. This is the academic strand of school life. Like a zipwire, their journey through academic lessons should be fast and fun. The other six arms are there for the pupils to reach out and grab other opportunities along the way. For some this will be sport or drama, for others coding or extra maths. Sometimes what is happening outside the classroom overtakes them and they let go of the zip wire. We expect that, they will learn more from getting things wrong than always getting things right. A great pastoral system means that children are swept up at this point and hooked back on to the zip line with a push to get going again. We also know that sometimes children find they have six or eight arms on the zip wire and it is our job to unpeel some of them and ensure that we get the balance right. A breadth of experiences ensures school is enjoyable and helps the pupils approach their learning with enthusiasm and excitement.

**Q** You spent a gap year travelling through South East Asia, Australia, South Pacific and West Coast USA. Were you alone? Did you have to face any difficult situations?

**A** I loved my gap year. I started travelling on my own and explored Malaysia before heading to Oz. I ended up working in Kalbarri on a horse ranch which was utterly amazing. Unfortunately, I had a nasty fall and was hospitalised. I am not great with needles or hospitals and the ambulance journey took several hours. The vastness of the country was quite shocking at that point. When I arrived in the hospital and they were sure I was stable, I was put in a side room on a children's ward as they were short of beds. When I told the nurses I was a teacher I found myself with a room full of young children demanding stories. It certainly made the time go more quickly.



# Creating a holistic creative thinking journey

The Bolton School Foundation, Lancashire has embarked on an action research project on creative thinking. Director of Creative Learning at Partnerships at Bolton School, Naomi Lord, discusses the initiative and how it is building developmental foundations in the approach to holistic learning.

**Primary Division: A Creative Thinking Action Research Pilot**  
Bolton School's Junior Boys and Junior Girls in Year 6 recently showcased their creative learning projects to peers, teachers from the Bolton School Foundation, and educators from local secondary schools. These presentations connected various subjects, including Science, English Literature and Language, History, and Art, and were a crucial part of their assessment process.

The students also had the opportunity to share their knowledge with younger pupils from the Infants and Year 3, engaging with subject experts, headteachers, deputy heads, and visitors. They discussed their learning processes, challenges they faced, and what they enjoyed most about the experience. This real-world learning approach emphasised mastering concepts by teaching them to others and receiving critical opinions as guidance from experts.

This initiative was part of an action research project on creative thinking in collaboration with the University of Winchester, ACER, and Rethinking Assessment, led by Professor Bill Lucas. It marked the second phase of Foundation staff's creative thinking research, involving both Junior and Senior School colleagues. The project aimed to encourage intellectual curiosity from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and explore innovative assessment methods to capture the growth of learning competencies.

The ultimate goal of this research was to deepen the understanding of how creative critical thinking can be nurtured in the classroom. It also aimed to enhance pedagogical practices to better prepare students for the transition

from primary to secondary school, focusing on 21st-century skills essential for future work.

The pilot work is now the developmental foundations of an ambitious approach to holistic learning across the Bolton School Foundation.

## **An All-Through Holistic Learning Programme**

These plans focus upon innovative educational pathways for learners focused on nurturing creative thinking and character development from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to Sixth Form. This pioneering approach aims to create a seamless, vertically connected learning experience for students and promote holistic education by bridging curricular, co-curricular, and community-based activities.

One key aspect of this approach is the implementation of vertical learning pathways, which facilitate a continuous educational journey from EYFS to Sixth Form. The school will integrate signature creative thinking projects at various pivotal stages to encourage critical thinking and self-reflection among students. These projects serve as scaffolds, guiding learners to take ownership of their creative thinking abilities and apply them in real-world scenarios within the school and the local community.

The school emphasises intellectual curiosity, imagination, and real-world learning, starting with philosophy programmes for infants and progressively introducing creative thinking practices inspired by Lucas and Spencer's 5 Dimensional Model of Creativity. Collaborative transition projects in Year 2 and Year 6 will serve as key moments in this journey, promoting staff

professional development as well as enhancing learners' capabilities.

Imaginative and varied Assessment for Learning plays a central role in evaluating students' progress within the creative thinking framework. Rubrics and signature AfL pedagogies are employed to assess creative thinking and character competencies. The school plans to expand the integration of signature projects to intervening year groups, building on the success of these mile-stone projects.

The school places a strong emphasis on independent project-based learning, allowing students to develop essential skills such as independent inquiry, design thinking, and effective communication. Higher Project Qualification (HPQ) and Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) in Key Stages 4 and 5 further prepare learners for higher education and real-world challenges.

A useful summary can be found in what the school articulates as 'three pillars': curriculum (head), co-curriculum, and community (hand and heart) and the interconnectedness of these domains which play a pivotal role in fostering personal growth, mastery, and leadership among students. This promotes diverse opportunities in career development, life skills training, well-being initiatives, and community engagement, well-connected to the traditional business of school life.

Collaboration with programmes such as the Greater Manchester Region Creative Health Strategy and the Royal Society for Public Health's creative health modules, engage students in community projects that emphasise creative expression and well-being. This



Naomi Lord

approach aligns with Bolton's Cultural Educational Partnership's broader educational strategies, fostering a 'golden thread' of cultural participation and access for Bolton.

The school envisions the development of digital portfolios to document and showcase students' progress across the three pillars of curriculum, co-curriculum, and community.

## **Recommendations:**

1. Promote the integration of philosophy and creative thinking practices into early education to nurture intellectual curiosity and critical thinking from a young age.
2. Advocate for the development and expansion of signature creative thinking projects that bridge curricular, co-curricular, and community-based activities to promote holistic learning.
3. Encourage the adoption of innovative assessment methods, such as the signature pedagogies outlined in Bill Lucas' 'Field Guide to Creative Thinking for Schools' (2023), to assess creative thinking and character development.
4. Implement and connect Key Stage 3 independent project-based learning opportunities and link them to Key Stage 4 and 5 opportunities such as HPQ and EPQ, to prepare students for higher education and practical application of their learning.
5. Ground and innovate your whole school approach with Bill Lucas' latest publication, Creative Thinking in Schools: A Leadership Playbook.





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## 2023 ISA Young Musician Competition opens

Entries for the ISA Young Musician competition are now open.

Established four years ago the competition celebrates the musical talents of pupils in ISA schools across the UK. This competition offers students an opportunity to showcase their skills, express themselves, achieve national recognition, gain feedback from experts, and learn from their peers.

For pupils from Key Stages 1 to 5, even the youngest are given

a chance to shine. Moreover, the competition champions the full spectrum of instruments to ensure a diverse representation of musical skills. Everything from the violin and harp to the flute and marimba is enjoyed.

Growing in popularity, over 100 entries are now received each year. The competition's first round involves online qualification, culminating in a live event for 30 finalists to perform at.

ISA Arts' core objective is to inspire creativity in young people with a wide range of opportunities in both the performing and visual arts. Inclusivity is at the heart of all these competitions.

### Entries are now open

Deadline: 7 December

Final: 31 January, Jacqueline du Pre Music Building, University of Oxford

Contact [isa@isaschools.org.uk](mailto:isa@isaschools.org.uk) to find out more.

Pictured: ISA Young Musician Competition 2022, Warwick Arts Centre

## Performance of Kindness: A Legacy of the Holocaust

Solihull School, West Midlands, has put on a verbatim performance of *Kindness: A Legacy of the Holocaust*.

The play was commissioned by Voices of the Holocaust and has been seen by over 20,000 students and members of the public since it premiered in 2022.

Susan Pollack OBE, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor who, at the age of 13, was sent to Auschwitz and later to Bergen-Belsen was welcomed to the school to watch the performance, along with fellow Auschwitz survivor, Mindu Hornick MBE; Kindertransportee Lia Lesser, as well as civic, religious and charity leaders from across the Midlands,

and further afield.

Head of the Prep School, Mark Penney, who organised the evening, said: "At 93 years old, Susan continues to be a beacon of inspiration. Despite losing 50 members of her family in the Holocaust, and her own near-death experiences, Susan continues to share how she is disarmed by acts of everyday kindness. Her heartfelt encouragement in the face of all forms of discrimination and prejudice, and to always be kind will live long in the memory of all present."

