

September 2023

# *The Independent* Schools *Magazine*



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# In this issue...



## Inspiring Sport Award

Eastbourne College, East Sussex, is celebrating success in the Talk Education Awards for Innovation 2023, winning in the Inspiring Sporting Activities category.

The Talk Education Awards showcase pioneering schools who are taking steps to modernise the face of independent education, with the Inspiring Sporting Activities award highlighting achievements and initiatives to get pupils active.

Eastbourne College was recognised for its focus on 'blue health' living and learning, as the school takes advantage of its coastal location to benefit pupils' physical and mental wellbeing by encouraging outdoor activities as much as possible – from water sports like paddleboarding to runs on the South Downs.

The school received additional recognition for its 'Mind Gym', which encourages pupils to be open about their mental health through sport.

Launched during the pandemic by rugby performance coach Jack Roberts, the scheme offers a 'self-care toolbox' where pupils can gain functional advice to help overcome issues affecting their game, such as stress, anxiety, low confidence or negative thoughts; but the initiative can help in their wider life too, preparing them for whatever life throws at them.

The judging panel for the Talk Education awards consists of experienced researchers, education experts and former heads, teachers and advisors in the sector.

Pictured (l to r): Jack Roberts (Performance Coach and Mind Gym Pioneer), Mike Harrison (Director of Sport), Richard Maryan (Head Groundsman), Headmaster Tom Lawson and Matilda Callaghan, Director of Cricket

## Cover background

## Going green

Highfield and Brookham Schools, Hampshire has been helped in its ongoing quest to be fully carbon neutral by 2030 thanks to a £4,250 grant from the South Downs National Park Trust.

To find out more about this and what other schools are doing to go green see page 44.

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## Is Your School Mentioned?

### Schools featured in this issue include:

Bloxham School; Bolton School; Brabyn's Prep; Bryanston; Brentwood School; Burgess Hill Girls; Canford School; Chafyn Grove Prep; Charterhouse; Cheltenham College; Christ College Brecon; Clayesmore School; Cranleigh School; Dame Allans Schools; Derby Grammar School; Downe House; Eastbourne College; Ellesmere College; Eltham College; Fairview International School; Bridge of Allan; Forres Sandle Manor; Francis Holland School, Sloane Square; Frensham Heights; Fulneck School; Greenfield School; Gordonstoun; Gresham's Prep School; Haileybury; Heathfield School; Highfield and Brookham Schools; Highgate School; The High School of Glasgow; Ipswich High School; John Lyon School; Kirkham Grammar School; King's College Taunton; King Edward's School, Birmingham; King Edward VI High School for Girls; King's Ely; Leighton Park School; Malvern College; Malvern St James Girls' School; Milton Abbey; Northampton High School; Nottingham High School; Oxford High School; The Pilgrims' School; Pocklington School; RGS Worcester; Royal Hospital School; The Royal School; Rugby School; Sheffield High School for Girls; Sherborne School; Shrewsbury High School; Stonyhurst College; Stowe School; St John's College, Cardiff; St Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen; St Margaret's, Hertfordshire; St Martin's School, Bournemouth; St Martin's School, Middlesex; St Mary's Calne; St Mary's Shaftesbury; St Paul's London; Tring Park School; Wellington College; Westholme School; York House

# Softening the potential VAT blow

Legal director in the schools and charities team at law firm Moore Barlow, Paul Ridout, takes a closer look at Labour's proposals for VAT on school fees and offers some thoughts on Fees in Advance schemes, and what schools can do to soften the financial impact.

Governors and staff at independent schools will have been thinking a lot in recent months about the impact of the COVID19 pandemic as well as the rapid increase in prices of energy, food and other essentials. They may also be increasingly nervous about another challenge on the horizon in the form of a Labour Party policy that could become reality after the next general election.

Labour is clearly anxious, in the interests of party unity, to offer something up to the party's left wing but seems to have stepped back from its earlier declared intention of abolishing private schools and integrating them into the maintained sector. It is also quite unlikely that Labour will at any time soon remove charitable status from independent schools, given the potential legal complications and the risk of alienating those nearer the centre ground, for many of whom independent schools are far from being an enemy of the party.

The focus in recent months has been much more on tackling the "tax breaks" and "loopholes" that independent schools are accused of exploiting, and to offer the prospect of bringing in extra revenue that can be used in the maintained sector.

Of course, as soon as you look behind the headlines and soundbites, the real story turns out to be rather less controversial. The focus of Labour's policy appears to be on

preventing independent schools from benefiting from relief from business rates (which flows from their charitable status) and from the exemption from VAT for the provision of education (which is not directly linked to charitable status).

Charities do not enjoy many VAT breaks on account of their charitable status. This is something that seems to confuse journalists and maybe even politicians who talk about schools getting VAT relief because of their charitable status.

## Vat concessions for charities

There are a few specific concessions for charities, so for example a reduced rate of 5% applies to fuel and power for premises where certain activities happen, and there are complex rules for reduced or zero rates of VAT on certain works such as adapting for disabled access. There is also a VAT exemption for specified types of fundraising events.

However, the VAT treatment of school fees flows not from their charitable status, but from the fact that the legislation says that the provision of education is, by and large, exempt from VAT if it is provided by an eligible body. Eligible bodies include any school recognised as such for the purposes of the Education Acts, and that includes not only those independent schools that are operated by charities but also those run for profit.

This exemption applies not only to the education itself, but



Paul Ridout

also to supplies that are closely related:

- things that pupils need for regular use in the classroom
- accommodation for teaching
- catering
- transport
- school trips

This is good news for parents, in that they do not have to pay an extra 20% on the fees. This, in turn, is good news for schools in that it means their services are more affordable than they would otherwise be.

The prospect of losing this exemption is therefore a very real concern for schools in the independent sector, whether they are charitable or not. Many schools are now looking at how a fees in advance scheme may be able to help.

## Fees in Advance schemes

Fees in Advance ("FIA") schemes have been promoted up to now as a way of taking advantage of charity tax relief. Where parents (or in many instances grandparents) pay over a lump sum in advance, the school can invest this money and, if it is operated by a charity, get a tax free return on it. This makes it possible for the school to offer a discount on termly fees.

These schemes may now offer an opportunity to reduce the impact of VAT on school fees, if the lump sum is paid over before the VAT exemption is lost.

The issue here is the tax point, the date on which liability for VAT arises. In the context of a school, where the supply is continuous, the tax point is the date that payment is received by the school. So if the lump sum is received before VAT becomes payable on school fees, no VAT is payable, even though the education may continue to be provided for some years.

However, there are a few key points that bursars and governors need to bear in mind. In addition to some technical points, such as the requirement for the school to have unfettered use of the money, rather than holding it in an escrow account, they need to remember that these FIA schemes are only likely to be attractive to parents who can raise a large lump sum now and can also afford to hand it over to the school, which is perhaps not so likely at a time when parents are already feeling the squeeze and when the cost of borrowing is so much higher.

Perhaps most significantly, it is a temporary measure that will only apply where the lump sum is paid before the VAT exemption comes to an end, so it is not likely to be of any use for parents whose children are being registered for admission after 2025, or whenever the VAT exemption ends. Having said that, it may be an effective way of softening the blow if and when the rules are changed by an incoming Labour government.

Further information is available at [www.moorebarlow.com](http://www.moorebarlow.com)

# Practical perspectives

York House School, Hertfordshire.  
Head Jon Gray:

“A great many independent schools will already have a Fees in Advance (FIA) scheme in place. There is generally some financial benefit in terms of commutation rate, which is most beneficial for those with more children/pupils and more years of FIA. Some families will be glad to make the payment in terms of their tax position, others will be glad of the certainty – “being one less thing to think about.” The most consistent theme for families taking up such a scheme is the vote of confidence and support that is being shown in terms of their relationship with the Head and School (FIA would typically be confidential to Head and Bursar in the same way that Bursaries should be). Some believe that payments of this nature might avoid a future change to VAT rules but there is no certainty on that point as yet, and independent expert advice should be sought if that is the key intention.

For a school, there is a cashflow benefit of course. If the school is growing and thriving, FIA schemes can feel like a beneficial following wind, whilst in a struggling school it might feel like a terrifying liability on the balance sheet. Even where a FIA scheme is being utilised, there

is still the option for notice to be given, although sensible schools might have extended that notice period, perhaps to a year instead of a term, to better enable planning and budgeting. FIA schemes are not on the menu for every family, but where it suits there can be a real mutual benefit, both hard and soft.”

Downe House School, Berkshire.  
Deputy Head Matthew Godfrey:

“There is a modest incentive for parents of Downe House pupils to pay fees in advance: currently, it represents a small saving. An additional incentive is that if VAT on fees is imposed after an advance payment, the parents may not be liable for this additional future cost; however, the upfront payment does factor in a projected annual fee increase. One advantage of advance payment for the school is that the finance department does not need to chase fees, and receiving fees upfront can help to facilitate additional borrowing for capital projects, bursaries and other projects. The vast majority of parents do not pay fees in advance, although there has been a slight increase in interest over the past year, most probably because of the possibility of VAT being imposed on fees by an incoming Labour government.”

## FREE EVENT NEXT MONTH

# The economic outlook and topical update for schools

An in-person event with guest speaker Professor Joe Nellis has been announced by Moore Barlow, legal advisers to senior leaders and governors of independent schools.

To be held at the Royal Grammar School, Guildford on 10th October 2023, Professor Joe Nellis, Deputy Director and Professor of Global Economy at the School of Management, Cranfield University will deliver a presentation on the Economic Outlook and its impact on independent schools.

Further information and how to register can be found at [www.moorebarlow.com/events/the-economic-outlook-and-topical-update-for-schools](http://www.moorebarlow.com/events/the-economic-outlook-and-topical-update-for-schools)

Moore Barlow team members Adam McRae-Taylor and Paul Ridout will also present on some topical issues, including:

- TPS update
- Recognition agreements
- Measures likely to be adopted by a Labour government – how can schools prepare?

Following the presentations, there will be time for Q&A.

Registration for the event will be at 5.30pm with presentations due to start at 6pm.



# Digi-Leads Learning Fair

Late in the summer term, The High School of Glasgow Junior School Digi-Leads Committee, a group of around 30 children from Junior 1 to Junior 6, hosted a Fair to share their digital learning with peers and teachers.

Taking the lead on their learning, children shared their expertise in areas including animation, QR codes and coding. They also guided children through their very own TED talk on digital wellbeing, ways to implement healthy tech habits and set limits on screen time.

Each area had its own station, the QR codes station focused on how to use and create a QR code; the coding station used a coding app to program robots; while the animation station brought pictures to life using an animation app.

Hands-on learning has been at the heart of the Digi-Leads Committee and children have visited the Apple Store to better understand cutting edge technology and design, and spent time in the Senior School's Flexible Learning Area in The John Shaw Science Wing, exploring Virtual Reality alongside Senior School Digi-Champions.

Earlier this year, the High School was awarded the Digital Wellbeing Award, part of the Digital Schools Award, which recognises schools helping children to maximise their 21st century digital skills while remaining safe and responsible online. It was noted that pupil advocacy and leadership encouraged by the Digi-Leads Committee was instrumental in this area.

Children from Junior 4 to 6 apply to be on a committee, whereas younger children are selected by their teachers. As part of their application to be on the Digi-Leads Committee, children must display a genuine interest in technology and have shown enthusiasm for this in

their day-to-day work in school.

Junior School Deputy-Head, Mrs Maggie Pollock, who has overall responsibility for the curriculum, learning and teaching, said: “Every single child at the Junior School has a place on a committee, there are nine in total, each having representation from all year groups and run by two members of teaching staff. The committees include: Digi-Leads; Eco-Committee, Outdoor Learning, Health & Wellbeing, Road Safety, Learning & Teaching, Ships, Global Citizenship, and Pupil Council.

“Ensuring every child is a member of a committee illustrates to children that the voice of every pupil counts and ensures they are fully immersed in the life and running of the school. Although younger children find aspects of their committee meetings and activities challenging, they learn from older peers who they look up to as role models and this provides a clear pathway for their future in the committee as they learn and grow.

“The decision to have everyone involved in a committee was a very deliberate one as we want to give each individual the chance to have their say and influence change in school, and not just those with the confidence to apply.”



Pictured: Pupils at the Digi-Leads Learning Fair

# Exam Results Round-up 2023

Statistics based on education setting that have been published by Ofqual, Scottish Qualifications Authority and Qualifications Wales.

## A Levels and Highers

Independent Schools – percentage graded A (or above)

|                                       | 2019  | 2020  | 2021  | 2022  | 2023  |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| England (inc. City Training Colleges) | 44.8% | 61.3% | 70.4% | 58.0% | 47.4% |
| Wales                                 | 68.2% | 80.5% | 85.1% | 75.1% | 73.0% |
| Scotland                              | 58.1% | 67.0% | 75.6% | 62.0% | 60.8% |

This year has seen a move towards pre-pandemic grading but with recognition that learners taking exams this year have had their education affected by the disruption caused by the pandemic so grading protection and additional measures were put in place.

In England, for example, allowances were made where national performance was weaker than before the pandemic.

In Wales, Qualifications Wales took the decision to require WJEC to provide an additional level of support for Made-for-Wales qualifications as part of the

transition back to pre-pandemic processes which was provided in two ways – advance information published by WJEC in February and a specific approach to grading for summer 2023 which required national outcomes at subject level that were broadly midway between national subject outcomes in 2019 and 2022. To achieve this, many grade boundaries were set below where they have been before the pandemic and should not be regarded as typical.

In Scotland to ensure fairness for learners, SQA describe the use of a ‘sensitive approach’ to awarding for 2023 which again recognised that

## GCSE and National 5

Independent Schools – percentage 7/A (or Above)

|                                       | 2019  | 2020  | 2021  | 2022  | 2023  |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| England (inc. City Training Colleges) | 47.2% | 57.4% | 61.3% | 53.1% | 46.6% |
| Wales                                 | 53.7% | 61.6% | 66.5% | 66.2% | 58.1% |
| Scotland                              | 68.9% | 72.9% | 76.9% | 74.0% | 71.5% |

learning and teaching are still in the recovery phase from the pandemic.