Artistic Director of Voices of the Holocaust, Cate Hollis, said: "It is profoundly important that Susan's story, that of her family and the other 6 million Jewish people murdered in the Holocaust continue to be told. The impact that *Kindness* is having across education establishments in the UK is incredible and we are honoured to do this work through the power of theatre."

Pictured: The cast with Susan Pollack OBE, Mark Penney and Cate Hollis



## Music partnership announced

ACS International Schools is celebrating a brand-new partnership with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO).

The year-long programme will benefit students at all three of ACS International School's UK campuses – Egham, Cobham and Hillingdon – and its campus in Doha, Qatar. The partnership will provide students with the opportunity to participate in virtual and in-person performances, lectures, and workshops hosted by the RPO's professional musicians and leading artists from around the UK.

It is the first step in ACS International Schools' planned future Arts Pathway to inspire creativity and nurture students' artistic growth to create a supportive performing arts community within schools.

But it isn't just ACS students who

will benefit from the partnership. ACS International Schools and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra will also jointly organise community events and performances to showcase the talents and achievements of students from partner schools.

Chief Executive at ACS International Schools, Tim Cagney, said: "We are delighted to have the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra as our signature partner. This collaboration is an excellent example of how creative relationships can be integrated into schools for the benefit of the whole community."

"It is really important to us that students from outside of the ACS community get to reap the benefits of this partnership too. We are so excited for some of the plans we have in the pipeline to engage talented creative students."

Pictured: The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at ACS International Schools' inaugural event, STEAM 2022 at Thorpe Park

## ATCL Diploma in piano

A young musician at King's Ely, Cambridgeshire, has achieved her Associate of Trinity College London (ATCL) Diploma in piano.

The ATCL is equivalent in standard to the first-year recital of an undergraduate degree, but Sixth Form student, Sayuri Okunushi, has earned hers, aged just 18.

Trinity Performance Diplomas are the organisation's most advanced performance awards. They follow on from grade and certificate exams, taking musicians up to a professional standard of performance and musical understanding.

Sayuri, who is from Tokyo, has been playing the piano since she was three years old. She joined

Pictured: Sayuri Okunushi



King's Ely's International Year 11 programme in 2021, and is now studying A-Levels in Music, Mathematics, and Textiles.

Sayuri also plays the cello, and this summer she sat her Grade 7 examination.





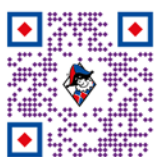
RAD HQ - David Tett

# The RAD dance on Harlequin floors

After working with Harlequin for over 30 years, the RAD knew that they wanted Harlequin floors in their new studios. Harlequin worked closely with the Royal Academy of Dance throughout the whole planning and development process.

“Besides all the technical details that make a great Harlequin floor, the most important aspect is that it is safe for our students. The floor is a dancer's main tool other than our bodies so we wanted to know that the floor would be reliable.”

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# Gold Parliament Teacher Ambassador

Dionne Flatman, Head of Economics, Politics and Business at Burgess Hill Girls, West Sussex, has been accredited as a Gold Level UK Parliament Teacher Ambassador.

The UK Parliament Teacher Ambassador Programme has been running since 2006. It was created to give teachers a solid grounding in how democracy and parliament work so that they can then pass on this knowledge to their immediate and local communities.

Successful applicants start the programme with a 3-day immersive training experience at the Houses of Parliament in Westminster. They then pass this learning on to their community, which, depending on the extent and number of initiatives they conduct to achieve this, gives them bronze, silver or gold Ambassador accreditation.

Dionne Flatman, is the first teacher in the school's history to apply for the programme. She attended the 3-day training programme in January 2023 with eighty other teachers from across

the UK. During the programme she sat in on debates in the House of Commons and House of Lords and joined tours of both Houses of Parliament including the Supreme Court and media suite. She also met with a variety of politicians including Mid-Sussex MP Mims Davies, ex-Prime Minister Boris Johnson, House of Commons Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle and his counterpart in the House of Lords, Lord McFall of Alcuith.

Following the UK Parliament training, Dionne devised a number of initiatives to spread her learning. These included:

- Delivering an interactive assembly about parliament and democracy to all the pupils and teachers in the Prep School.
- Arranging a visit from Mid-Sussex MP Mims Davies, which included a talk to A Level Politics students and a speech and 'Q&A' session for all Senior School and Sixth Form students at one of their assemblies.
- Organising a Democracy Day for Year 8 students.



Dionne Flatman meeting Sir Lindsay Hoyle

- Hosting a Speech Writing and Debating Workshop for Year 10 students.
- Encouraging the wider community to take part in a Select Committee 'call for evidence.'
- Inspiring friends to get involved in election campaigning and starting e-petitions.
- Holding a Mock General Election.

Having completed all these activities Dionne submitted her portfolio and was awarded

the top accreditation as a Gold Ambassador.

Dionne's initiatives are now part of the ongoing curriculum at Burgess Hill Girls, and she is keen to deliver them across the wider Sussex community. She has also been asked by the Education and Engagement team to return to the UK Parliament and share her work with the next group of Teacher Ambassadors as part of their training experience.

If you are interested in Dionne delivering one of her sessions at your school or community group, please contact Burgess Hill Girls.

Advertorial Feature

## Learning environments are changing...

Jo Prescott, Head of Sales at Rosehill Furnishings, provides her view on the latest developments in school furnishings

Gone are the days when learning was confined to traditional classrooms with symmetrical rows of desks and chairs.

Today, much like the evolution of offices – which have embraced agile working spaces, and breakout areas – learning environments are changing.

Desks and individual seats are making way for modular seating solutions which encourage collaboration, a more productive working environment and general wellbeing.

Traditional common room lounge chairs are making way for acoustic seating booths, individual block seating, and bench seating that allows for social interaction and contemplative study alike.

What students expect from furniture is changing, too...

With students arriving at school



equipped with laptops, smartphones and tablets, schools are increasingly investing in items of furniture that include charging and data points; allowing students to work uninterrupted on their electronic devices.

Students' expectations are also changing in terms of the general environment in which they spend

their time. Just as corporations are using attractive working environments as a means of attracting the latest cohort of graduates, independent schools can do the same; wielding modern, attractive learning environments as a student recruitment tool.

Furniture aesthetics are another area that's changing. Contract furniture manufacturers are increasingly

taking the 'made-to-order' route, providing a constellation of customisation options. This means it's easier than ever to purchase furniture that perfectly matches your school colours.

Here at Rosehill, we know that school furniture has always had to stand up to a considerable amount of abuse and general wear and tear. Traditionally, this meant that items such as chairs had to be upholstered in hard-wearing, albeit utilitarian vinyls. Today, however, thanks to advances in materials science, it's possible to have your chairs upholstered in premium fabrics that are as equally tough as their predecessors, whilst offering a superior finish and feel.

To conclude; if you want your school to attract and retain the very best students – and enhance learning outcomes – it pays to pay attention to your furniture.

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# Engage and Empower Parents to Improve Student Success

Parental involvement is a game-changer in education. If you're not actively fostering parent engagement, you might be missing out on a significant catalyst for student achievement.

Research consistently highlights the power of parental engagement in boosting school performance. It's not just students who benefit; schools also experience a multitude of advantages. From enhancing community connections to elevating school profiles, successful parent engagement is a win-win for all stakeholders\*.

However, engaging parents effectively remains a perpetual challenge for schools. Many lack a formal communication strategy for parent engagement, relying instead on scattered channels and sporadic efforts.

Surprisingly, research shows that schools are often perceived as "hard to reach" by parents. While both sides acknowledge the value of parental engagement, they often have different expectations regarding its purpose\*.

Parents seek simplicity, consistency, and efficiency in school

communications. They don't want to juggle multiple platforms for payments, newsletters, reports, and other information.

So, how can schools communicate consistently with parents while offering swift and convenient access to vital information? The solution lies in introducing a centralised hub for parent engagement.

Engage MIS by Education Horizons provides a dedicated parent portal and app within its School Management System, thereby enriching communication and fostering increased parental involvement in their child's daily activities.

Crucially, they provide easy access to progress reports, attendance records, and teacher feedback, all in one place. This complete visibility reassures parents and eliminates the need for constant questioning.



One school using Engage commented, "Having our parents feel involved in their child's school life is extremely important to us. Engage connects parents and teachers through the parent portal and provides instant notifications."

Engage simplifies parent-teacher communication, streamlines access to relevant information, and enhances parent involvement.

To effectively reach parents, schools should meet them where they are – on their mobile devices. A school app facilitates communication through push notifications and alerts, keeping parents informed even during their busy schedules.

Parents can use the app to read newsletters, access event calendars, and check their child's timetable whenever they have a free moment. They can also manage absences, update contact details,

view payment history, and budget for upcoming expenses seamlessly.

Our new uplift to the parent app, takes this convenience to the next level. Parents can access attendance data, assessment reports, account balances, school notices, and timetables. They can synchronise their personal calendar with the school calendar and receive push notifications for important updates.

A robust parent portal and app not only enhance parent engagement but also provide invaluable support for students' educational journeys.

At Education Horizons, we've been delivering premium solutions to independent schools for over 40 years. Our expertise and technology empower schools to optimise every aspect of their operations.



\* Do Parents Know they Matter (Harris & Goodall/University of Warwick 2007)

Connect with our experts to implement the right platform for your needs. Call +44 1935 403 020 or email [sales@educationhorizons.com](mailto:sales@educationhorizons.com)

[ads@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk](mailto:ads@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk)



# Science: Embracing the PSQM

Woodbridge School, Suffolk, has embarked on a journey to look at ways to improve and enhance opportunities within the primary science curriculum. Science subject lead at Woodbridge Prep, Helen Cory, takes a look at the Primary Science Quality Mark (PSQM) and how achieving this has not only helped to improve the teaching and learning of science, but also other curriculum areas throughout the School.



Helen Cory

Primary Science Quality Mark is a one-year school improvement programme for primary science. Accredited by the University of Hertfordshire and led by a team of experienced science leaders, PSQM provides professional development for new and experienced subject leaders, enabling confident, knowledgeable, reflective leadership which results in an improvement in the way in which science is strategically planned and taught across the whole School. PSQM supports subject leaders to effectively implement a curriculum for science that is informed by research evidence and best practice data.

## The process for PSQM

At Woodbridge School Prep, we are continually seeking ways to develop our curriculum. With this in mind, we began the PSQM journey as a means of further improving and enhancing the opportunities available to our students.

After enrolment a thorough audit of current practice and key goals took place. As Science subject lead, this enabled me to develop and articulate a clear intent and

an aspirational vision for science at Woodbridge School Prep, as well as providing opportunities for all staff to reflect on current practice and future targets. It is important to note that, although I led the process in school, PSQM can only be achieved when staff work together, and it involves significant commitment from everyone involved.

## Team effort

Working as part of a network (hub) of science leaders from schools across Suffolk, together with an expert hub leader, we worked to evaluate current provision for science and put in place a development cycle that would lead to rapid and sustained progress in science across the School.

We met as a team regularly for professional development sessions and developed key targets during the year-long process. In addition, this collaborative group of science subject leaders worked together to share issues, test ideas and disseminate expertise.

After conducting student voice interviews throughout the school, and reviewing our current

assessment data, it was clear that our students were both engaged in, and excited by, their science learning. However, these discussions highlighted a need to make better use of our outdoor environment and to provide further opportunities for the development of scientific skills. All too often, current assessment practices focus on knowledge gained rather than the skills acquired or developed; we were keen to shift the focus and raise the profile of scientific skills by implementing more of an enquiry-based curriculum.

## Recording and assessing

As a staff team, we worked together to devise a scientific skills recording and assessment system. Referral to this system in each lesson became a valuable tool, used to make skills explicit to our students. With the introduction of focused practical tasks, clearly linked to the scheme of work already in place, teachers were enabled to make accurate judgements and plan further opportunities that would develop specific skills. Our assessment data now reflects the development of skills, alongside knowledge and understanding, which is built upon year-on-year.

## School resources and environment

With extensive grounds, a forest school area, outdoor classrooms, ponds, and woodland, we were keen to make best possible use of our resources. Key members of staff worked alongside Suffolk Wildlife Trust to enhance our outdoor environment, while whole staff INSET enabled each year group team to develop further opportunities to learn outside the classroom, where appropriate. Further student voice discussions highlighted just how much was gained from learning outside; our outdoor environment now enables purposeful learning opportunities to take place.

The journey to achieving PSQM follows a cycle of intent, implementation and impact. The conclusion of this work is the PSQM

submission, in which subject leaders reflect at a personal, professional and institutional level on the impact of taking part in the PSQM against each of the set criteria.

Each school provides one submission, which contains written reflections and supporting documentary evidence of the impact of interventions to improve the quality of science teaching and learning. The submissions are reviewed and moderated by other hub leaders before PSQM awards are made according to the extent of the impact. Following this rigorous assessment process, it is intended that schools continue to develop science teaching and learning – after three years PSQM Gilt and then PSQM Outreach may then be achieved.

## The impact of PSQM

Now, there is a wealth of opportunities for children at Woodbridge to experience science as relevant and important to them from assemblies to visits from parents and outside experts, careers talks and whole-School investigations. For myself, fairly new to the role as science subject leader, the PSQM process has helped me to focus on the existing strengths and to look for ways of improving both the School and my role as leader. Each time I consider a new science initiative, the PSQM training makes me reflect: What am I doing? Why am I doing it? And, on its implementation, what has the impact been? I have thoroughly enjoyed being involved with the success science has had across the school and I am looking forward to building on this.

The impact of the PSQM ultimately is that not only has this helped us to improve the teaching and learning of science, but also other curriculum areas throughout the School.

## Nursery addition



Heathcote House Nursery

Heathcote House Nursery, Wiltshire has joined Wishford Education.

Wishford already runs eight nurseries alongside its prep schools, this is the first standalone nursery to join the group. Heathcote House has been run by

Keith and Jean Hudson for over twenty years and the transition to Wishford will allow them to plan for a well-earned retirement. There are no plans to change the leadership, staff or the approach the nursery takes to care and education.





Engage is the cutting-edge solution your school has been waiting for. Our comprehensive suite of tools is designed to streamline school management, enhance parent engagement, and boost student success all within a single platform.

**//** The BSP has been working with the Engage MIS for a decade...From basic registers to administration of trips it has been straightforward to use... - all the information in one central and secure space. We've been impressed with the levels of support that has been provided and the training packages on offer. Databases are not always the most exciting aspect of school life, we've found Engage to be reliable and effective, which is just what we want!"

NICHOLAS HAMMOND, HEADMASTER, THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF PARIS

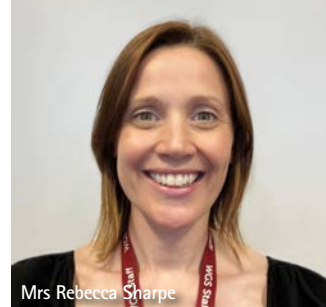
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for a personalised demo

# Why poetry inspires

Can poetry help students find their place in the world as well as inspire them to change it? Teacher of English at Woodhouse Grove School, Yorkshire, Rebecca Sharpe, shares how she believes the art form can do just that.



Betjeman said: “Too many people in the modern world view poetry as a luxury, not a necessity.” And as an art form which taps into and awakens the depths of our innermost emotion, we cannot dismiss it as merely a collection of words on a page. Poetry condenses the human condition into self-contained moments of beauty and that is why it resonates with us on such a profound level.

It is for this reason that poetry is the cornerstone of my love of literature and I strive to share my passionate enthusiasm for this innovative form in the classroom. But over the last few years, I have realised that to inspire, poetry must break out of the confines of the classroom walls to allow its evocative words to infiltrate the entire school.

Why is poetry so important? As with all literature, poetry is a timeless expression of creativity: it has the power to move, provoke, to enlighten and transform; not only does it help students to find their place in the world, it inspires them to change it.

To foster a personal connection with poetry, I began entering the school into the national Poetry by Heart Competition. I remember reading a beautiful analogy which, for me, perfectly describes the joy of learning a poem by heart: you may walk into an art gallery and admire a beautiful painting, but ultimately, when the museum closes you have to leave it behind. Yet when you learn a poem by heart you get to keep it forever with you, like taking the painting home.