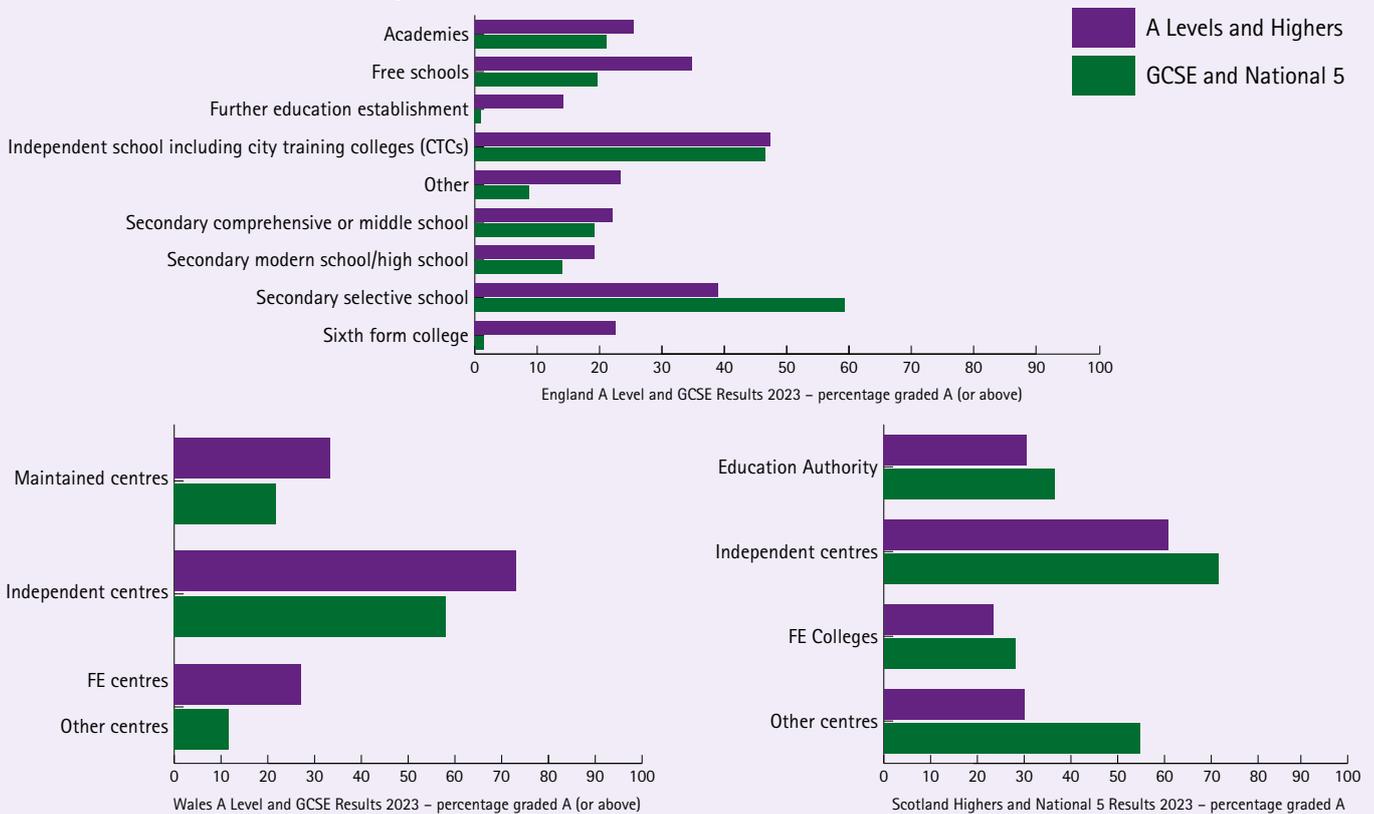
Overall, results in Scotland for 2023 are between 2019, the last exam year before the pandemic, and 2022, when a ‘generous approach’ was applied to awarding for the first year of the return to exams.

Ofqual Chief Regulator, Dr Jo Saxton, said: “Two years ago we set out a clear plan to return to pre-pandemic grading – a system that schools, colleges, universities and employers are all familiar with. As we said then, we expected overall A level results would be similar to 2019, and lower than in 2022.”

“As with A level results, GCSE results have returned to pre-pandemic levels, similar to those in 2019, and – as expected – lower than in 2022.”

“However, recognising the disruption that students have experienced, we put in place important grading protection to make sure that a student who would have secured a particular grade in 2019, would be just as likely to achieve that same grade this year. It is therefore more meaningful to compare this year’s results with those of 2019, the last summer exam series before the pandemic.”

## How the 2023 results compare with those from other centres



Full interactive analytics and statistics for England can be found on the Ofqual Analytics site at: <https://analytics.ofqual.gov.uk/apps/Alevel/CentreType> and via news stories at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual>  
 For Wales, the Summer 2023 overview and reports are available at: <https://qualificationswales.org/information-support/summer-2023-results>  
 And the SQA Official Provisional Attainment Statistics for August 2023 can be found at: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/105123.html>

# Successful summer schools

Director of Summer Courses at Heathfield School, Berkshire, John Endean, shares his thoughts on providing the very best in summer school experiences, adventures and academics.

With this year's courses over – another successful programme, filled with fun and enthusiasm – it's time to look ahead and start preparing for next year. Summer school is my favourite time, it is intense and often exhausting but always filled with joy. Although the courses themselves may only last for a relatively short time, the programme takes months of meticulous planning.

For students, summer courses are one of the highlights of their young lives, and for their parents there's the joy of providing their child with experiences they will treasure for a lifetime. Therefore it is crucial that you know your target audience and who you are offering your programme to.

By the end of August, most schools and agents have begun preparing new brochures for the following year. Ensure you offer something exceptional – a key point of difference – which will help your course stand out in a very competitive (but friendly) field. Ensure all your attendees will be enthralled by a varied daily programme guaranteed to be both fun-packed and educational.

Summer courses are expensive to run, so make sure to do your homework – know your estimated income and expenditure. It's also important to have a contingency plan in place for the inevitable unexpected expense, be that additional fans in a heatwave or alternative transport arrangements due to industrial action at the airport.

Autumn is filled with meetings, marketing and promotional activities, conferences and workshops and continuous correspondence with stakeholders. Integrity and transparency are key to building relationships, people put their trust in you, so only promote what you can deliver.

The new year brings new opportunities and the continuation of correspondence with agents and parents. Staff recruitment is in full flow. One of the top priorities for success is attracting dedicated, talented and effective staff who will deliver your programme to the best of their abilities, and an efficient admin team behind the scenes to provide the necessary support and back up. We value enthusiasm and a sense of humour and look to recruit creative and inspiring individuals with a joy for life in general, who engage in the ethos of the summer school and can use their initiative.

The final planning of summer school content moves to the next level – confirming travel plans and final bookings for trips and attractions. As Spring progresses, the work intensifies with student bookings and the subsequent correspondence.

Another important practical consideration is to ensure your administration system has the capacity to cope with the workload. A dedicated and streamlined system is necessary for the incredible amount of data and correspondence involved.

Curriculum design is obviously extremely important. Each summer school offers a selection of courses with varying degrees of teaching contact time for students. At Heathfield we strive to provide a cohesive structure of study so each student can access the optimum level of English tuition to meet their ability. Alongside the academics, sporting and arts activities need to be carefully considered. What is particularly great about our summer school is the variety and choice for students. We offer an array of creative and inspiring activities to suit all tastes – which is key to offering a programme that will appeal to everyone.

With students coming from all around the world, creating a

welcoming multicultural community is very important for summer school. At Heathfield, our summer courses are designed to bring the girls together, to live, socialise and study in the school's grounds. A positive and enjoyable meeting of cultures based on the strongest values of kindness and respect. In order to build this diverse and open community, we always strive to create a balance of nationalities across our visiting students.

Social and emotional development is such an integral part of the summer school experience. With a wide variety of activities and opportunities available, excellent staff and a caring and nurturing environment, all the students can feel supported and encouraged to try something new. They will embrace what's on offer and



John Endean

confidently step outside their comfort zone.

With this winning combination, confidence grows, the students all pull together and become a community, each with a voice, and each with the knowledge that they will be listened to. Every summer I witness the positive progression of students, developing talents they may have been unaware of, making friendships that may well last a lifetime – and of course, having loads of fun – the time of their lives.

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# New inspection framework

From the start of this term, most independent schools will be inspected under a new framework. Director of Inspection Quality at the Independent Schools Inspectorate, Indra Warwick, explains the principles that will underpin the inspectorate's approach.

Starting a new inspection cycle always provides the opportunity to review and develop inspection practice. Preparations for this started almost two years ago and included a seven-month consultation and a four-phase pilot programme. We are extremely grateful to school leaders and staff for their constructive and valuable engagement over this period.

The end result is a set of principles and methods for inspection that we are confident are fair, transparent, and will continue to provide high-quality external assurance for the sector. Our updated inspection framework and inspection handbook are rooted in evidence and reflect extensive listening and dialogue with school leaders, staff, pupils, parents, and inspectors.

As with previous inspection cycles, there are certain things that are determined by the Department for Education and will be familiar to schools. We will continue to inspect against the Independent Schools Standards, which outline the statutory expectations for all independent schools in England. Our inspection framework does not impose any additional requirements on schools beyond those outlined in the Standards. Boarding schools and those with early years provision have additional standards which they need to meet.

We will also continue to inspect schools routinely twice within a six-year inspection cycle or as directed by the Department for Education. With this framework, we have moved to a single type

of routine inspection to promote clarity and consistency in our reporting over time and simplify the inspection process for schools.

Underpinning our approach are four guiding principles. These were informed by our engagement with schools, and we believe will support a positive culture of school accountability across the sector. They will also ensure that inspections remain robust, while reflecting the complexity and interconnectedness of school life.

## Manageability

We want the inspection process to be manageable for schools. Schools are busy places, and inspections should not create additional workload for leaders and staff. As a result, we will not expect or request any documentation to be produced specifically for inspection. Pupils' work will be reviewed by inspectors in whatever form the school holds it (in books or digitally) and that goes for anything else the inspectors would like to see.

## Collaboration

Inspectors will work collaboratively with school leaders and staff to ensure the smooth running of the inspection. There will be regular keeping-in-touch meetings, and the reporting inspector will raise any serious emerging issues with the headteacher as they arise.

Inspectors may, wherever possible and appropriate, offer school leaders the opportunity to conduct some inspection activities jointly. These could include reviewing pupils' work, joint lesson walks and tours of the school premises.

## Triangulation and typicality

Inspectors will gather evidence from a wide range of sources and triangulate this to reach valid and reliable judgements. This will include first hand observations and onsite discussions with school leaders, staff and pupils. There will also be scrutiny of documentation and school records, plus information from inspection surveys.

Inspectors will consider what they are seeing, reading and hearing. They will consider why it is important and how it relates to the Standards and other regulations, plus how it relates to other evidence and what further evidence they may need to gather.

Whilst there are some cases where a specific piece of evidence can be serious enough that it leads on its own to Standards not being met, this is rare. Inspectors are well trained to contextualise and test inspection evidence, always looking for connected sources of evidence to reach judgements.

For example, there is not a fixed percentage of positive or negative responses to a survey question that will automatically result in Standards being met or not met. Inspectors will consider survey findings carefully and use them to form areas to probe, which will test any emerging themes or issues.

## Proportionality

When judging the extent to which a school meets the Standards, inspectors will exercise their professional judgement – based on their knowledge, expertise and training. Throughout the calendar year, we



Indira Warwick

have delivered extensive training to our reporting inspectors, to ensure there is consistency in how we inspect and reach professional judgements.

Where there are some relative weaknesses or minor errors that can be easily rectified, inspectors will take a proportionate approach. They will consider the scale of any weaknesses or errors and whether these amount to a failure to meet one or more of the Standards.

Weaknesses or errors which are indicative of systemic failings will lead to a judgement that the relevant Standards are unmet.

## Start of inspection cycle

We are introducing our new framework with enhanced levels of quality assurance during the autumn term. This replicates the model used at the start of previous inspection cycles.

Our priority for this academic year will be to successfully deliver the first year of our new inspection cycle. As part of this, we will continue to support all schools and stakeholders in understanding the nature and reach of the Standards and how the assurance and inspection process works.

Throughout, we will continue to listen and engage with schools and the sector, as well as promoting strong provision and positive outcomes for pupils across all aspects of school life.

Further information and resources for schools are available at [www.framework.isi.net](http://www.framework.isi.net)



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# How less can be more with teachers' CPD



Matt Tiplin

Teacher and former schools inspector, Matt Tiplin, shares three key strategies for delivering fewer, but more targeted and effective professional development opportunities for teachers.

"Imagine Ms Longhurst, an experienced and passionate teacher who always goes above and beyond to plan and deliver inspiring lessons which are designed to develop children's subject knowledge and critical thinking skills.

Each morning as students file into the classroom, they are greeted individually with a warm smile and genuine interest in their wellbeing or how their team fared in yesterday's cricket match.

Let's say Ms Longhurst has a few new students this year and she wants to take her teaching practice to the next level with some additional training, including teaching maths and science to children with autism or English as a second language.

What are the most effective strategies individual schools and groups can put in place to meet the needs of teachers like Ms Longhurst and help them deliver the quality, rounded education that drives their students' success?

## Prioritise marginal gains

In my view, large scale training and professional development should be reserved for updating the

knowledge and skills all teachers need on a day-to-day basis, such as in areas of safeguarding and mental health.

The individual requirements of teachers are much more nuanced, so replacing generic training days with smaller, more frequent sessions work better in the long run.

A series of short workshops for Ms Longhurst and a few of her colleagues on teaching science to autistic children with sensory needs, for instance, would allow learning to be taken on in a more meaningful way instead of attempting to digest a full day's worth of content and apply it in the classroom all in one go.

This little-by-little approach strengthens the link between professional development and practical application too, which results in marginal gains that have a positive and lasting impact in the classroom.

## Put teachers front and centre of shaping CPD

Teachers do best when they are able to focus on the small but important aspects of their professional development rather than sticking to

a rigid CPD framework with a big bang approach to change.

Positive change can come from allowing teachers to reflect on which aspects of a lesson went well, and which didn't quite hit the mark. What phrase did the teacher use that sparked the imaginations of children learning about King Henry VIII? Did the new seating plan in the computer suite help students to work more collaboratively with their peers to solve a coding task, or is another strategy needed to better engage them?

Reflecting on the incremental improvements and encouraging teachers to chat with colleagues about what changes made a difference in the classroom can be transformational for the children being taught too. A weekly discussion in the staff room over a cup of tea and a piece of cake might be all that's needed to start having an impact across the school.

## Nurture authentic creative teaching

By making small yet positive changes, teachers can maintain their authentic voice and their unique teaching style. One way to do this is to change how lesson

observation is managed across the school.

The traditional model for observing lessons is to have a senior member of staff or a colleague in the room at the same time as the teacher. However, this can have an impact on the flow and dynamic of the lesson. It can create an unrealistic picture of what actually goes on in the classroom too.