At first, even the most eloquent students were nervous to perform their recitations, like sharing their reading was laying their soul bare. I wanted to dispel the myth that we should be afraid of poetry, that they should shy away from this genre for fear they cannot interpret the secret they perceive it holds. I knew I needed to put myself in their position and, like the students, outside of my comfort zone. I decided to enter the staff competition; I wanted to inspire my students to take a risk on poetry.

It was a joy to listen to and share the discovery of a vast array of

poems, from classics to modern verse, that had clearly resonated with the students. They recited them – not by rote but from their hearts – with their interpretations and meanings infiltrating every line. It was heartwarming to hear each word had taken significance, held power until a confident personal interpretation had been shaped.

We celebrated our bravery and then our successes together as I accompanied a fellow student down to London for the national finals. Learning poetry by heart had not just been a cognitive exercise, it had built literary appreciation, cultural understanding, emotional and personal connections not to mention confidence in public speaking and a joy of aesthetic pleasure, feeling the rhythm and imagery flow from within it. And for this to come to fruition on the iconic Globe stage and be awarded national staff champion was simply magical.

I strive to make poetry accessible to all, to give students the platform to recite, discuss, confidently articulate and defend their interpretations of this literary form of expression, to

see that it has no boundaries. I not only wanted students to fall in love with the poetry that had already been written but to shape the poetry of the future, to see how the poetic voice can be transformative: it is not just a mirror to society but a catalyst for change. So it will be on National Poetry Day, that we will announce the Grove's third Poet Laureate, a competition I initiated within the school to celebrate poetry written by students. I am always honoured to judge the huge response of poems from all age groups as they offer their unique and valued perspectives. Students are presented with a platform to write their poignant viewpoint on key issues and events throughout the year as the winning writer is given the opportunity to be the school's poet in residence.

Our current national Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage tells us that “The poems we learn when we're young stay with us for the rest of our lives.” and I sincerely hope that the poetry we have shared as a school community will continue to inspire the students of Woodhouse Grove School for many years to come.

## New covered play area

Covered outside space has been a growing requirement in the UK since Covid, allowing everyone to work and play outside in fresh air.

St Faith's School made contact with SMC2 to design and build a 112m2 canopy over their play area to protect the children from rain

and sun and increase the usage of the bark chip play area which was not being used to the maximum potential for the school.

Constructed using Glulam timber and textile membrane roof, this gave the school an eco responsible building that was easy to install



due to its offsite manufacture and optimises the use of the play area. The translucency of the textile membrane ensures the play area is bathed in natural light during the day with no need for artificial lighting, reducing the carbon footprint for the school further.

SMC2 worked with BB+C Architects in Cambridge for the



planning application, and the staff and pupils are very happy with their new area.

The design and construction of all SMC2 playgrounds and buildings comply with the standards for permanent buildings.

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Advertorial Feature



# Developing strategies for the long-term sustainability of proprietorial schools



Educationalist Andrew McEwen, considers some of the threats facing schools today and how this may impact a school's resilience and viability, offering some thoughts on what to think about should it come to a school sale.

In earlier articles I have written about the numerous threats to sustainability that the private school sector has been subjected to. I cited the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, economic pressures – especially those which have impacted on parents' ability to meet rising school fees and inflationary pressures affecting lending rates, the rise in employer contributions to pension schemes and national insurance rises and, more recently, the possibility of the introduction, by a Labour government, of VAT on school fees. Of course, these issues impact not only directly on the school's finances, they also affect the parents' ability to pay their fees.

Taken either individually, or worse still, all at once, such threats have led many owners of proprietorial schools to seriously consider their options for the future. Of course, the problems facing proprietorial school owners are not all equal. On the one hand, the schools forming part of medium or large corporate groups have greater resilience, with the opportunity to spread risk, seek economies of scale and possibly have access to less expensive borrowing should the need for short term financial

help be the most obvious solution. On the other hand, even the stand-alone proprietorial school businesses may find that their location is less affected by certain financial pressures than other schools.

Given these considerations it is likely that the single proprietorial school in more remote settings and with lower financial resilience will be most threatened. Unlike many private schools abroad, UK private schools tend to operate on relatively low profit margins and the loss of a handful of students or a major increase in costs or unexpected expenses, can push the school into the red. With the significant increase in borrowing costs, what might have been the usual recourse of seeking temporary finance from a bank may now become untenable.

At this point, some proprietorial school owners may look to more permanent solutions. These could range from an outright sale, through to merging with another school, up to actually closing the school. All these options have significant implications. Taking the last, for example, a proprietor may be tempted to close the school down, and then if the school buildings are owned

outright, selling these to recoup some money. He may feel that this is the simplest in the long term. Should this be considered then the school owners will need to look very carefully at their potential liabilities, especially those related to employment issues and parental contracts. These are areas which require careful analysis and necessitate the taking of specialist advice.

The somewhat less drastic option of an outright sale also requires specialist advice. In my experience, only a minority of schools are in a position to leverage a quick sale as buyers will undertake comprehensive due diligence which almost inevitably exposes issues which had not been contemplated by the current owners. Few school sales achieve completion without significant investment of time and money spent in the sorting out of these issues. These can range from staff contracts, including TUPE processes, through lease agreements and managing outstanding loans.

Of special concern is the matter of confidentiality. Schools are rumour-mills and the prospect of a school being sold can impact parental and staff confidence, hence the need to control

information until a sale has been finalised. The best strategy is to 'get the house in order' before proceeding to a sale.

Most people who have sold a house will sooner or later have concluded that the sale is best mediated by a specialist Estate Agent, i.e., someone who knows the market, can identify the potential buyers and advise on how best to present the property. If this is true of a house sale, then it is even more true for a school sale. Matters such as ensuring confidentiality, advising on pricing and presenting appropriate buyers require specific expertise. Specialist brokers, such as National School Transfer, a company with over 30 years' experience and which has handled well over 100 school sales, have the expertise to help pave the way to a successful outcome.

A school is, after all, more than a business, it is a community, a social enterprise which has been responsible for the care and nurturing of generations of children and for the wellbeing of its employees, as well as being the life's work of its owners and is thus deserving of ensuring the smoothest and most fruitful transition of ownership.

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.

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## School opening

Guests have joined students and staff at Oxford International College (OIC) Brighton to celebrate the opening of the new independent day and boarding school for students aged 13-18 at Ovingdean Hall.

Leading the celebrations was His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex, Andrew Blackman, who hosted a special tree-planting ceremony to commemorate

the opening of the school. The *Ligustrum lucidum* tree, planted during the ceremony, symbolises strength, resilience, and endurance. Following the tree-planting event, the Mayor of Brighton & Hove, Ms Jackie O'Quinn, officially opened the new building before attendees enjoyed tours of the school campus.

The school, which will expand to accommodate a maximum of 400 boarding and 100-day students over the coming years, builds upon the model of its sister school – Oxford International College – in Oxford. OIC Brighton, offers pre-GCSE, GCSE and A-Level courses for both British and international students.

More than 160 students from across the globe were welcomed to the school at the start of the academic year.

The College is part of the Nord Anglia Education family of schools.



Pictured: Tess St Clair-Ford, Founding Principal of OIC Brighton, cutting the cake modelled on the grade II listed Ovingdean Hall

## Acquisition of historic site for new school

Thomas's London Day Schools ("Thomas's" or the "Group") has announced the acquisition of Richmond Hill campus as premises for its co-educational secondary school.

The new school, Thomas's College will open September 2025 and will offer secondary education to students aged 11 to 18. Initially it will open for years 7 to 12 before building to a capacity of up to 630 pupils up to year 13, offering both day and flexible boarding places.

The site, which is in the heart of Richmond was originally a Wesleyan Theological College with the Grade II Listed main building opening in 1843. The campus more recently has been home to The American International University in London.

Pictured: Thomas's College



Credit: Ed Kingford

Funding for the acquisition was facilitated by education specialist private equity firm, Oakley Capital, who joined the group in April 2023 as a strategic partner to provide capital resource, support and knowledge to develop current facilities, and to expand Thomas's education by investing in new opportunities.

The process of recruiting a Head of Thomas's College is now under way and further details and a prospectus will be released in Spring 2024.

Advertorial Feature

## Exclusive school caterer selected

Palmer & Howells, specialist independent school caterer, is thrilled to announce its recent catering partnership with Wychwood School, Oxfordshire. Pupils at the school will now enjoy culinary offerings featuring fresh, locally sourced and seasonally inspired meals.

Newly appointed Chef Manager Jack Moss, with the support of two skilled chefs and catering assistants, has taken on the responsibility of providing nourishing food for the whole school. Beyond daily meals, Palmer & Howells will also extend its expertise to hospitality catering for all events ranging from open days and sporting events to various afternoon teas, lunches and dinners held throughout the year.

Operations Director for Palmer & Howells, Emma Allen, stated: "We are so proud to have been chosen as the exclusive food service provider for Wychwood School. Our understanding of the importance of forging a partnership that delivers a personalised and bespoke catering experience paved the way for the school to confidently outsource its catering operation. We share the school's passion for nurturing its pupils' understanding of food and [www.palmerhowells.co.uk](http://www.palmerhowells.co.uk)

nutrition as well as instilling healthy eating habits from an early age."

Commenting on the new alliance, Director of Operations at Wychwood School, Duncan Radnor, said: "This culinary partnership with Palmer & Howells enhances how we care for our day pupils and boarders. We undertook a robust tender process to ensure we selected the right catering partner who understood our ethos, and right from the start of the process Emma and the team listened and understood the vision of our catering provision, and the mobilisation period has been extremely well managed. A mutual appreciation for serving food that is not only delicious and appealing, but crucially nutritious underscores our collaboration. We are delighted by the initial positive and enthusiastic response of our pupils to the new food choices on offer."

Palmer & Howells provides all meals, including breakfast, lunch and supper, seven days a week as well as morning break and after school snacks during the week. They will also be providing hospitality services for events and have created diverse and wholesome menus for the pupils to enjoy.

### "Created with purpose & heart"

Our approach starts with understanding each client's priorities and making sure that we design a personalised service commensurate with each individual school we work with.

- Our commitment to sourcing local and regional seasonal products, helps support local producers as well as reducing our carbon footprint and food miles. For our schools it means truly seasonal menus using fresher, tastier produce that supports the local community and economy.
- People are at the heart of what we do. Supporting our teams with training and development empowers them to strive for excellence and creates opportunities for both personal and professional growth.
- We work transparently and openly to deliver on our finances, providing accurate performance data to show how we manage our operating costs. We guarantee a high level of head office, regional and local support to deliver on our promises and exceed expectations.





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## Charity art installation

Pupils from Felsted School, Essex, have assisted with the expansion of a charity art installation of 20,000 glowing lights in the shape of fireflies, each one dedicated to the memory of a loved one, at a hospice in Wiltshire. On a visit last month (September), the Princess Royal became one of the first people to receive one of the new lights, which was dedicated to her late parents.

Lighting up the grounds of Dorothy House Hospice are 800 fireflies, each made up of 24 fibre optics, which were designed and crafted by artist Bruce Munro with the help of pupils.

Bruce Munro, a former student of Felsted, asked the school to help work with him to expand the installation so more people could

sponsor a light in a loved one's memory.

The hospice's Firefly Woods was originally installed in 2021 and has become a valued space for those who visit Dorothy House Hospice, but the new expansion means it can now be accessed by the wider community.

"Light is the beginning of life and the end of life, and without light there is no existence," said Bruce Munro of the installation. "These little fireflies move with the air currents and almost feel as if they have a life within them."

The Princess Royal toured Firefly Woods as part of her visit to the hospice's Day Patient Unit, where she met with patients, families, volunteers and staff.



Pictured: The Firefly Woods at Dorothy House Hospice and Felsted pupils helping to build Bruce Munro's 'fireflies' in memory of the late Queen and Prince Philip as part of the hospice's charity installation



## Arts Fest

As part of week-long celebrations by the Faculty of Creative and Performing Arts at St Mary's Senior School, Colchester, girls from Years 7 through to 11 have showcased their work at the school Arts Fest.

There were Shakespeare inspired music performances, a monologue slam, a 'cake off' competition, a GCSE Art and Photography exhibition as well as a Fashion Show garment showcase.

Former creative arts student success was also celebrated with Lily Cornell who put on a graduate show at Colchester Institute for her BA (Hons) Fashion & Printed Textiles degree. Her final collection 'Pattaya' has been bought by an international buyer and she is now working as a Junior Textile

Pictured: Lily Cornell (second from left), with her mother Alexis (far left), and teachers Mrs Caroline Parry-Jones and Mrs Katie Palfree at Colchester Institute's graduate show with Lily's collection 'Pattaya'

Shakespeare artwork created by St Mary's girls in Years 7-9, which provided the backdrop for the performances at Arts Fest



Designer for Textile Consultant and Creator, Anna Howlett.

The school also welcomed back former pupil, Alicia Lording, who gave a talk about her career path and her job role as Costumier for Angel Costumes, a leading costume supplier for film, television and theatre. The girls were able to get up close and hands-on with costumes from live action Disney films such as The Little Mermaid and Beauty and the Beast as well as a piece from Beyoncé's tour promo video.

## Festival celebration

St Margaret's School, Hertfordshire, has hosted a week-long Arts Festival in celebration of music, art and theatre.

Pupils were able to watch a piano recital by award-winning pianists Lara Melda (winner of the BBC Young Musician of the Year in 2010) and her sister Melis Azra, as part of an Earthquake Relief Recital to raise money for Turkey and Syria.

A group of Year 10 pupils also performed a variety of classic, comedic and naturalistic monologues to a live audience, and the school's Year 9 and 10 cohort also gave a playful portrayal of traditional 'cautionary tales' to parents.

Celebrating the impact of physical theatre, Years 7 and 8 took part in a series of performances exploring the skills of mime, masks and movement. Singing teacher Nicola Webb, also hosted 'A Night at the Musicals' with performances from shows such as Carousel, My Fair Lady, Wicked and Mary Poppins. Year's 3 to 5 gave a LAMDA showcase, while the younger pre-school children in Year 2, took part in a production of What the Ladybird Heard for a live audience of parents.

There was also a live theatrical production of Matilda from the Junior School attended by parents and children from other local primary schools in the region. The pupils also took part in



Pupils in costume for What the Ladybird Heard

some special writing workshops, creating a play from scratch and also experimenting with directing performances.

As part of an initiative to encourage the uptake of more orchestral and less common

instruments, the school's music teachers also ran more than 80 music taster sessions throughout the week across multiple instruments including the harp, trumpet, trombone, French horn, violin, clarinet, saxophone, bassoon, oboe and drums.



# The single-use plastic ban



Chris Webster

As of the 1st of October 2023, the new ban on single use plastic has been enforced as law in England and Wales. The UK Government's aim is to nudge the country's consumption habits and lessen the impact of plastic waste on the environment.

But what does this mean when considering school catering? Food procurement company Senior Relationship Manager, Chris Webster, brings some clarity to the complicated details of this new ban.

## What is banned?

The plastic ban will cover a range of single-use plastic items, including plates, trays, bowls, cutlery, balloon sticks, and specific types of polystyrene cups and food containers. These items, often discarded after a single use, have been a substantial contribution to plastic pollution and environmental degradation.

## What are the practicalities of meeting the legislation?

Catering managers and supervisors need to be fully aware of the products that are now banned and are required to implement checks within their foodservice operations to ensure that these banned products are not supplied to pupils and indeed all diners. It is advisable that old stock of single-use plastic cutlery and single-use plastic balloon sticks are removed from storage, to ensure they are not accidentally supplied.

The legislation includes biodegradable, compostable and recyclable plastic items intended for single-use. Concerns have been raised about the potential impacts of compostable and biodegradable plastics in closed-loop environments. While these materials are marketed as eco-friendly, their effectiveness in real-world conditions is variable, potentially contributing to plastic pollution.