Self-reflection can be a much more effective way to enhance teachers' practice. If Ms Longhurst has the opportunity to reflect on a specific aspect of a lesson, guided by a more expert colleague, she could see where small adjustments would make a difference. It might be by assessing whether boys were fully engaged in a poetry writing task, or by reviewing a video recording of a warm-up session to see how well it helped the children prepare for a new history project.

Teacher's professional development should be positive and impactful. By taking small steps towards change, the improvements to classroom practice can be long-lasting and teachers like Ms Longhurst will feel valued and supported by their schools."

Matt Tiplin is a founding fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching, has a master's degree in Education and a National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership. He is also a former school inspector, senior leader at a school trust and the vice president of ONVU Learning, <https://www.onvulearning.com>

## Learning Outside the Classroom award

Gresham's Prep School, Norfolk, has received national recognition for its commitment to taking



Pictured: Pupils on learning outside the classroom activities

learning outside the classroom (LOtC) and has been awarded the Gold LOtC Mark by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom.

The LOtC Mark is awarded by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC), the UK-wide charity that champions all learning that happens beyond the classroom. Their work supports educators, schools and organisations who are dedicated to ensuring more children and young people have opportunities for lifechanging learning experiences beyond the classroom, whether

these happen indoors or outdoors, close to home or far away.

Chief Executive of CLOtC, Dr Anne Hunt, said: "Learning outside the classroom has many proven educational benefits as well as providing some of the most memorable experiences in a child's school life. Achieving the Gold LOtC Mark demonstrates that Gresham's Prep School is committed to developing and delivering genuinely valuable learning outside the classroom experiences for their children and young people."



# Outward Bound: Empowering minds, building resilience, and overcoming adversity through wilderness exploration

Head of Education Partnerships from Outward Bound, Paul Marshalsea looks at how outdoor learning can have a positive impact on pupils.

We live in a world that thrives on comfort and convenience, where young people spend hours in front of screens or talking with friends through devices – I often have this challenge with my own children! It falls to us as parents and educators to encourage and empower young people to choose a path where they could fail, where they will need to embrace the unknown, where things will be tough, but through determination and persistence, goals will be achieved and rewards gained. An Outward Bound adventure takes pupils on a transformative journey – fostering resilience, mastering adversity, and fuelling self-belief.

**Building Resilience:** Expeditions provide a real opportunity for young people to dig deep and find [www.outwardbound.org.uk/empowered](http://www.outwardbound.org.uk/empowered)

that extra bit of grit. Facing harsh weather conditions, travelling long distances and scaling mountains require pupils to push beyond their comfort zones. They need to overcome challenges, solve problems and strengthen their resolve to succeed. I've seen first-hand when I've joined groups, that when they stand on the summit of the conquered peak, the realisation hits that they are capable of achieving much more than they ever thought.

**Overcoming Adversity:** Much like life, an outdoor expedition isn't easy; the wilderness doesn't discriminate and the weather in our national parks can challenge the most experienced adventurers. It is in the forming of strong

bonds, knowing others have your back and also becoming someone who they can rely on, that pupils learn how to overcome these setbacks – the skills gained from the experiences support their personal and professional lives for years to come.

**Empowering Minds:** Outward Bound adventures are not just about a series of activities and having fun. Whilst these things will happen, through facilitated discussions and purposeful adventures, pupils are encouraged to think about their views, how they behave in new environments, what matters to them and how different situations make them feel. This process enables them to reflect on their goals and gain



a greater understanding of who they are. They learn to manage their emotions, make better decisions, trust their instinct and by knowing themselves better, they will be empowered to unlock their potential more easily.

To learn more about how outdoor learning can impact your pupils, join us for our Senior Leaders Network Walk on 9 December. Sign up in the link below.

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# Inspire outdoor learning and improve the mental wellbeing of students with a Fordingbridge Structure

Studies have shown that outdoor education comes with a vast array of benefits, backed by Ofsted reports, and here at Fordingbridge we could not agree more.

## Boost your student's confidence to learn

By interacting with the outdoors during lessons, it engages students' thoughts and broadens approaches to different scenarios and better overall wellbeing of pupils, thanks to being a huge contributing factor to the natural release of serotonin. By bettering a student's confidence through interactive learning, many witness notable success with grades and achievements across the board.

## Better social skills and communication between peers

A change of environment brings out a pupil's natural instinct to express themselves and opening engage in further learning thanks to a change of environment and through experiencing challenging spaces outdoors. This leads to increased communication and understanding, allowing students to pro-actively engage with the class on a deeper level, therefore boosting the success of subject knowledge as a result.

## Improve class motivation and moral

By diversifying teaching methods through stepping outside, it is highly probable that a students' interest in classes are to increase, and so as their enthusiasm to know more heightens, this better the motivation of students to succeed in subjects they otherwise may find less engaging. This is complimented by a notable reduction of stress

thanks to being outside of the classroom, illustrating improved quality of learning. By increasing motivation, the moral of a class is highly likely to surpass previous standards of student engagement.

## Enhance subject knowledge and understanding

Exposing pupils to green spaces encourages learning and exploration through adaptive learning techniques, with various approaches and attitudes to learning being far more affective to students, than remaining indoors, thereby increasing the quality of kinaesthetic, auditory, interpersonal, and visual teaching methods in a single lesson; boosting learning processes for each pupil.

## Strengthen the connectivity between learning and physical skills

Increase the feeling of happiness and productivity through the use of physical techniques and alternative educational activities allowing the class-experience to become memorable through outdoor tasks such as floor drawing, environmental exploration, and even, put simply,



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# Three keys to wellbeing

Wellbeing educational consultant and coach, Beth Kerr, looks at some of the approaches that schools can take to measure wellbeing and suggests three principles that could be helpful when developing a wellbeing strategy.

'Measure what you treasure' – a perfectly sensible, and on the face of it, straightforward, statement.

In education, measuring the academic progress and attainment of students is a fundamental way of demonstrating a school's contribution to their learning. Quantitative data lends itself well to this task, and although it can never explain the whole story about either the child or the school, it is a yardstick familiar to us all.

Wellbeing data on the other hand is a relatively nascent concept, and given how all-encompassing the mere term 'wellbeing' is, it is perhaps unsurprising that there is no agreed consensus on the best way of measuring this thing that we all treasure.

Over the past 4 years, I have worked with over 100 schools in 12 countries who have looked at different approaches to measuring student wellbeing. Three principles have emerged from that work that could be helpful to schools looking to develop their own assessment of wellbeing strategy.

## 1. Start with the Physical

The new ISI Inspection Framework lists the five aspects of wellbeing that are defined in section 10(2) of the Children Act 2004, and the first of those is 'Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing.' Interestingly, many of the schools I worked with began by assessing the mental, rather than physical health elements of wellbeing. This is something that was of course very worthwhile, but also invariably complicated, fluctuated regularly and could also be very expensive.

However, if we look at the drivers of wellbeing – sleep, diet, and

exercise are absolutely critical. For example, there is not one mental health condition where disturbed sleep is not a feature, and such is the evidence linking these three things to good health, 'lifestyle medicine' is a key part of general practice today.

We also have clear guidance from the World Health Organisation about how much sleep children need, how active they should be, and the impact of eating over-processed food. Therefore, as teachers you are not put in a position where you need to make a judgement about how much exercise a child should have, or give clinical advice that you may feel ill equipped to do, but rather just support global expert evidence. It is also more straightforward to assess whether a child is getting adequate sleep or exercise, than trying to work out if they have 'enough' friends or 'good relationships.'

Finally, this is a relatively easy and cheap thing to measure. I have seen it done in a weekly form period journal type activity – asking students to self-assess their sleep and then reflect on how their work, mood, relationships have been that week to see if there are any patterns. Other colleagues have set up an iPad as students come into class with a simple ☺ or ☹ button to press, which reinforces on a daily basis the centrality of sleep to focus and emotional regulation, as well as giving the teacher summarised information to inform a regular discussion about the topic and an opportunity to give tips to improve sleep. It is also something that can be done on a global scale, across schools worldwide through an annual simple survey students asking about the role of sleep, diet

and exercise in their own lives and assessing their view of the school's contribution to this component. This can be tremendously helpful in identifying wellbeing patterns across populations and also making it easier to ask for parental support in targeting areas of concern. For example, if sleep has been identified as a troublesome trend, it is an ideal opportunity to communicate with parents in a non-judgmental way to share the data and evidence. Schools can emphasise how interlinked sleep is with learning, which things detrimentally impact it, what they are might be doing to address the issue at school, and how parents could help at home.

## 2. Change the default – from teacher-led to student-led analysis and intervention

We are certainly data rich in society and in schools. Gathering information on the things that drive wellbeing and cross-referencing them with academic progress should be a key part of any educational data strategy. However, this data belongs to the child and given that good health and wellbeing are lifelong endeavours, it is crucial that interventions are not done 'to' the child, but rather 'with' them. Building the narrative around 'cause and effect', and then empowering children to have the agency to make positive interventions to change their wellbeing for the better is something that can be done from a young age.

I have listened to teachers talk about various tools that help measure wellbeing, and the one thing that many of them have in common is the onus they put on the teacher to make the intervention, to make the

difference, to prove that they have helped. However, wellbeing is such a personal and individual construct that perhaps a teacher's role in this could also be one of facilitator, supporter or coach – helping the student explore ways that they themselves could improve their own wellbeing first.

Some schools adopt this as a principle in their approach to data, and have trained their staff to lead discussions with students by asking them what they could/would like to do to make a change. This may seem like common sense but by making it an intentional part of a wider strategy, and giving simple but important guidance around questioning, it is more likely to increase student agency in relation to wellbeing and learning.

Other schools make time in form period or lessons, to ask students to self-evaluate their own drivers of wellbeing, then identify (with varying degrees of scaffolding depending on the individual student/class) proactive things they could do to improve them. This can be represented visually by a simple scorecard giving various drivers (like exercise or relationships) a mark out of ten and then having time to reflect or discuss if there is any correlation between their score and their perception of their overall satisfaction or productivity that week.

For schools looking for a platform that supports this idea of engaging students in the solution, while building vital skills to manage their own wellbeing, one that I saw working brilliantly in a number of schools was Skodel. The colleagues I worked with particularly liked the evidence based check-ins that helped students, the way it took students from reflecting on their



Beth Kerr

wellbeing to structuring their own action plan and finally how it was customisable to direct students to support services and resources the school already had in place.

### 3. Wellbeing and education are two sides of the same coin

Looking at wellbeing data and academic data in isolation is a little like trying to change your weight without looking at your diet or exercise levels.

This appreciation of the symbiotic relationship between learning and wellbeing means that we should

Beth Kerr is a wellbeing and educational consultant and coach. She is a public speaker, ISI inspector and media commentator on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. <https://bethkerrwellbeing.com>

reframe how we look at all data in a school – if they fail a test in Maths, is that telling us that they are struggling with algebra, or that they are struggling to sleep properly or make friends?

In my experience, schools are totally aware of this and the barriers to integrating data are more as a result of technology and the complexity of integrating data from different systems, than any unwillingness to cross check data sources. If this resonates, giving time to the relationships between teacher and student is invaluable – sometimes talking gives you more insight than the best data in the world! It may also help to prioritise the previous principle (about student-led interventions) to ensure that students develop that habit of joining the dots between wellbeing and their learning.

Admittedly, wellbeing is not as easy to measure, but then again... the things you treasure never are.”

## Wellness Room inspired by nature

Pupils at Ellesmere College, Shropshire, have welcomed the opening of a nature inspired ‘Wellness Room’ - which provides a quiet space for students away from studies, to find support and relax away from the busy school life.

The room in the medical centre at the school has a large mural with a forest theme, owl decorations, comfy sofas, books on mindfulness and other subjects, music, art therapy such as colouring books, a weighted blanket which helps people feel calm, bird sounds and a diffuser with pine smells.

The room was developed thanks to funding by the school’s award winning Mental Health

at Ellesmere Support System (MHES).

The student led initiative focuses on helping students recognise the signs of detrimental effects of stress and anxiety to their health and wellbeing, and how and where to access help and support to address any issues.

The MHES team has been fundraising through events held at the school to transform the Wellness Room and since then a number of pupils who are MHES Ambassadors have chosen to complete a mental health training course to be able to support other students.



Sister Jenny Howard talking to a pupil in the Wellness Room

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# Altrincham Grammar School for Boys provides Sport for All with Duncan Ross cricket and drainage project

Altrincham Grammar School for Boys (AGSB) has planned extensively to provide Sports for All. The latest development projects aimed at achieving this goal include cricket and drainage schemes, spanning 23000m<sup>2</sup>, successfully installed by contractor, Duncan Ross Ltd.

Launched in April 2022, the campaign aims to allow pupils at every level to take advantage of facilities in the school and after-school clubs, while community grass-roots sports clubs from across Altrincham and Trafford will be able to use the facilities in the evenings.

Completed by the Duncan Ross team in June 2023, the five-lane synthetic cricket wicket installation, including surrounds, cage, nets and batting screens, has provided the opportunity for more pupils to participate in the school's most popular summer sport.

To address the problem of waterlogged fields during the winter, a significant lateral and sand slit drainage project was undertaken simultaneously to ensure year-round play and allow Hamblin Trust Head Groundsman Neil Brown to raise the quality of the pitches.