## Exemptions

There are some exemptions to the single-use ban, which allow for the supply of single-use plastic plates, bowls and trays if they are to be supplied to another business or if used for packaging which includes pre-filled or filled at the point of sale at your school. There are also exemptions on polystyrene drink and food containers if further

preparation is required such as adding water, microwaving or toasting.

If single-use plastic, plates and trays continue to be used, as well as polystyrene containers for drinks and food, then all members of a school catering team should be aware of and fully understand what these exemptions are.

## What are the consequences of not adhering to the single-use plastic ban?

Local authorities are expected to undertake inspections to make sure that the new legislation is being followed. If schools are identified to be breaking the law, then the school can be fined and ordered to cover the cost of the investigation.

## Checklist for catering managers and supervisors:

- Not supplying any single use plastic cutlery
- Not supplying any single-use plastic balloon sticks (drink stirrers)
- Single-use plastic plates, bowls and trays are not being provided to pupils that are not already pre-filled or filled at the point of sale
- Not supplying any ready to drink or eat foods in polystyrene containers unless further preparation is required.

## What alternative products can be used?

In response to these challenges, sustainable alternatives are emerging in the market.

### Cutlery

There are a variety of different materialised disposable cutlery options available on the market, which include wooden, paper and cornstarch to name a few.

### Balloon Sticks (Drinks Stirrers)

The most popular alternative material for drinks stirrers is wooden. There are also other alternatives available now such as cornstarch.

### Plates, Bowls and Trays

A wide range of paper, card and wooden alternatives are available on the market and have been for some time now.

### Polystyrene Containers

Card containers and paper cups have been available for some time. There are also alternatives made from sugarcane natural fibres as well as bamboo and wood pulp moulded fibres.

Vegware and Notpla are just two of the companies that are leading the way with these alternative products which can be sourced through the majority of multi-temp suppliers. Both offer packaging alternatives that are made from the sustainable materials mentioned, as well as seaweed and plants. Notpla has gone a step further and extended their range to edible packaging which is designed to be eaten by the consumer as part of the product. Says Hoa Doan, Notpla's head of impact & sustainability: "caterers can respond to the growing consumer demand for guilt-free, plastic-free packaging while also making meaningful strides towards sustainability."

We need to change our ways of production and consumption. Now it falls to every individual, business, organisation, school and nation to begin to collaborate to embed these principles.



[www.allmanhall.co.uk](https://www.allmanhall.co.uk)



## Putting a lid on plastic waste

In a significant move towards environmental responsibility, The Leys School, Cambridgeshire, has announced its latest initiative, aimed at reducing plastic waste and promoting sustainability.

Effective from the start of the Summer Term, the school will no longer distribute single-use water bottles on school trips and at sports fixtures. Instead, pupils are encouraged to fill up their own reusable bottles at any of the seven newly-installed water fountains. This is expected to prevent the consumption of more than 10,000 plastic bottles annually, furthering the school's commitment to eco-conscious practices.

Headmaster, Martin Priestley, commented: "As a country, we use and dispose of 7.7 billion plastic bottles each year. By no longer supplying single use water bottles to pupils, we can make a small step in helping to reduce this number."

The initiative, driven by the passionate efforts of the pupil-led Sustainability Society, is part of a broader endeavour to enhance sustainability at The Leys. Recently, the society has also been actively exploring sustainable practices in the fashion industry and has successfully organised clothing swaps, allowing pupils to donate unwanted garments and acquire new ones in exchange.

The school has also recently joined the 'Let's Go Zero' campaign, a nationwide movement that includes more than 2000 schools. By taking part in this initiative, schools must pledge to achieve Zero Carbon emissions by 2030.

Pictured: Pupils at one of the new water fountains

More can be found here on the single-use plastic ban:

<https://allmanhall.co.uk/blog/the-uk-single-use-plastic-ban-coming-into-force-in-october-2023>

Chris has worked within the catering industry for over 15 years as a Chef and Production Manager. Following industry, Chris spent over 3 years delivering work based NVQ cookery and management qualifications to catering teams across many sectors including Education and Care, before moving into catering consultancy. He is Senior Relationship Manager at allmanhall, an independent, family owned and managed provider of food procurement services. Established 2006, their mission is to challenge and transform food supply so informed decisions become clear.

## Royal Horticultural School Garden Awards

Pattison, Coventry, has been awarded Level 5, the highest level, in the Royal Horticultural School (RHS) Garden Awards. The school started at Level 1 in September 2022 and has achieved this result after just 12 months. The work has been led by the schools' Gardening Clubs and Eco Team, supported by the school's Facilities Manager, Mr Hanks, and Senior School Science Teacher and Wellbeing lead, Mrs Patria.

On the journey to the Level 5 RHS Garden Awards Pattison children and staff:

- Showed that the garden was a haven for wildlife by digging out the overgrown pond, relining and filling it with captured rainwater and adding suitable plants. After receiving a donation of frogspawn, the pond is now teeming with life
- Researched how to plant trees and planted a mini orchard of 8 trees with more to come.
- Secured a donation from the Woodland Trust to plant a hedge around the orchard and meadow.



Pictured: Pattison pupils and garden

- Set up stalls at the Christmas Fair selling the seeds from sunflowers grown over the summer as well as hyacinth bulbs.
- Invited parents and neighbours to an open garden at the end of term, gave talks on the journey of the garden over the past 12 months and explained how to grow vegetables to the audience.
- Ensured the garden project is 100% self-funded through the sale of produce grown in the garden as well as stalls at the Christmas Fair. Funds raised have enabled the team to buy two greenhouses.

The Pattison Gardening Clubs and Eco Team hope to join in the RHS Big Food Share next year and donate excess fruit and vegetables to the local food hub to help those in need.

Head of Pattison, Graeme Delaney, said: "With this project, Pattison children have turned a piece of unused school garden into a wildlife meadow, a vegetable patch and an orchard. Not only does the end result look fantastic, but the produce that the children have grown in the vegetable patch has been enjoyed by the whole school community".

Advertorial Feature

## eibe playground design

At eibe, providing children with the best play equipment to assist their development is our passion. Countless studies prove that physical activity (preferably in fresh air) directly supports a child's growth, development, and health. But which way is the best to do this? Ask the experts! We will take care of the planning and design of your play area! Eibe provides individual solutions for nursery schools, KS1, KS2, and SEND settings. The playground designs are adventurous and challenging yet safe and secure. The functional play equipment is athletic and purposeful. The designs capture the hearts of children, as well as inspiring teachers every day.

It is crucial that play spaces are inclusive and are designed to allow for the participation of children with a wide range of abilities. Eibe Play's equipment is constantly evolving as we aim to manufacture innovative ranges that are inclusive and accessible to children of all abilities.

When it comes to the design of new play equipment, eibe are here to support you from the beginning with a full service: individual consultation, visits at the site, and bespoke concepts. Thanks to many years of experience, the designers at eibe will help implement your ideas in clear, easy to visualise stages and work with you on each individual step of



the journey, managing costs for the duration of your scheme. Our project managers work seamlessly together with our internal specialists: You will always have a direct contact person who can

consult, advise and refer whenever you have a specific question.



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## Girls football training day for local schools

Rossall School, Lancashire, has held a training day which aimed to extend access to girls football by offering its FA licensed coaches, national champion girls' players, and state-of-the-art facilities to five local schools.

'Rossall's Big Kick' featured a carousel of activities designed to enhance skills and provide a fun-filled learning experience and concluded in friendly matches to win the first annual Big Kick shield.

By collaborating with local schools, Rossall School aims to foster a vibrant and inclusive football community for girls, inspiring them to pursue their passion for the sport. Rossall aims to support local schools in their mission to make football accessible to all girls in school or the community by 2024. The event not only promoted skill development but also encouraged teamwork, sportsmanship, and a love for the beautiful game.



## Triathlon

A 16-year-old pupil from Bromsgrove School, Worcestershire, has competed at The British Triathlon Championship Grand Finals. William Pridden came away with silver in the individual race and was 3rd in the overall Super Series standings.

The Super Series consists of 7 separate competitions comprising of a mixture of Triathlons and Aquathlons. Each one has slightly different formats. Some with heats and finals, others with multiple races over the day all of which start in April and conclude in September.