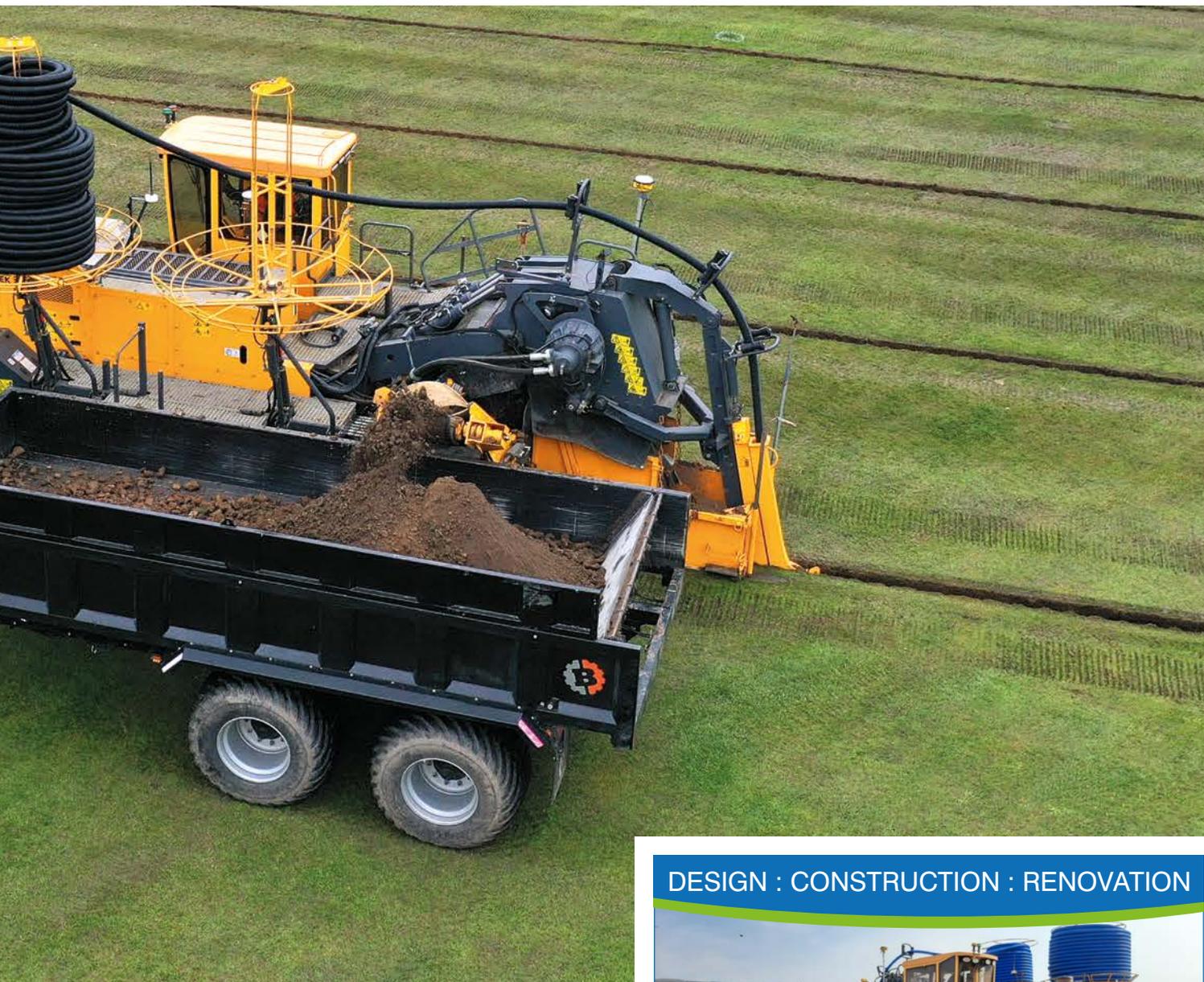
With timings tight for the work to take place and the grow-in period, pre-planning was a crucial aspect of the project, and Neil puts the success down to the work done by Duncan Ross Ltd in the build-up.

"In the months since June, we've had a lot of rain, so we've already seen how the drainage work has improved the area no end," Neil said. "We've had no holding water at all on the main field, and by the time we're into winter, the drains will have settled, and they will only be more effective, so we won't have to worry about cancelling fixtures, training sessions or lessons.

"We decided to start work during the summer term because of the timings involved, which meant we needed a comprehensive plan, and that's what Managing Director Duncan Ross, gave us. He investigates the area properly and gives you an honest opinion on what should be done and won't do anything for the sake of it.

"He addressed all our issues, and now we can focus on improving





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the quality. Good drainage helps everything. The grass coverage will improve, we won't be taking tractors or mowers onto boggy ground, and we can confidently implement a programme that will see continuous improvement over the coming years."

AGSB aims to take the school's tradition of sporting excellence to a new level, and a key part of that is consistency. With Phase 1 of drainage installation complete, Duncan Ross Ltd will return to mirror the work on the school's second field, ensuring quality across the entire site.

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# Supporting pupils with col

Dame Allan Schools, Tyne and Wear pupil Marcus Difolco was diagnosed with Colour Vision Deficiency (CVD) almost a decade ago. To mark Colour Blind Awareness Day, his mother and author Marie Difolco writes about her son's colour vision condition, the steps schools can take to support children with colour blindness and her campaign to change the lives of colour blind schoolchildren across the UK.



Marie Difolco

I can vividly remember the day I realised my son, Marcus, was colour blind. At six years old, he came running into the kitchen clutching a green pen and an orange pen and asked me which of the pens was orange.

It came as such a shock. I was horrified that it hadn't been picked up before, especially as he'd had the standard vision screening offered to all children in their first year at primary school. As a parent, I'd assumed they tested for all common eye conditions, but they don't. In fact, school screening for colour blindness was scrapped in 2009 and consequently, few teachers are trained on how to support colour blind pupils, despite the condition affecting around 450,000 schoolchildren across the UK.

My own suspicions about Marcus' vision were subsequently confirmed by an optometrist almost a decade ago, and in the intervening years, both Marcus and I have come to realise how much the education system – and the world – relies on people being able to see colour in the usual way.

Colour is extensively used as a teaching aid – even as adults, we are presented with information in colour all the time. Much of the Public Health information during the Covid pandemic for example, used bright and colourful graphics which meant a lot of it couldn't be understood by the three million people or so in the UK that live with this common condition.

In schools, across all age groups and in all subjects, colour is used as a tool for learning. In Early

Years, Maths might be taught with coloured blocks or with 'colour by number' tasks, in older year groups, children are looking at coloured graphs, charts, maps, chemical solutions and so on. They might also struggle to tell 'house' colours apart or to spot some equipment or line markings in PE. This can put colour blind children at a serious disadvantage and creates a barrier to their education.

Because teachers aren't usually trained to understand how colour blindness affects a person, a child might be labelled as naughty or disruptive when the task they are facing is simply inaccessible to them. In addition, if colour blindness is undiagnosed and a child has other needs such as dyslexia, interventions like coloured overlays can often compound the issue.

There is no longer any excuse for people saying colour blindness won't affect a child's education. There are several tools available now that allow those of us with normal colour vision to see the problems for ourselves.

Colour blindness – or Colour Vision Deficiency (CVD) – is one of the world's most common inherited conditions and affects around 3 million people in the UK, the majority of whom are male.

Since Marcus' diagnosis, I have become heavily involved with the Colour Blind Awareness organisation. Its own research has shown that 80 per cent of Year 7 children have never been screened for CVD and at least 50 per cent of colour blind students are thought to be undiagnosed by

the time they sit their GCSEs in Year 11.

Statistically one child in every co-ed class of 30 children will be colour blind, yet children are no longer routinely screened for the condition and teachers aren't trained to understand it and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. Consequently, most of the 450,000 colour blind children in the UK's education system right now are going unsupported. Indeed, because screening was removed, most schools are now unable to identify all of their colour blind children and many don't believe they even have any!

I was determined not to let Marcus' condition negatively impact his education. I've worked closely with Dame Allan's Schools, Tyne and Wear, where Marcus, now 15, has been a pupil since the age of nine, to ensure his needs – and the needs of all colour blind pupils – are met. Dame Allan's now routinely screens all its pupils using the Ishihara test – the most well-known test for colour blindness, consisting of circular plates with colour dots depicting a number or pattern – and teachers are trained to understand and support the needs of colour blind pupils. They recognise the limitations of coloured labels, charts or codes used in textbooks or as teaching aids when there's a colour blind child in the classroom and adapt their methods accordingly.

Dame Allan's are pioneering in this field when few others have any real understanding of the impact of colour blindness in education. They will be so far

ahead when legislation changes and screening is brought back into schools throughout the UK, which is something I'm campaigning for, with the backing of my local MP Liz Twist. Following extensive discussions with myself and Marcus, Ms Twist has taken the debate to the House of Commons and is calling for a more considerate environment for the colour blind community, particularly in education and in sport, and supports the return of testing in schools.

Of course, change won't happen overnight. Ms Twist herself admits it's a 'seismic challenge', but the government has shown a willingness to listen and I'm confident that one day legislation will be in place to ensure colour blind schoolchildren are no longer at a disadvantage in the classroom.

I don't advocate for colour to be taken out of the classroom – colour is beautiful, and colour is a great teaching aid for those who aren't colour blind – what I'd like to see is schools adapting and teachers offering secondary labels or a differentiator to make resources and exam papers accessible for those with colour blindness.

Given there's no human cure for colour blindness, I vow to continue campaigning for change – with the support of Colour Blind Awareness, Dame Allan's Schools and Ms Twist – not only for my own son, but for all colourblind school children who deserve to be educated in an equal environment without discrimination.

# our blindness

## Colour blindness ~ the facts

According to the Colour Blind Awareness organisation, Colour Blindness – or Colour Vision Deficiency (CVD) as it is sometimes known – affects 1 in 12 men and 1 in 200 women. In most cases it is genetically inherited from your parents, although it may also be acquired alongside conditions such as diabetes, liver disease, multiple sclerosis and stroke.

Colour Blindness is a spectrum with Deuteranomalous conditions being the most common. There are three main types of Colour Blindness:

- Tritanomalous to Tritanope (mild to severe blue loss)
- Protanomalous to Protanope (mild to severe red loss)
- Deuteranomalous to Deuteranope (mild to severe green loss)

For more information on Colour Blindness please refer to: [www.colourblindawareness.org](http://www.colourblindawareness.org)

Link to Colour Blind Awareness' #1InEveryClassroom animation for parents and schools: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F01Q0581pl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F01Q0581pl)



## National Engineering Development Trust final

A team of 14-year-old pupils from St Margaret's School for Girls in Aberdeen reached the national finals of a competition run by the Engineering Development Trust (EDT).

The girls designed a future-proofed house encompassing all considerations for climate change in the future. Their design included rain water collection, solar panels,

composting and many other features.

The team was selected after the regional event in Aberdeen to go forward to the final after participating in the Industrial Cadets Bronze Project, a 12 week programme which gives young people the opportunity to engage first hand with external mentors from industry and solve real life challenges.

Pictured: The team with their future-proofed house design

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# Cohabitation agreements: ensuring protection for your investment

In today's financial market, parents are increasingly supporting their children to purchase their first property. In many cases their child will be buying with a partner, or their partner will move into a property funded wholly by that individual and their family. In such situations where couples are unmarried (nor in a civil partnership) it is important to consider the legal consequences and possible claims that can arise upon cohabitation. It is also important to note that the relevant rights and protective measures will depend on where in the UK you live.

## Know your rights

In Scotland, couples who have lived together as if they were husband and wife or civil partners but who are not married or in a civil partnership have certain legal rights. To determine if a couple are 'cohabitants', consideration would be given to the length of time that the parties have lived together, the extent of any economic arrangements between them and the nature of their relationship.

There are certain claims available for financial compensation in the event of a cohabitating couple separating. For example, a former cohabitant can seek payment from their ex-partner if they can establish that they have suffered economic disadvantage to the benefit of the other individual, or in the interests of any child of the relationship. These claims can be based on a range of scenarios, including financial contributions to the mortgage payments or funding refurbishments of the property. It is also possible to raise a claim in relation to household goods or upon your partner's death. Crucially, however, any such claims must be made within one year of the couple ceasing to live together or within 6 months of the death of the deceased cohabitant.

## How can a cohabitant's interests be protected?

A way in which cohabitants can restore certainty to their legal position is by entering into a cohabitation agreement. Under Scots law, a cohabitation agreement is a legally

binding document which will establish financial arrangements during a couple's cohabitation, clarify property ownership between the parties, and outline what should happen to joint and solely owned assets in the event of separation. This is of particular relevance where there is an imbalance in the couples' wealth, or where one individual or their family has significantly or wholly funded a property purchase that the couple then cohabit in together. The agreement can establish for both partners that any financial contributions by one to the other will not give rise to an interest in the property during their relationship or following separation. It can also include protection for the financially weaker party.

## The position in England & Wales

In England and Wales, the legal framework is in stark contrast to that in Scotland. At present there are no express rights for cohabitants, meaning that failing any agreement to the contrary, there is not much legal scope to deal with any disputes following separation. Similarly, however, you are able to formalise your arrangements in a Living Together agreement which can clearly outline both parties' property interests and clarify what financial obligations you owe to the other, during the relationship or following separation. Alternatively, you can clarify matters in relation to property ownership by entering into a Declaration of Trust.

## Benefits of these agreements

These agreements can be as simple and flexible as you desire. An agreement can



Ciara Wilson

simply acknowledge that no claim will be made by either cohabitant in the event of separation, or it can set out more intricate arrangements following separation. Where a parent has supported their child with purchasing a property, they may wish to ensure that their gift or loan is protected from a claim by their partner in the event of separation. Cohabitation agreements can provide that degree of protection.

Whilst the law in both jurisdictions is currently undergoing review, it will be some time before any changes come to fruition. In the meantime, to protect your personal property and to avoid disputes in the event of a separation, a Cohabitation agreement can protect your and your child's investment.

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Ciara Wilson is a solicitor in Turcan Connell's family law team. [www.turcanconnell.com](http://www.turcanconnell.com)

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# Empowering students to communicate effectively

Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer recently brought oracy education into the spotlight, making a manifesto promise to develop students' spoken language skills. Highlighting the difference between the state and independent sector, he recognised how public speaking is integral to independent schools, claiming this is the reason for the characteristic confidence and eloquence of privately educated students. Head of Partnerships and Head of English at Burgess Hill Girls, West Sussex, Sarah Kruschandl, takes a closer look at oracy, its role, and why it should be taught...



## What is Oracy?

Speech is central to education but is a multifaceted issue. In schools, students learn to talk and talk to learn. Research from the Education Endowment Foundation shows that oral language teaching interventions 'have a high impact on student outcomes'. Oracy to aid teaching is explored by Tom Sherrington in 'Walk-thrus', and Barbara Bleiman from the English and Media Centre.

Starmer's plan centres, however, around performative talk, as he stated in an article published in The Times, "The ability to speak well and express oneself should be something that every child is entitled to and should master." At the heart of his approach lies a keen emphasis on public speaking. Effective public speaking relies on a combination of cognitive, linguistic, physical, social, and emotional skills. Confident speakers share their views and value their opinions.

## Why should we teach oracy?

The significance of oracy extends beyond education to the workplace, where strong speaking and listening skills are pivotal for professional conversations, building networks, collaboration, leadership, interviews and presentations. Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders said,

"We need to equip young people with the tools they need to thrive when they leave school." The rhetorical art of composing and delivering a speech is essential for leaders who need strong oracy skills to inspire and motivate their teams and share their vision to drive the organisation forward.

In the new era of AI, oracy skills will become more significant. AI systems are unable to comprehend contextual cues, subtle nuances, and complex communication. Orators can express abstract ideas, navigate ambiguity, and convey emotions effectively.

## What role has oracy previously played in education?

Oracy is one of the three skills taught in English. Often sidelined by the seemingly more important skills of reading and writing, over the years various governments, educational specialists and academics have fought to prioritise spoken language. Aristotle wrote about The Art of Rhetoric in the 4th Century BC, but the term 'oracy' wasn't coined until 1965, when Andrew Wilkinson sought to promote the teaching of this skill. Renamed as 'speaking and listening' in the 1980s National Curriculum, this and the subsequent government-funded

projects (National Oracy, 1987 and Language in the National Curriculum, 1989) highlighted the significance of communication skills for student's personal and academic development. Abandoned in 1990, then re-introduced in the 1999 National Curriculum as 'communication'. Initiatives from 2002, such as 'Talk for Writing', encouraged teachers to use talk to improve learning. The Teachers' Standards were revised in 2011, specifying that all teachers should promote high standards of 'articulacy'. Speaking and listening coursework was introduced to the English Language GCSE in England in 2000, which was replaced in 2014 with a 'spoken language' component, which is assessed but does not contribute towards students' final Language grades.

## Ideas for teaching public speaking

In English lessons at Burgess Hill Girls, half a term in each year group is devoted to developing the art of spoken communication. In a carefully constructed scheme of work which spans four years and maps the core oracy skills, students develop confidence, to speak with conviction and capability.

At the end of Year 7, students work in small groups to create a pitch – a

presentation to the school council which recommends an improvement to the school, applying their newly acquired rhetorical skills.

Students in Year 8 are taught how to structure and compete in formal debates. They are taught about Aristotle's modes of persuasion and the British parliamentary style of debating. Each student works in a team and delivers a three-minute speech during an assessed debate.

Year 9s study influential speeches from the feminist movement and then create a speech about an issue affecting girls and women today, either in the UK or around the world. They are taught how to research, compose and deliver a powerful speech.

In Year 10 students prepare a speech on a topic of their choice and after delivering their speech, respond to questions from the audience. This recorded speech is their spoken language assessment which is an endorsement of their Language GCSE.

Extra-curricular speech and drama lessons and debating clubs offer students the opportunity to further develop their skills. The debating clubs compete against students from other schools in a variety of national competitions.

## Final thoughts

The recognition of oracy's significance in the independent sector reflects the growing awareness of its benefits in education, personal development, and the workforce. Through dedicated curriculum time, debating groups and specialised speech and drama lessons, schools can empower students to find their voices, express themselves confidently, and develop crucial communication skills. Oracy education is essential for empowering individuals to communicate effectively, express their opinions, and thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

## Debate on Labour's plans to "shatter class ceiling"

Students from two schools have come together to host politicians, journalists and educational experts at a conference on social mobility and breaking class barriers in education.

Following Keir Starmer's announcement that a Labour government would work to shatter the "class ceiling", focusing on education and opportunity, students from Highgate School, London, and the London Academy

of Excellence of Tottenham, (LAET) ran a day of debate around the theme of 'Bridging the Gap' in education.

Panel discussions and a keynote speech from David Lammy MP, alongside a video message from Chair of the Education Select Committee, Robin Walker MP, focused on themes of attracting teachers, future funding of education and how to break down barriers. Other themes

to emerge throughout the day included the 'gaps' across the country, the relationship between poverty, socio-demographics and education, and the future of educational policy.



Pictured: David Lammy MP (centre) with Adam Pettitt, Highgate Head (left) and Jan Balon, LAET Head (right)



*“Throughout the school, pupils’ behaviour is of the highest order. A natural respect and politeness is evident in all ages.”*

*“Pupils make outstanding progress in the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding.”*



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# Developing community and inclusion through pupil voice

Head at St Margaret's School, Hertfordshire, Lara Pechar, discusses the power of student voice and how it creates an inclusive school environment..



Over the last few years, schools have been placing a greater emphasis on actively listening to their students. While school councils and student-led representative groups have been around for decades, there has been a significant improvement in the mechanisms for gathering student feedback and involving them in decision-making processes. School leaders now recognise the power of students in finding the best solutions and creating a more effective and inclusive school environment, particularly in areas such as pastoral care and diversity.

At my school, we have implemented various methods to capture students' opinions so that every person has a voice that is listened to. We have conducted confidential questionnaires on topics like race, wellbeing, and sanctions, allowing our students to express their thoughts on the areas where they feel improvements can be made. Additionally, I have established a twice-weekly open-door slot where students can simply drop in and discuss a wide range of issues, including issues such as environmental sustainability, uniform policies, curriculum concerns, fairness

of sanctions and rewards, and requests for more effective wellbeing and prayer spaces.

Many of these conversations have led to the formation of student-led groups, while also offering leadership positions to those students who have shown initiative. These groups have been known to cover a wide range of interests and identities, such as the SAGA group for LGBTQ+ support, the SE Asian group, and a group of younger students interested in 3D printing. Earlier this year, a number of students requested a "this is me" day whereby they could come into school dressed in the clothes that they believe represented their identity best – in a bid to celebrate their diversity and heritage. As we enter the new academic year, I am excited about the enhancements we are making to our volunteering and service programme, which will allow us to tap into the depth and breadth of our diverse community.

In addition to listening to our students, my counterpart in the Junior School and I also offer drop-in sessions once every term for parents. These informal sessions provide an opportunity for parents to raise any concerns

or suggestions they may have.

These meetings have proven to be immensely beneficial, as we gain valuable insights into what parents appreciate and what they believe could be improved. The absence of a set agenda and the regularity of these meetings contribute to their success, even when discussing more challenging topics. This academic year, we are introducing a pupil version of these meetings, where our students can drop in for a hot chocolate with a friend in a neutral space. These relaxed yet focused discussions on improving their community, will help students feel included, understand the power of everyday leadership, and grow in self-confidence.

During a visit to Phillips Exeter School in the USA earlier in my career, I witnessed the power of student leadership and voice through pupil-led spiritual assemblies. Students volunteered to write and deliver these assemblies, creating a strong sense of community which benefited both the speakers and the audiences. Inspired by this, we are introducing a similar initiative in one of our senior school assemblies this term. I am confident that hearing from our

students about aspects of their lives and experiences that matter to them, will open up important discussions and provide support for others. It will also be a powerful way to extend support and warmth within our school community.

Schools will often involve students in recruitment processes, pupil panels, and gathering feedback on lessons. Their insights are often the most accurate reflection of a teacher's abilities. When I need to address an issue or gain a better understanding of what is happening in the school, my lunches with senior prefects often provide valuable guidance.

Our young people communicate differently from previous generations, but they have a lot to say and are passionate about their community, diversity, and fairness. As a school leader, it is increasingly important for me to create an inclusive environment where students feel comfortable sharing their views and opinions. Ultimately, their ideas are the ones that will lead to the most effective strategies for student engagement and success longer term, so it is vital that they have access to platforms that allow their voices to be heard.

## School contributes over £50m to UK GDP

A report using the ISC/Oxford Economics modeller has found that in the last financial year, Bolton School, Lancashire, has contributed £23.4 million towards the town's gross domestic product (GDP). Bolton is one of the country's largest towns and the contribution represents 0.43 per cent of its entire GDP.

Further afield, Bolton School contributes £50,678,897 to the UK's GDP, a figure which comprises the school's own GDP plus that of its UK-based supply chain and the induced GDP which is generated through the spending of staff and the school's suppliers' staff.

Head of the Bolton School Foundation, Philip Britton, said: "These are significant figures and the contribution of independent schools should not be underestimated. Together they contribute £16.5 billion to the UK economy, supporting 328,000 jobs and £5.1 billion in tax revenues. The sector saves the government £4.4 billion annually by educating pupils who would otherwise take up a place in state-funded schools. If we did not exist, 2,349 of our own pupils would be entitled to a free state school place.

"As a School, last year we paid £15.9 million in tax into the Exchequer's coffers, which

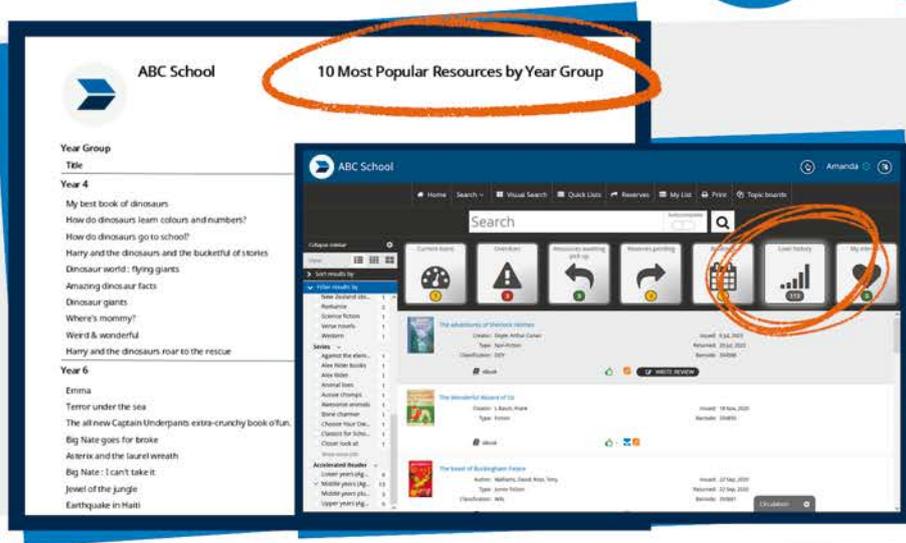


included income tax, NICs, plus indirect and induced tax contributions. Payments to other businesses for goods and services relating to our core operations amounted to almost £11m. The total number of jobs supported by our activities is 747.

"Besides our significant contribution to the local economy,

we offer education for over 2,500 children and help stimulate social mobility – one in five of our Senior School pupils receives assistance with their fees. Our pupils also contribute enormously to the region through their volunteering and work in the community and we are a regular collaborator with local state schools."

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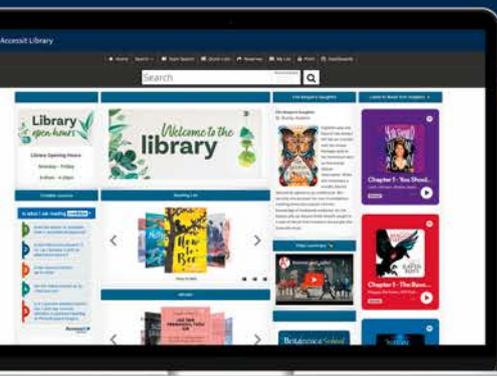
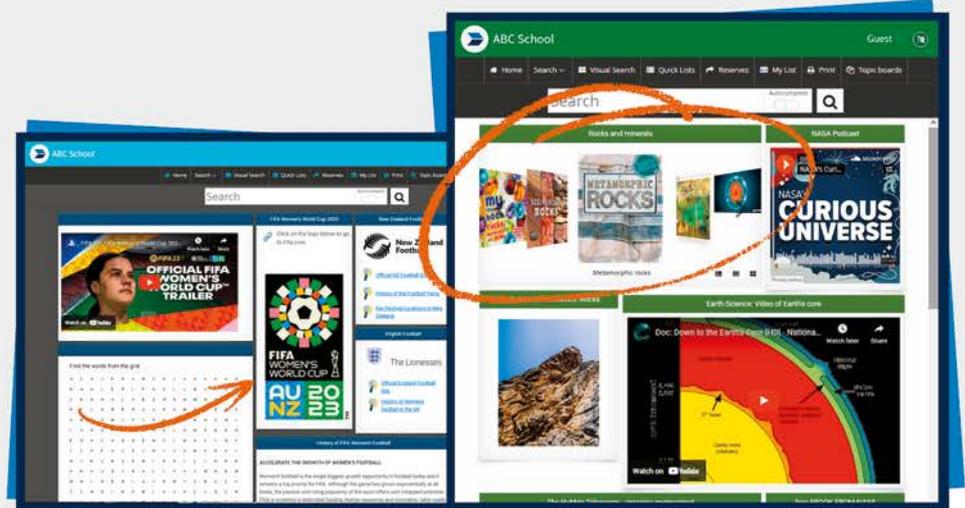


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# International Baccalaureate

Headteacher at Fairview International School, Bridge of Allan, Stirling,  
David Hicks, says the IB curriculum grows student confidence.



“The philosophy of the IB centres around Student Agency and from the very earliest stages of learning in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) all the way through to the Diploma Programme (DP), students take a more active and independent role in their learning compared to their counterparts in other education systems. The noticeable outcome of this is students taking greater responsibility for their learning and working of their own initiative; taking positive action in their lives, participation in planning and direction of their learning, and utilising those skills in the community through service and action, advocacy and entrepreneurship to make a difference to the world around them.

“The philosophy of the IB centres around Student Agency and from the very earliest stages of learning in

It is hugely noticeable in our school that students have many platforms and opportunities to demonstrate the growth in their confidence. The profound development in each and every one is the result of an engaging curriculum designed to cultivate confidence.

Each of our Middle Years Programme (MYP) pupils for instance complete a Personal Project, a formal assessment of their approaches to learning (ATL) skills. Demanding self-reflection throughout, the process supports personal growth and increased confidence.

For example, a Year 11 student recently led a whole school assembly highlighting an awareness for Autism connected with her Middle Years Personal Project. She created activities and a presentation for members of the audience and shared strategies that everyone can use to support those with Autism.

Similarly, a Year 9 student created a presentation informing everyone about haemophilia; opening up about his personal experiences and speaking confidently in front of a large school audience.

## Progression through the IB

Offering younger students a gentle introduction to the IB style of learning is the Celebrations of Learning in PYP, a platform for students to share aspects and highlights of their learning journey with teachers, parents and often wider family members too.

As programme elements such as the Year 6 PYP Exhibition are introduced, students are offered the opportunity to take on a personal passion project, often a significant personal development milestone. As students mature further, the Personal Project in the MYP, community projects and extended essays all allow for personal passions to be engaged with and in turn a great

level of confidence is developed in each young person.

The IB Learner Profile attributes feature throughout the 3 programmes (PYP, MYP and the DP) of the IB. Our students learn about these through images and role play in their first years of the PYP, learning to identify them in themselves and others. The ten learner profile attributes represent what we want our learners to be, both in and out of school.

The various elements of the curriculum are bridged by our Approaches to Learning skills (ATL) which give students confidence that they are not starting afresh with each programme, they learn consistent skills and attributes that progress with them and develop throughout the programmes.

## The IBDP

The internationally recognised IBDP is a gold-standard pre-

Advertorial Feature

## Traditional upholstery courses by Sarah Louise Dix Upholstery

Upholstery began in the Middle Ages and has been passed on for generations. Sarah Louise Dix owner of Sarah Louise Dix Upholstery is passionate about the craft and the tradition behind it.