William has never been solely a member of a Triathlon club, rather completing each discipline at an

Pictured: William Pridden with the awards



individual club. He predominantly trains for his Swimming with Worcester swimming club, running with Bromsgrove & Redditch Athletics club, and Cycling in the group rides for Wyre Forest CC.

## Netball star to focus on coaching

After 250 appearances in the Netball Super League and a seven-year stint for England, Lindsay Keable has announced that she is to retire from professional netball this year and focus on her work as Head of Netball at Felsted School, Essex.

During a playing career spanning 16 years, Lindsay has played for Netball Super League (NSL) sides Team Bath, Celtic Dragons, Mavericks and most recently London Pulse. She also represented England between 2011 and 2018 after being spotted at the age of 16.

For the past eight years, Lindsay has balanced her professional netball career with her role leading

Pictured: Lindsey Keable (left) with Felsted Netball 1st Team

the development of netball at Felsted, alongside her roles of RS Teacher and Housemistress. Lindsay will continue in these roles after her professional retirement at the end of the 2022-23 NSL season and the Fast5 competition. She will also coach part-time at London Pulse's academy.

"Women's sport is becoming so much more professional, not just netball but other sports too," said Lindsay. "There are so many opportunities for girls now, we have a duty to share our passion with them and show them how they can get the most out of sport, whether as a career, or just as part of a healthy active lifestyle, playing for fun."

## Swim partnership

Kent College, Pembury, Kent, has announced a new partnership with RTW Monson Swimming Club. The launch coincided with the opening of the new 25-metre, six lane competition KC pool.

The new partnership will see Monson deliver much of Kent College's new swimming programme. Monson will also utilise the pool for a joint swim school providing lessons for the local community and the expansion of their squad structure.

Monson Swimming Club was established in 1901 and caters for Parent and Toddler classes in their Learn to Swim programme, all the way through to precision

training for competing at British National Level and beyond.

Director of Sport at Kent College, Georgina Hughes, commented:

"We are excited about the development of our new pool and the partnership. We have designed the swimming programme to provide sport for everyone."

Head of Age Group Swimming at Monson, Karen Bradbury, remarked: "The club are really excited for the future. With a waiting list for most squads and our swim school, this partnership enables Monson to expand, adding momentum to our club goal of promoting swimming and waterpolo within the local area."

## Director of Sport

Ashville College, North Yorkshire, has kicked off the new school year by appointing former Harrogate Town player and youth team coach as Director of Sport.

Paul Stansfield joins the school after guiding Harrogate Town's Under-18s academy side to become champions of the EFL Youth Alliance North East Division in only its second season.

Outside of his football career, Paul's teaching experience includes six years at Harrogate's St Aidan's CE High School, where he was Head of Year and Head of Department, and seven years at the town's St John Fisher Catholic High School, where he was latterly Deputy Head.

He said: "Sport contributes so much to a child's experience of

Pictured: Paul Stansfield



school, not just because of the competitive element but because of the skills it teaches.

"The skills you learn from sport are life skills. Sport teaches you about hard work, communication, cooperation, teamwork, resilience, and being there for other people.

"These are the things you need in life to be successful, to come through the difficult times, and to enjoy the good times."



## Trampolining gold

Sasha Roberts, a Year 6 pupil from Bolton School Junior Girls', Lancashire, beat off 60 other competitors to win gold in a trampolining event at an English Gymnastics competition held at Telford. Sasha was taking part in the Trampolining Silver Level for females aged 11-12 years. The win saw her qualify for the English Championships. Earlier in the year, Sasha came fourth at another English Gymnastics qualifying event in Kent.

Sasha also competes in the National League and has won two golds this year. She has also taken part in several north west regional competitions and won three golds which will see her represent the area in the inter-regional finals in the autumn.

Sasha belongs to the Jump UK Trampolining Club along with her brother Harry who is in Year 8 and also at Bolton School.

Pictured: Sasha Roberts



The club in Leyland has a long history with British Gymnastics and several members are also part of the British squad.

Sasha started trampolining recreationally just before her third birthday. She attended just once or twice a week but, after Covid, with the reopening and reorganisation of the club, she started training 4-5 times a week and she is now in her second year of competitions.



## Junior Ladies Olympic Skeet British Champion

Sixth Form student from Bishop's Stortford College, Hertfordshire, Bethany Norton, has again been crowned Junior Ladies Olympic Skeet British Champion 2023, retaining her title from 2022.

An open competition with athletes ranging from 12 to 60 years, Bethany was up against numerous competitors in her category under the age of 21. In addition to winning the Junior Ladies Championship title for the second year running, Bethany also topped qualification in both the Juniors (men and women) and open women (all ages) categories.

Bethany began shooting in 2018 but has only been skeet shooting

Pictured: Bethany Norton

since 2021. After entering an English skeet competition at her local ground, she was later invited to try Olympic Skeet by a British shooting coach. A few lessons later and Bethany was invited to join the British Shooting Development Pathway, before being selected to join the British Shooting Talent Academy for the 2021 season. As well as entering domestic Olympic Skeet competitions, Bethany qualified for the Great Britain (GB) Junior team for the 2022 and 2023 seasons.

Bethany's long-term goal is the Olympics, and is currently planning towards the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

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# CHANGING FACES... CHANGING PLACES...



Hunter Hall, Cumbria, has welcomed a new head, Paul Borrows.

After completing his PGCE at Homerton College, Cambridge, Mr Borrows started his teaching career at an international school in Zambia. On returning to the UK, he took up a position at an independent day school in Bury St Edmunds. During this time, he completed a Masters in Education at the University of Cambridge, and also began working with a

number of other organisations, including the Royal Institution and the Independent Association of Prep Schools (IAPS) as a Maths Subject Advisor, during which time he organised a number of popular and oversubscribed courses.

Paul also works with the Independent Schools Examination Board (ISEB) where he leads the 11+ Maths Setting Team and writes the 13+ Mental Arithmetic Papers. Prior to joining Hunter Hall, Paul was Deputy Head at Vinehall School in East Sussex.



Pangbourne College has announced the appointment of Mr Oliver Knight to be its next Head from September 2024. Mr Knight will succeed Mr Thomas Garnier, who will be stepping down as Head in July 2024 after 19 years of service.

Pangbourne will be Mr Knight's fourth headship. His first headship was in 2014 in Greenwich and then in 2017 he became Executive Head of Phoenix Academy, London, moving in 2019 to be Principal of Ark Acton Academy, London.

Mr Knight is also a published author on education and teacher development and one of his publications on curriculum planning and lesson design is

currently included on PGCE courses. Alongside his published work on education, he is on the Board of a successful Multi-Academy Trust and is a Governor for a London Prep School and Senior School.

He is also passionate about outdoor education and has recently set up a sports scholarship programme in conjunction with the Human Performance Scientists who work for Red Bull and Aston Martin F1 teams; and his adventure programme has taken the first state school children to the top of Ben Nevis in winter, as documented by The Sunday Times. The Duke of Edinburgh's award, at all three levels, forms a major component of his outdoor educational philosophy.



Loughborough Amherst School, Leicestershire, has welcomed Mr James Neville as its new

Headmaster.

Having served as a senior leader at several independent day, boarding and maintained secondary schools, Mr Neville has a track record of whole-school leadership. Originally from Cardiff, he read Modern

History at Magdalen College Oxford before completing an MPhil at King's College Cambridge, where he was a Choral Scholar in the world-famous choir.

Loughborough Amherst School is part of the Loughborough Schools Foundation, alongside Loughborough Nursery, Fairfield Prep School, Loughborough Grammar School and Loughborough High School.



Mr Phil Soutar, who has been the national Chair of the Independent Schools Association for the past year, has become Head of Ashville Prep School, North Yorkshire. He was previously Head at Rosemead Prep School and

Nursery in Dulwich, South London, for the past six years.

In a career spanning more than two decades his other posts have included Deputy Headmaster at Ackworth Junior School, near Pontefract, and Headmaster at St Wystan's Prep School in Repton, Derbyshire.



Helen Foster has been appointed as the new head of Loughborough Grammar School,

becoming the first female head of the all-boys school in its 530-year history.

Taking on the post at the start of this academic year, Helen previously served as senior deputy

head at the school, which is part of Loughborough Schools Foundation.