Understanding the importance of passing her knowledge on to younger people she has developed a uniquely tailored, traditional upholstery workshop package for schools and colleges.

Ideal for new students, the workshop which involves upholstering a footstool drop in pad with a beach wood frame, offers a practical, hands-on experience away from academic life in a bid to keep the skills and knowledge alive.

With a background in fashion design (at Vivienne Westwood's PR company) Sarah has spent the last 18 years building her business. Based in Godalming in Surrey,

Sarah Louise Dix Upholstery also runs a selection of courses and workshops, including a popular 10-week upholstery course and day workshops at the shop,

which are suitable for all abilities. From beginners or those with no experience, to intermediate and those experienced there is something for everyone.



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# – cultivating confidence

university education programme. The various components that make up the IBDP course develop a wide range of transferable skills that prepare students extensively for their university education and their future. Students engage with a wide range of academic literature and learn how to research, communicate and critique different sources of information. In addition, they undertake projects such as the Extended Essay, a 4000-word research piece which is very similar in style and structure to a university based assignment.

As well as our on-campus resources, we maintain a close relationship with the nearby University of Stirling, where our students have access to the library and other facilities. This familiarisation is paramount to a smooth transition.

## Supporting student independence to build confidence

What works for us in supporting students to become confident and independent individuals is to celebrate and empower students

as agents of their own learning. Creating a school where they are happy and feel valued underpins the learning experience for each student.

We embrace variety in terms of teaching approaches and take risks in terms of handing over ownership in the direction of the lesson. Facilitating a lesson which actively pursues student passions and interests can help to really develop that love of learning and curiosity that is so powerful to witness in a teaching and learning environment. It also promotes a love of learning when students see that their feedback and passions are valued in their learning space.

A welcoming classroom climate where questioning is encouraged and celebrated is vital to foster. It's important that we make it ok to be wrong or partially correct to help students develop their questioning skills. We work with those answers, taking the student through the zone of proximal development one step at a time. This is the key to inquiry, and therefore, engaging and successful learning. It is crucial

to equip even our youngest of learners with the tools required to answer questions and realise that there is a wealth of sources they can use beyond a search engine to find answers. Learning cannot be rushed, each individual moves at their own pace.

The PYP provides a framework and students have freedom within that framework to influence their learning and development. This in itself fosters a sense of responsibility and confidence in their own ideas and abilities. Learners are encouraged to make connections, share thoughts, ideas, opinions, take action, have agency, be risk takers, question, inquire, reflect – on the good and the bad. This open mindedness in education nurtures confidence in students to be themselves.

Promoting the development of the Learner Profile attributes combined with the Approaches to Learning skills (ATL) at all stages of the IB learning journey nurtures confident students who take a very active role in

their own personal development. By focusing on research, communication and social skills in various subject areas and contexts, students benefit from presenting their learning in various different ways. This is often enhanced by technology through media and information literacy; again allowing students to excel in a way that best suits them.

In many aspects of the curriculum, there's no wrong answer, just underdeveloped reasoning. Teaching students to justify their ideas, opinions and thoughts while making connections to the bigger picture allows all students to approach learning with an open mind and removes the common 'fear of failure' barrier. Our students show empathy, compassion, and respect. When the other students in the class are caring, people feel safe enough to be risk-takers and to offer thoughts, answers and opinions. This opens the door to real inquiry and progress."

*Sarah Louise Dix*

## Student Enrichment Opportunity

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# Maintaining your independent school buildings

The need to invest in your school facilities in order to enhance your appeal to prospective parents, and attract and retain pupils, is always a top priority. Your school buildings play a vital role in this. So too does the task of continually updating and upgrading your existing facilities.

In this article we will explore how to develop and use your buildings to secure the next generation of pupils within existing estates.

We'll also discuss cost effective ways to create a welcoming and stimulating learning environment that creates the potential to generate income for more building projects.

## Hiring out communal facilities

Communal facilities, like your hall and sports fields, are a key part of your school buildings.

Hiring out your communal facilities can help you generate additional revenue, which can then be invested back into your school.

Your sports areas, theatres and halls, for example, can provide excellent venues for events in the community. This includes regular exercise classes, yoga retreats, amateur dramatic performances, music concerts, sports tournaments or weddings. The possibilities are endless when you have beautiful facilities and grounds.

If your indoor and outdoor facilities are looking a little worn or outdated, you may need to update these to make them desirable for prospective hires.

For example, you can invest in large visual displays to make the areas more appealing and suitable for events.

If you're planning to hire out your sports facilities in particular, create visual displays with a sports theme to set the scene. However, if you're keen to hire out your facilities for any type of external event; such as weddings, shows and conferences, it's worth having a more generic design.

Due to their long term durability, permanent visual displays also reduce maintenance costs in large communal areas, as they require zero upkeep.

## Life in your school

Your school buildings can show prospective families what life is like at your school, and communicate your school's curriculum, values and aims.

Using large visual displays on the walls of your corridors, stairwells and other communal areas can:

- demonstrate the breadth and balance of your curriculum
- showcase academic highlights

- celebrate successful alumni
- explain your higher education and career pathways
- track the history of your school

Parents will feel secure knowing that their child's whole development and welfare is in safe hands, as well as their academic success.

## Home from home

Boarding houses are an important part of your school buildings when it comes to Open Days and school marketing events. They're a key factor for prospective families considering your school.

Knowing that when their child is with you their personal space is as welcoming as their bedroom at home can be a key decision point for parents on which school they choose.

You may not have the budget to revamp old, historical boarding houses. But you can inject personality and visual appeal through a clever choice of artworks, furniture and layout.

Personalised Wall Art can create a sense of belonging and cultivate a positive environment for existing students. At the same time, it can impress prospective families by showing that your boarding houses are a real 'home from home'.

Many schools involve their pupils in the process of creating Wall Art for boarding houses. This builds a sense of belonging once the designs are finalised and it is a fantastic way to get fresh ideas and input into the process.

## Maintenance projects - expertise and quality

According to Ian Wakeling, Partner at Bidwells Property Consultancy,



a lack of property expertise is one of the top ten challenges faced by independent schools today. It can be tempting to opt for a do-it-yourself model, using quick, low cost options when updating your internal and external buildings.

But when it comes to building maintenance, it's always better to think long term. Choose credible third party providers and invest in high quality, durable materials for displays, updates and facility upgrades.

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# Social responsibility:

## Supporting pupils to make positive change

Deputy Master at Haileybury, Hertfordshire, Simon Heard, outlines how they have gone about embedding social responsibility at the school and this is equipping pupils to make positive contributions to the world...



"As educators, our primary focus is to deliver an exceptional education so our young people can thrive in their careers and lives. As we know, an excellent education extends well beyond the classroom; it requires a holistic approach, where all parts of school life are considered. Our pupils must be well-equipped in leadership, teamwork, compassion, resilience and respect, as well as knowledge, if they are to achieve their full potential and become active citizens who make positive change in the world.

At Haileybury, social responsibility is profoundly embedded in our history and ethos. With alumni including former prime minister and founder of the National Health Service, Clement Attlee, duty and service are at the core of what we do.

### Setting a clear vision

A school's vision sets the tone for a school community and guides senior leaders' decision-making. This then trickles down into every aspect of school life. By placing social responsibility at the centre of your school's vision, it will ensure pupils think about others before

themselves and actively want to contribute to a better society.

At Haileybury, we believe in the merits of an all-round education with strong co-curricular provision where our pupils learn the value of community. This provides them with a robust moral compass and effectively prepares them for their next steps.

### Embedding social responsibility within the curriculum

To help instil a commitment to social responsibility, a school's vision should be lived and breathed through the curriculum. The first part of this is offering a breadth of subjects that facilitate awareness of different issues that are affecting communities, countries and environments across the globe.

At Haileybury, with a choice of both A Levels and International Baccalaureate, our pupils can elect to study Economics, Geography, History, Science, Modern Foreign Languages, Politics, Theology and Philosophy and many others, building a wider awareness of the world and ensuring they are well

informed about current affairs. We find that our pupils continue to champion important causes throughout their lifetime due to the studies they undertake at school.

Beyond the subjects provided, the content within lessons can further embed a culture of duty. At Haileybury, climate change is an issue we are particularly passionate about and have set a goal to be carbon-neutral by 2030. This is reflected in our lessons, where in mathematics our pupils might visit our beekeeping site and calculate how much honey bees will produce within a season, or in economics, where our pupils learn about energy supply and demand, or in biology, where our pupils analyse our wildflower meadows and biodiversity levels.

Similarly, the upcoming opening of our new science and technology centre will house pioneering research as part of the Stan-X project in partnership with professors from Stanford University, in California, USA. This is a groundbreaking study of genetics using fruit flies which is contributing to the efforts to find cures for human diseases such as diabetes and pancreatic cancer. A number of our pupils are fortunate to have the opportunity to be involved in this vital research which demonstrates to them the positive contributions they can make to society.

### Offering tailored co-curricular activities

Co-curricular activities can further embed a sense of social responsibility, whilst also providing exciting and enriching opportunities. Our pupils are strongly encouraged to take full advantage of the activities on offer. These vary from the Conservation Group which has created an apiary site for beekeeping and pupils now use this area to learn about the species as well as sell the honey for charity; to our pupil-led Charity Committee which runs an active schedule of events to support local and national charities.

In addition, we run a Community Service programme for all Sixth Form pupils which involves helping older people, organising football training, supporting local primary school teachers and decorating church halls. We also provide other volunteering opportunities including through our Combined Cadet Force and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme.

New initiatives also help engage pupils in social responsibility. For example, we are launching our new Hearts and Wings initiative in conjunction with Green Frog Holidays. This will provide local young people with disabilities a residential inclusive holiday experience, utilising our facilities. The spirit of service is embodied by the significant number of Haileybury pupils who volunteered to support this programme.

### Ensuring it is pupil-led

A key to the success of our social responsibility work has been making it pupil-led. Beyond learning about the importance of duty and key issues around the world, it is by conducting their own research, leading fundraising campaigns themselves and volunteering their own time that our pupils gain the real skills, experience and knowledge they need to make a valuable contribution to society.

Alongside the previous examples, our pupils also run a Haileybury Model United Nations (HMUN) programme which develops leadership, public speaking and debating skills. Our Sixth Formers run weekly sessions and organise our annual HMUN conference where we welcome 600 international visitors. Similarly, we also established a Pupil Sustainability Committee, which is now an integral part of our sustainability strategy.

It is by embracing and embedding social responsibility in all aspects of school life that our pupils are equipped with the knowledge and skills to give more than they take and make positive contributions to the world."

## App to help the homeless

A student from Pocklington School, East Yorkshire, has come third place in Samsung UK's national competition, Solve For Tomorrow. The competition, is designed to encourage young tech innovators to come up with game-changing solutions to societal issues.

Student, Henry Hudson's tech idea, aims to help people who are homeless. It focuses on helping homeless individuals in a society that relies on electronic payments and was inspired by his own experiences of not being able to give money to homeless people because he didn't have cash and had concerns about where the money would go. Henry's idea was to create an app that allows for contactless

donations to homeless people within a certain proximity. The donation can be anonymous or not, and 100% of the donation goes directly to the recipient. To ensure the money is spent wisely, certain restrictions are in place. Homeless people wear a smart wristband and can check their balance at various checkpoints set up in shop windows.



Pictured: Henry Hudson at the Samsung UK Solve for Tomorrow prize presentation

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**Ross Borthwick**, iPQ Lead, and Head of Sustainability and History at Cottesmore School, UK



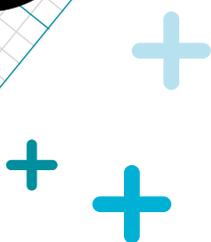
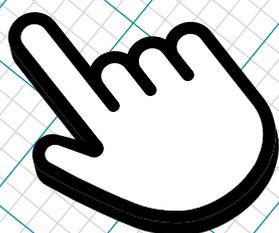
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**Caroline Jordan**, Headmistress, Headington School



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# Profile

In conversation with Julia Martin

**Born:** Surrey

**Married:** Yes to James

**Children:** Two girls aged 13 and 11

**Schools and Universities attended:** Stockton House, Farnborough Hill, UCL, Surrey, Kingston, Southampton

**First Job:** Celebrity PR (yes really!)

**First Management Job:** Head of Teaching and Learning at an alternative provider of music industry qualifications

**First job in independent education:** I was a private tutor for independent school pupils from the moment I started teaching

**Appointed to current job:** 2021

**Favourite piece of music:** I'll never decide. As a classically trained musician I love Mahler's 10th Symphony and Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring, but having worked in the music industry, there is nothing I won't obsessively listen to, from Metal to Grime to Alternative to pure Pop

**Favourite food:** Seafood and Cheese. But not necessarily at the same time...

**Favourite drink:** Diet Coke

**Favourite holiday destination:** Lyme Regis, so many happy family memories and I don't even mind when it rains!

**Favourite leisure pastime:** Reading and horse riding

**Favourite TV or radio programme/series:** Currently, Ted Lasso but long term love for Masterchef

**Suggested epitaph:** 'This was the only way we could get her to be still'??????

**Q** The ISEB have been providing examinations and assessments for pupils transitioning from prep and junior schools to senior schools in the UK, designing and setting the Common Entrance assessments that have been used since 1903. What would you say is the biggest challenge for the CE as you close out on your 120th year?

**A** At its heart, CE represented the independent sector coming together to ensure that there were agreed ways in which children would transition from Prep to Senior school and with the intention of offering a 'common' exam that all children would take, reducing the need for every pupil to take a very different exam for each school.

We know that education has changed rapidly and that most recently, we've all had the chance to explore assessment, teaching and learning in new ways. So, for CE it is essential for us to continually explore its development. We have lots up our sleeves and if we keep those core principles of CE close to our heart: offering children a curriculum that best prepares them to move to a senior school where they can thrive, be happy and meet their potential, then those are pretty solid aims upon which to build a great curriculum and really modern multi-modal assessments. We're developing new things at the moment, working directly with prep schools and it's a truly exciting project.

**Q** A more recent innovation is the Common Pre-test, taken when a pupil is in Year 6 or 7, designed as an online age-standardised measure of ability and attainment. What evidence is there that such testing adds significant benefit over and above traditional teacher assessment?

**A** The process of updating and developing the ISEB Common Pre-Tests was extensive and highly complex. We worked with many experts in the field of assessment and quality and piloted the test with thousands of pupils, and the resulting product is outstanding. As an adaptive test model, the ISEB Pre-Tests offer a truly accurate measure of a child's current ability, through English and Maths tests, and potential, through Verbal and Non-Verbal

Reasoning tests. As an academically robust qualification, schools can feel confident that results accurately reflect a pupil's ability and ambitions forming a crucial element of their admissions portfolio. In addition, the dedicated portals for Guardians, Senior Schools and Invigilation Centres means the process is as streamlined and stress-free as possible for all involved.

Ultimately the ISEB Pre-Tests form part of a wider admissions journey contributing to the overall picture of a pupil used by senior schools to determine entry. Traditional teacher-directed assessments remain important and, in some cases, are used in tandem with the ISEB Pre-Tests, however, the universal applicability and impartiality of the tests enable registrars to feel confident they are selecting pupils for their school who will thrive in their individual schools.

**Q** For the last two years ISEB has also offered a Project Qualification – a 15–20 hour project providing a framework for teaching and assessing the development of independent, pupil-led project-learning skills. Resulting in a certificate from ISEB, the iPQ aims to build confidence and motivation in pupils and help prepare them for the transition to senior school. How many schools use this iPQ? What quantifiable benefits have been reported concerning pupils who have done it?

**A** The ISEB Project Qualification (iPQ) is one that has the potential to transform the way in which teaching, learning and assessment are delivered in schools. When developing this qualification at ISEB, we reviewed and evaluated similar project-based programmes, such as the Extended Project Qualification traditionally used in sixth form and asked the question, why is there not a project qualification for pupils from year 5 through to year 9? We decided to change this and, through development and implementation, came to understand and appreciate the immense potential of the qualification for schools, pupils and staff.

We have seen schools use the iPQ in a myriad of unique ways, all championing self-directed learning and pupils' creativity. Project submissions have been hugely diverse. They

Julia Martin has been the CEO of the Independent Schools Examination Board (ISEB) since January 2021 and is also Chair for Curriculum and Quality for a newly merged group of FE and HE colleges in Hampshire. Julia started her educational career teaching A Level English (and also music) in Surrey over twenty years ago.



have ranged from practical construction projects, for example, we've had a pupil from Hall Grove, Surrey, build a working trebuchet! Through to school-wide initiatives, for example, at Cottesmore School, West Sussex, where the iPQ is closely tied to the theme of sustainability where pupils answered questions ranging from "How have trains developed over time?" to "How sustainable is international sport" and "Is the school's catering sustainable?".

Many iPQs have a charitable or community focus, at the Banda School in Kenya, one student created a lending library for local people, while another student wrote and produced a 45-page adventure novel donating the proceeds to Usikimye, a charity working against gender-based violence. Others have integrated the iPQ into existing curricula, including Common Entrance, such as Kenton College, Kenya, which used the project to structure TPR (Theology, Philosophy and Religion) lessons, with students exploring questions from "Is there life after death?", "Can humans trust artificial intelligence" and "Is it ever right for leaders to inflict hardship on their people?". Ashfold School, Buckinghamshire, is currently piloting iPQ to deliver cross curricular themes in humanities, which is really exciting.

With the iPQ, if you can think of a question, a student is exploring the topic!

**Q** Some senior schools have reportedly lost faith in CE and prefer instead to rely on conduct and academic reports from their prep school and other references. One head was widely quoted as suggesting that "two years free from Common Entrance in schools that 'are not required to drive children along the CE examination motorway' can be used much more effectively." How do you respond to such comments?

**A** It is important to understand and view qualifications like the Common Entrance exam within the wider context of a national education system. CE exams have been around for 120 years this year, and that longevity speaks to their ability to transform and develop to suit the educational climate of the time.

Introduced in 1903, they were first taken in June 1904 and, at the time, served to reduce the number of entrance assessments children had to take, thereby promoting pupil wellbeing – even in the early 1900s! Since then, CE exams have evolved and transformed into something much broader than simply an exam for entrance to senior school. They offer a curriculum for prep schools to utilise in the classroom and are rigorous and academically robust while offering scope for practical learning. They are taught internationally and recognised by some of the leading independent schools in the UK as the best preparation for further study. Most importantly, CE remains a key educational milestone for children ahead of their GCSEs and A-Levels, and for many, is the first experience they have in a formal exam setting.

At ISEB, we understand that CE as a qualification will need to continue to evolve and develop from its roots in 1904, and we will continue to push for engaging content suited to study in the 21st century. There are exciting things on the horizon for 'Britain's oldest exam'!

**Q** The ISEB recently hosted two inaugural events to promote and encourage discussion regarding digital assessment practices, as well as the impact of AI on teaching and learning. What did you find were the key takeaways from these events for you?

**A** It was brilliant to feel the excitement in the room. We know that all of us whether on the teaching and learning or assessment side have the same aims: to nurture and support young people to succeed. When those worlds come together to learn about what can be achieved, that's when you get truly great ideas.

**Q** At the same events, Adaptive Comparative Judgement was also discussed. This alternative method of assessment is something the ISEB are starting to explore. What is it and what is your current thinking about it?

**A** Adaptive Comparative Judgement is an incredibly exciting avenue of development for ISEB, and I am proud to say that we are set to be the first exam board in the UK to adopt this practice. It is still early days for this project, however, through our piloting during the summer and ongoing discussions with partners RM Education, it's an area of innovation that looks set to significantly impact teaching and learning for the better! The fact it allows us to assess a range of creative artifacts like writing, presentations, video, practical work and so on, means that it's a really versatile, twenty-first century way of assessing. It's also pretty AI-proof and really dynamic, putting the control in the school's hands too.

**Q** Pupil stress is a key concern related to assessments. How can this be dealt with so the message that assessment doesn't have to mean exam is got across?

**A** For me this all comes back to how children and families frame learning within their home environment. I'm a firm believer that assessment does not necessarily equal examination and the subsequent stress that comes with it. It's all about embedding responsible practice and preparation, identifying the ways of learning that work best for your child and family and taking into consideration their interests outside of a school environment.

I'd encourage parents to be thorough when conducting their research into test practice options and revision resources. It can be easy to be swayed by dynamic content and engaging visuals, but what really matters is how closely aligned a test practice platform is to the qualification itself. This formed part of our reasoning behind Bond Online Premium Plus, the only ISEB-endorsed test practice platform for the ISEB Pre-Tests. We saw that parents were engaging in test practice following the re-launch of the qualification last year, and so worked with our partners at Century and Bond (Oxford University Press). We want to enable parents and children who decide to engage in test practice to do so confident in the knowledge that their practice directly relates to the tests they will take for senior school admissions, no one knows this detail like the exam board! **Continued >**

# Profile

In conversation with Julia Martin (continued)

Another important component of practice and preparation is downtime; relaxing as a family, encouraging creativity, nurturing hobbies and building mental resilience in our children. Gone are the days when children were chained to their desks for hours revising, and it's important to work with your child, and their teachers to support their learning and encourage a lifelong love for it. That is why ISEB has been working with Tooled Up Education behind the scenes to develop resources to empower parents to support their child during times of stress. Parent Power Toolkits will be available in September from the ISEB shop and come packed full of supportive activities and tasks for the

whole family that can help during periods of change and school transition.

**Q** You have had a varied career having previously worked in PR and Marketing in the music industry before moving into the education sector. What drew you to education originally and latterly to assessment design?

**A** I absolutely loved my education, and I could never shake that curiosity about what it might be like to be in front of people, teaching them and inspiring them the way that I had been. It may sound clichéd but I had so many great teachers over the years and honestly, I wanted to be just like them.

**Q** Looking back at your time with ISEB to date, what has been your personal highlight so far. What are you most excited about for the future?

**A** We've built an amazing team. I look around us and in a few short years and a lot of hard work, we've really challenged ourselves to ensure that ISEB can sit right at the heart of the sector and be modern, responsive and technically ready for the future. I'm excited about the possibilities in front of us with new assessment designs and resources coming to life. I'm most proud of and grateful for my team. They deliver, design and create what we do and who we are.

## A closer look at Formula 1 in schools

Head of DT from St John's College, Cardiff, Clare Crowley-Davis, discusses the value of F1 in schools, and takes a look at how it developed and become embedded into the school curriculum.



"F1 in Schools is a STEM project that can inspire and challenge, the next generation of

brilliant minds at your school. St John's College has been competing in the F1iS (F1 in Schools) challenge for over ten years. What started out as a lunchtime STEM club for 6th form pupils, has now become embedded in the school's curriculum and is one of the most exciting and successful co-curricular sessions running for KS3 and 4 throughout the year.

In Year 7, we start our Design Technology lessons with the F1iS Entry Class project. Teams are drawn at random from the infamous "cauldron of doom". This allows students to work with new pupils and remove them from their comfort zones, it doesn't always work out perfectly, but we believe this prepares them for "real life" experiences. Building up resilience and patience is a must when competing, especially at the highest levels. The culmination of the Entry Class project is an "In House Competition" where the teams compete against each

other for a place to represent the school at the Regional Finals. The "In House" allows pupils to create their own Pit Display and perform their verbal to our Development and Professional teams who mark against the criteria and produce feedback, just like a real event.

The sheer excitement at being able to experience a "live" event before reaching a Regional competition is something that our Year 7 pupils never forget. Their screams of joy as the cars whoosh down the track and their teams get praise for achieving prizes for certain elements really makes all their hard work worthwhile... but also fuels a drive to achieve more!

After competing at Entry class, the pupils are able to form their own teams, should they wish to continue, and compete at Development class. This area of the competition is run at lunchtimes, or whenever the teams are free. They too compete at our In House for a place at Regionals.

The Development teams have to seek sponsorship and engage with businesses. This encourages and equips pupils with skills to communicate professionally and understand how to budget.

The culmination of all the years of hard work and F1iS experience is to compete at Professional class. Professional class is an all-consuming competition, where our most dedicated pupils totally immerse themselves in all elements of the challenge. The teams generally split into Enterprise and Engineering teams and work on their own sections to ensure that each portfolio is of the highest quality. This is a full-time job and can sometimes mean working weekends and holidays to facilitate the team's needs. This sounds onerous but honestly, once you invest in these teams you will do anything to help them achieve their goals as it really is their only dream to compete at Worlds!

Supported by EESW STEM Cymru, as we do not have our own milling machine, pupils use our 3D printer to create their own front and back wings using Autodesk Fusion 360 and Cura. For a school with limited resources, we have learnt to think out of the box in terms of developing ideas and producing quality outcomes. Our teams understand the importance of reaching out to others for help and advice and indeed, as the



Lead Teacher, I certainly do the same! I absolutely love this challenge, as it brings out the best in our students but also challenges me to think differently and try to view problems in the eyes of a teenager navigating real world problems. I have laughed, and sometimes cried through our adventures over the last few years, but my experiences with F1iS and our teams have made memories that I honestly never thought I could make when I started out nearly 25 years ago as a DT teacher!

Our F1 teams really are the superstars of the school! The challenge is a perfect mix of focusing on strengths but also giving the keenest minds the opportunities to solve problems that gives them a head start that will make them the leaders of tomorrow."

Pictured: (top left) Clare Crowley-Davis and (top right) Team Predator – Entry winners 2023

# GL Assessment unveils the Adaptive Admissions Test

Ready for the new school year, GL Assessment has unveiled its new admissions test. It's the perfect choice for independent schools looking for a reliable and effective way to run online admissions assessments. Head of Admissions Testing at GL Assessment, David Hilton, answers your questions...

## Q. What does the Adaptive Admissions Test assess?

The Adaptive Admissions Test is a reliable and robust admissions test that is designed to help independent schools assess candidates' attainment and ability. It has been developed by GL Assessment, who have provided independent schools with a range of assessments for over 40 years.

The test is designed to evaluate students in Year 6 or Year 7 ahead of entry to senior school. It has been developed by subject experts and includes four multiple-choice tests looking at verbal reasoning, non-verbal reasoning, English, and mathematics.

The test is flexible, so schools can choose which elements they want to use. Each individual test

is valid in and of itself, so schools can choose the combination that best suits their needs. All four tests take two hours and 15 minutes to complete, with individual elements lasting from 30 minutes upwards.

## Q. How does the Adaptive Admissions Test adapt to a student's ability?

The Adaptive Admissions Test adapts to the student's ability level as they take each test, which means that it is not possible to guess the answers or get by on luck. This makes it a highly accurate measure of a student's attainment and abilities.

## Q. Are the results of the test reliable and fair?

Yes. Results are standardised to the independent sector, based on data from over 20,000 independent school students, meaning schools

can be confident that the results are reliable and fair.

The assessment has also been developed to suit the needs of both the most academic and non-selective schools. The test is timed, but an untimed version is also available for students with additional needs.

## Q. Where do students sit the test?

The Adaptive Admissions Test can be taken in a student's own prep school, the senior school they are applying to or at an independent test centre. And because the test is online, schools receive the results quickly. This is obviously a significant advantage over traditional paper-based exams, which can take several weeks to mark.

## Q. Can the test be used to assess international students?



Yes. The online format of the test also means that it can easily be used to assess international students who would like to come to the UK – or elsewhere in the world – to study. The tests use language that almost all EAL students should be able to cope with, and a familiarisation website means that pupils can practise questions and get a good idea of the format of the test before they take the test itself.

## Q. Who can I speak with to learn more about the Adaptive Admissions Test?

To arrange a call to discuss how the Adaptive Admissions Test can help your school get a more complete picture of a prospective student's abilities, please email Andy Small, our Independent Schools Advisor, at [admissions@gl-assessment.co.uk](mailto:admissions@gl-assessment.co.uk)



# Evolution ‘a straightforward process’

This academic year, Derby Grammar School has become fully co-educational. It is a transition the school has taken in phases. Head, Paul Logan, shares the motivations and learnings taken from this approach.

## The Reason

It was in my first term of being head teacher at Derby Grammar School, at the end of 2021, that I knew I wanted to make the move to co-educational.

After Covid, families' circumstances and often their working patterns had changed. Many did not want the added complication of separate school drop-offs for their son and daughter, for example. Parents were telling us that they wanted to keep their families together, they wanted simpler wrap around care, and they wanted their daughters at the same school as their sons.

Some of the pupils were also saying how good it would be to have girls in the school. We have had a mixed sixth form for many years and pupils in the rest of the school appreciated the support they received from the prefects in sixth form, many of whom were girls. Pupils highlighted the positives of welcoming girls into other year groups.

I was also mindful of changes in society at that time – campaigns such as MeToo and Everyone's Invited, for example.

Everyone in society was taking a long hard look at their organisations and ensuring they were fit for the future. At Derby Grammar School, we want to give everyone, boys and girls, the best possible grounding for what they want to do, and I feel a co-ed environment means students are better prepared for living and working in a mixed society.