Helen began her career as a boarding housemistress of Oakham School, Rutland, in 2009.

After joining Loughborough Grammar School in 2018 as deputy head of pastoral and discipline, Helen has also led the school's boarding and safeguarding.



St Mary's School, Cambridge, has appointed Miss Olivia Buchanan as Head of Junior

School, following the departure of Mrs Jo Christian at the end of the last academic year.

Olivia joins St Mary's from Falcons Prep Richmond, where she was Headteacher for five years.

Educated at an all-girls' prep school in Surrey, followed by boarding at secondary school, Olivia has a BSc in Geography from St. Andrews University and a PGCE in Geography from Homerton College, Cambridge University. She also gained a distinction in a Masters (MEd) in

Special Education and Inclusion at Cambridge University.

Olivia's teaching experience has been gained in a range of settings that span state and independent schools and secondary and primary phases of education across Cambridge and London, and prior to her time at Falcons Prep Richmond, Olivia spent six years as Deputy Head (learning and teaching) at The Hall School Hampstead.

On top of her day-to-day work commitments, Olivia has also supported the training of teachers at Homerton College and published papers in Sustainable Development and Renewable Energy.

## Heads Hunted

### Among the upcoming head and principal appointments:

|                            |               |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Alleyn Court Prep          | Essex         |
| Bishop's Stortford College | Hertfordshire |
| Cranleigh Prep             | Surrey        |
| Frewen College             | East Sussex   |
| Haileybury                 | Hertfordshire |
| Kirkham Grammar            | Lancashire    |
| Saint Ronan's School       | Kent          |
| Sherfield School           | Hampshire     |
| St Mary's Calne            | Wiltshire     |
| St David's Prep, Purley    | Surrey        |
| Portsmouth High School     | Hampshire     |

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

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

Please email:  
mail@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk



# Selecting the right holiday camp provider

The financial horizon for Independent Schools is clouded with potential policy change. The only certainty is that reliance on fees as the sole income generator is fast becoming risky. The essentials will always be maintained but quality educational establishments won't thrive just covering the essentials. Whilst

keeping the primary focus on education, an integrated and strategic co-commercial strategy can provide financial benefits as well as a potential pupil pipeline.

A quality holiday camp partner can offer both revenue when your school is closed to students and, as a childcare provider, a pupil pipeline. When selecting a partner,

there are 3 key areas to consider; what they offer you as the host school, how they could benefit your parents and what advantages they can deliver to your children.

It's important to align with the providers reputation, making sure their commitment to quality, company culture and values match your own. A great place to start is looking at feedback on the provider. Independent review platforms such as Trustpilot offer insights on customer experiences and official ratings are available with Ofsted reports.

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# Teaching and the menopause

With some teachers leaving or stepping back from their careers as a result of the menopause, GP, Dr Sarah Hattam, marking World Menopause Day, provides some advice on what support and resources are available to help improve health and wellbeing.

Debbie (not her real name) had booked a late afternoon appointment in my GP surgery. She was in her early forties and an experienced secondary school teacher working in a local independent school. But no sooner had we closed the consulting room door than the tears started flowing.

Debbie told me she was on the brink of leaving a career she loved. When I enquired as to the cause of this momentous decision, she started to describe multiple seemingly disconnected symptoms: a recent crushing lack of self-confidence, the embarrassment of finding herself red-faced and unbearably hot in front of a packed classroom, fitful sleep, anxiety verging on panic at time and aching joints which made supervisory duties physically painful. And the list went on - fatigue, brain fog, difficulty remembering, not just the names of her students, but on a bad day, even the names of long-standing colleagues.

As far as Debbie was concerned, she was "losing her touch" as a teacher, and there was no option but to hand in her resignation.

Fortunately, Debbie did not leave a successful career in education prematurely. The constellation of symptoms she presented during that appointment were,

in fact, typical of the menopause transition, a natural phase of female life and part of our ageing process. For many women, the menopause is unpredictable and feels much like going through puberty in reverse. Thankfully, I was able to reassure her that the way she was feeling was explained by erratic hormone changes secondary to the menopause. Debbie received appropriate advice and treatment which alleviated the vast majority of her symptoms.

Debbie's story is very common. Symptoms of the menopause transition often begin a lot earlier than many people realise or expect and last on average between 4 and 8 years. The vast majority of women in menopause transition are working, and most wish to continue. But at least half of women report that their menopausal symptoms have had a significant negative impact on their work. And for staff working in the education sector, some of the "easy wins" that other employers can offer are just not workable. Working in a school doesn't lend itself to remote or flexible working for instance.

Recent research also shows many women don't ever consult a healthcare professional during their menopause, and, for those that do, *it often takes several visits to find someone*

*who is appropriately trained in menopause care and support.*

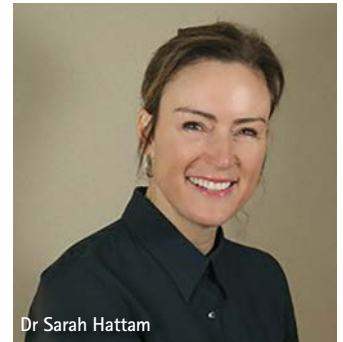
## A "One-Size-Fits-All" approach to menopause doesn't work

When it comes to menopause support, a "one-size-fits-all" approach is just not effective. So, whilst it's great that we've seen recent traction in terms of improved awareness of the menopause transition, with some schools implementing a menopause policy or setting up a peer support group, this isn't enough. *We have to go further if we are going to stem the silent tide of valuable and experienced female colleagues leaving or down-shifting their careers during this time.*

## Personalised guidance and advice is needed

Too many women looking for support during menopause are left to the mercy of a random internet search which risks driving them into the hands of a non-evidence based and potentially very costly wellness industry.

It was precisely for these reasons, that a digital tool, Me & My Menopause®, written by accredited menopause specialist doctors, was developed, bringing together evidence-based advice, to bring clarity instead of confusion and provide a roadmap to navigate the menopause transition phase effectively.



Dr Sarah Hattam

Whether the user is pre-, peri- or post-menopausal, each woman receives a personalised action plan with loads of information and relevant advice which meets the highest standards of clinical governance.

## What about the men in menopause?

Menopause is an issue which is relevant for all staff in schools.

Yes, it's predominantly our female colleagues who will experience menopausal symptoms and potentially run the risk of longer-term health complications as a result of oestrogen deficiency. But the vast majority of male colleagues, at some point during their careers, will be working or living alongside a woman who is in menopause transition.

Research demonstrates that this time of life is a key pressure point for many relationships. Having the confidence to open up an informed conversation, irrespective of gender, not only demonstrates solidarity and support, but may help to mitigate against some of the potential negative impacts of the menopause transition both in and out of work.



Further information on Me & My Menopause® and how it can support schools is available at [www.meandmyhealth.co](http://www.meandmyhealth.co)

Dr Sarah Hattam (MBCHB MCRGP (London) DFSRH PPMC) is a GP, Menopause Specialist and the Founder of Concilio Health, a workplace wellbeing and performance consultancy.

## Refurbishment

The Sixth Form Centre at Truro School, Cornwall, has been refurbished, with the Estates Team working to enhance the facilities over the summer holidays.

Alongside the modernisation of the Physics department and Library, the Sixth Form Centre was treated to a contemporary transformation, creating a light-filled, modern workspace.

The design, which was created by a local interior design consultancy includes acoustic panelling, new furniture and dedicated areas for collaboration, relaxation and private study.

Combined with the Sixth Form Café, the facilities help to create a dynamic hub in an environment that sits both alongside and distinctly separate from the main Senior School



The newly refurbished Sixth Form Centre





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

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A photograph of three students in school uniforms. On the left, a young woman with dark curly hair tied back, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a dark blue plaid skirt, is smiling and looking towards the right. In the center, a young man with dark hair, wearing a light blue shirt, a dark blue V-neck sweater, and a yellow and purple striped tie, is smiling and looking towards the right. On the right, another young man with dark hair, wearing a light blue shirt, a dark blue V-neck sweater, and a yellow and purple striped tie, is smiling broadly and looking towards the left. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a building.

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