At the same time, the market wasn't telling us that being a single sex school was important to prospective pupils. What parents were attracted by was our smaller size, our nurturing environment, the fact there was plenty of healthy competition and a strong co-curricular offer for sport and music. That is what it was

important to retain, not the single sex aspect.

## The Approach

Going co-ed was a large shift for us but our mixed sixth form meant we had already seen the benefits of a co-educational environment but without losing any of our uniqueness and our small, nurturing environment.

This experience led us to make the decision to begin our change to fully co-educational by starting with our Primary year groups in September 2022 and going fully co-educational from September 2023. This allowed for a slower pace of change so that lessons could be learned and embedded and to allow us to retain those areas of uniqueness which are important to us, as we had done with the sixth form.

For us, we wanted to listen thoroughly to people's views. We also wanted to give pupils a lot of agency and voice. For example, the girls told us they wanted to do netball but also wanted to work with the boys in mixed sports such as hockey.

We have also carefully considered the impact on our existing students. While it was less of a concern in our primary school where pupils were at the start of their educational journey, some boys going into Year 10 have been used to single sex education for eight years. Even a cohort of just 10 girls can be quite a proportion for a school of under 300 pupils like ours so we are mindful of the change. That was an important part of ensuring our approach had been phased and considered properly.

Our approach has been, and continues to be, to listen, to include and to phase our changes.

## The Consultation

Firstly, we put a case to the governors who were very

supportive about the process. We listened to all the different stakeholders, parents, pupils and staff. The consultation ran during the pandemic and we had two or three online meetings with people, almost like virtual town hall meetings, where people could raise any thoughts or concerns. We also did pupil assemblies and held staff meetings.

It was actually a very straightforward process and we had very few adverse comments and lost no pupils by making the proposal to go co-educational.

Our experiences of having a mixed sixth form helped with this. We knew the benefits of co-educational classes. For example, we had seen a reduction in some of the slightly boisterous behaviour from some of the pupils when girls joined, and we had seen students spurred on even more to achieve in the sixth form.

What we didn't see was a reduction in healthy competition and that had been a concern from some of the stakeholders. This meant we were able to talk through people's thoughts and concerns with some experience.

As a result, we applied to the Independent Schools Inspectorate for a material change, which is a requirement.

## The Preparation

The first thing people often think of as needing to change ready for co-educational is the toilets and changing facilities. For our primary section we did have to build a new block of toilets but in our senior school we already have separate changing facilities due to our mixed sixth form.

However, a lot of the changes that aren't immediately obvious are in the curriculum.

For us it was a chance to look at what we were teaching, and how, and refresh it, making sure it

provided opportunities for all our students to contribute and thrive.

For example, we looked at the plays and poems we studied and ensured there was ample opportunity for discussion and debate.

In putting on our own plays and performances, being co-educational certainly makes things much simpler!

We also looked at our sport offering. Sport is a very important part of the school which parents, staff and pupils are passionate about, so we listened to what pupils wanted.

We also noticed that other schools were fielding mixed teams in competitions. We redesigned our sports programme and now offer mixed sport throughout our primary school and this will continue, where it is wanted and appropriate, in our senior school.

We also listened to pupils about our approach to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and are offering separate groups for girls and boys if they wish to be taught those lessons separately, and parents have the option to request that too.

## The Lessons

We know from our primary school that, at first, while news that we are co-educational filters through, numbers of girls attending is quite small. In primary we have one year group with just one girl in. But we have worked to support and empower our pupils and that girl actually stood up and spoke at our Remembrance Sunday service, in her first term, which I think is a huge achievement for any Year 6 student and shows how totally unfazed she has been.

We have also worked to try to ensure girls joining do not feel isolated. For our transition days and experience days we have grouped some of the girls together, so they are not the only



Paul Logan

ones in the group. We have also encouraged them, as we do all new students, to join for part of the last term if they can, so they begin to make some friendships and get used to the new environment.

Having small numbers of girls joining initially does come with some complications. For example, if they would like to form a netball team, there may not be enough numbers in their year. But that is why our redesigned sports curriculum works as it allows for mixed teams and opportunities and we look to provide opportunities for collaboration across year groups where possible.

These were all aspects we were able to pre-empt and prepare for thanks to our experience of phasing our move to co-educational.

### The Advice

As we look forward to opening our doors officially this term to both boys and girls, I think the biggest advice I could give other school leaders planning to transition to co-educational is to listen and take your time.

We listened to all our stakeholders and continue to listen every day. To the hopes, the aspirations and the concerns about the move to co-educational.

By phasing our move, we took our time and, as a result, have retained all the positive aspects which make our school unique: our small cohorts, our healthy competitive spirit, our family feel.

I would advise others to listen, every day and to put together a timetable and programme that addresses those hopes and concerns raised so you can do the best for everyone. In some schools that may take longer than others but take the time that is right for your school.

# How it turned out ~ eight years on

Back in 2015 Nottingham High School made the historic decision to become co-educational after 502 years of being a boys' school. Head, Kevin Fear, looks back on the decisions made.



Kevin Fear

“At the time going co-educational felt like a bold and somewhat risky step but we had planned well and were very encouraged by the initial take up of places by girls. The parental reaction both of our current parents and of those applying had been overwhelmingly positive and the early adopters soon settled in. We had been helped by visiting several other schools who had recently made a similar switch and all that we learnt from them proved invaluable.

Eight years on and the decision has been completely vindicated. The School has grown in size by around 200 students and we now have around 450 girls in the School but it has also enabled us to be more selective in our entry. As a result we managed to make it into the top 50 of the League tables and have won several awards as being the strongest academic school in our region. More than this, last year we were also named the Co-Educational Independent School of the Year, a national award which recognised all that we have done to promote diversity amongst other things.

Key to this success has been that as a school it has never really been about gender to us. We have always focused on each child as an individual and so it has never been about whether they are boys or girls but what we need to do to get the best out of them individually. Our vertical pastoral care system means that they are all in small tutor groups with a consistent teacher who looks after them

for up to four years and thus ensures that we really get to know them and what their needs are. Individuality is one of our core values and this has served us well.

There were of course changes that we had to make to the building initially and we have had to secure more space for sports facilities, hockey in particular. However, the growth in school numbers has more than compensated for the sums we have spent and boys and girls alike enjoy the enhanced facilities. We also worked to ensure that our curriculum was suitable for all and at the same time that it reflected the full range of diversity in our school.

There is no doubt that academic standards have improved. Boys and girls have definitely brought out the best in each other in the classroom, and with us also being able to become more selective, standards have risen considerably.

Financially too it has been an excellent decision, especially in the current climate. This was inevitably one of the initial drivers behind the decision. We could see that there would be ever more pressures on school budgets with rises to teachers' pension costs and now in the future potentially VAT on school fees. Our increase in numbers has allowed us to weather the storms so far and we look to the future with more confidence than many.

There were some at the start who had reservations about the move but the planning that we had done reassured the vast majority of parents that we had

thought things through carefully, learnt from the experiences of other schools and that we were well-prepared. We had surveyed our staff and almost all of them had previously worked in co-educational schools. We had a mix of male and female staff at all levels in the School and we gave considerable thought as to how we would support the first girls to join the School. These were a strong group in every sense, and my own daughter being one of them, meant that I got daily feedback on how it was all going in a very direct way! We listened to them all but also to the feedback from the boys in the School, I had met with each year group when we first announced the decision to explain it to them and we still touch base through our pupil and parental surveys to check that it is all still going well eight years on.

If education is anything, it is a preparation for the world outside school. Our students now benefit from a much more holistic education and leave us ready both for university and the world of work. They gain confidence by working together, by being led by fellow students of both genders and benefit from hearing from a much wider group of voices. It is perhaps easy for schools to stand still but we have always been prepared to take risks and our move to co-education was certainly the best professional decision that I ever made. It had felt increasingly anachronistic being a boys only school and this step took us firmly into the world of today.

# Fighting to keep BTEC options

Deputy Head Academic at Royal Hospital School, Suffolk, Catherine Stevens, discusses the importance of offering BTEC options.

It is no secret that traditional A-Levels aren't always the best option for all students. When GCSEs and A Levels were reformed in 2017, the percentage of coursework was significantly reduced<sup>1</sup> and modular exams were removed. This has meant that young people's results from two years of learning have relied heavily, if not completely, on examinations.

The pressure of exams combined with a lack of coursework to fall back on has led to an increasing number of students opting to undertake BTEC courses instead. BTEC qualifications are provided by the Pearson exam board and allow students to learn in a slightly different way to the more traditional A Levels and GCSEs.

BTEC qualifications have retained the modules from that GCSEs and A-Levels previously followed, allowing pupils to learn the course content in sections. It also gives them the opportunity to have a second go at an exam if needed. BTEC qualifications also feature a higher proportion of coursework, allowing hard-working students who struggle with the pressure of exams to have their capabilities reflected in their coursework.

BTECs are also designed to be more practical, a bonus for

students who prefer a more hands-on way of learning. For example, in BTEC Digital Creative Media Production, pupils not only learn about the theory of how to respond to a brief, but they also do it. Students respond to a genuine brief, pitch their ideas and then produce an advert or a campaign.

The Enterprise and Entrepreneurship BTEC allows students to run their own business. Pupils create a business plan, and a cash flow model, as well as their marketing, production and accounts through their coursework. At RHS, many of our pupils have continued their businesses after their coursework finished, allowing them to generate an income ahead of attending university. Another benefit of BTECs is that they create a portfolio of evidence of a student's work before they even leave school, making them more confident for the world of work.

While BTECs are a particular help for students who thrive under a more practical and coursework-based atmosphere, we've found that it is not simply students who received lower GCSE results choosing BTECs, with students of all abilities opting for the courses. We currently have three BTECs on offer at RHS – Sport, Digital

Creative Media Production, and Enterprise and Entrepreneurship. The courses have been a really popular addition, and we've seen success in results from the courses too.

Many of our BTEC pupils have gained the UCAS point equivalent of A Level A and A\* grades and have gone onto a range of highly competitive universities and apprenticeships. This means that these more engaging and practical qualifications can also support these pupils in moving on to higher education, making them a popular choice.

We've also seen benefits in terms of staffing with a positive impact not only on staff recruitment but also enthusiasm. Despite the reputation of the courses for there being lots of paperwork (there is!), I've seen first-hand that teachers really enjoy teaching these courses, feeling that they have the ability to deliver aspects of their subjects with far greater creativity and freedom. The clear benefits of BTECs are why I am disappointed by the Government's decision to phase out a large number of their BTECs where they consider there to be an overlap with A Levels and T-Levels. T Levels are new technical-based qualifications, but unlike BTECs, they were



Catherine Stevens

developed with businesses and offer an industry placement. For us and other small to mid-sized schools, it is simply not possible to put in place the infrastructure required to deliver T Levels. They need infrastructure for practical teaching and require pupils out of school on work placements for 20% of the course. It's different from traditional schooling and will therefore suit the bigger Sixth Form Colleges.

While I support anything that helps learners in developing skills related to a specific trade, I think phasing out BTECs is a real step backwards and suggests there is a lack of understanding of the style and skill set of different groups of learners. I feel there is a place for A Levels, T Levels and BTECs to all work harmoniously to provide education for young people. I sincerely hope that the government will listen to the voices of those of us working in education to rethink their decision.

1. Ofqual: 'Get the facts: AS and A level reform'. January 26 2018. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-the-facts-gcse-and-a-level-reform/get-the-facts-as-and-a-level-reform](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-the-facts-gcse-and-a-level-reform/get-the-facts-as-and-a-level-reform)

## ICGS conference

Delegates from Northampton High School have attended the International Coalition of Girls' Schools (ICGS) conference held in Cleveland, Ohio.

Northampton High representatives, Miss Emily Hair and Mrs Debbie Hill joined experts from around the world, including 23 fellow GDST colleagues for three days of professional collaboration and learning.

Alongside her role as a Modern Foreign Languages Teacher,

Pictured: Delegates and education experts at ICGS conference

Debbie Hill is both a School Consultant Teacher and the GDST's Trust Consultant Teacher for Educational Research, as well as a Research Advisor for the Global Action Research Collaborative (GARC), led by the ICGS. Debbie partnered with Sophie Sissons, Head of Geography at Oxford High School GDST, to co-host a session entitled 'Action Research – Not Just For Teachers'.

The pair presented on their work with students who, over an

18-month period, had conducted action research projects into aspects of their own learning.

Northampton High's Head of Junior School, Emily Hair

partnered with Kate Millichamp, Junior Head at Shrewsbury High School GDST, to deliver a session titled 'Rethinking the role of play in our schools: It isn't just for preschoolers'.



Credit: Northampton High School



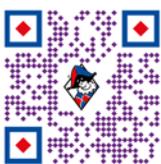
London Children's Ballet

# London Children's Ballet dances on Harlequin floors

The London Children's Ballet headquarters now features state-of-the-art dance studios complete with Harlequin Activity sprung floor and Harlequin Cascade vinyl floor, ballet barres and dance mirrors.

“When we got this space there was no option to do this by halves, if we were doing it we were doing it properly, so it was important to have Harlequin as a partner to get the floors, barres and mirrors to the professional standard that these kids are striving for.”

**Ruth Brill**  
Artistic Director



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# Setting up a pre-prep orchestra

Head of Middle School & Director of Music at St Martin's School, Middlesex, James Fussey, takes a look at how the school has gone about setting up an orchestra for their pre-prep boys and how it builds a sense of spirit and harmony.

“Setting up a Pre-Prep Orchestra is no easy feat and a challenge that the peripatetic staff were keen to get their teeth into.

Now in its second year, boys who have been learning orchestral instruments since the start of the academic year have come together to form an orchestra giving them the chance to play together for the first time which is incredibly exciting for them.

Run by Karen Cormican, who is a violin specialist and visiting music teacher, the orchestra play pieces that have been specially arranged for their ability levels supported by the other peripatetic staff at the school.

Boys start learning instruments at the beginning of Year 2 at St Martin's and get the chance to have a trial on all the orchestra instruments, piano and voice. The encouragement and support that the parents give the boys at home in harmony with the work of our dedicated Visiting Music Teachers (VMT's) are the only factors that make this venture even remotely possible.

Pupils are selected by their VMT's to start taking part in the rehearsals and these rehearsals were carefully structured so that the boys need to be picked up immediately after lunch giving them a feeling of importance and a special responsibility.

Although all the boys in Nursery and Pre-Prep were visited not so long ago by our school Wind Band giving an outdoor playground performance of “Friend Like Me”, being a part of the orchestra gives them the opportunity to experience playing in a group together for themselves for the first time.

The concert itself was a huge success with the boys starting together and finishing together. The tuning is questionable but the experience of them playing together like this and the positivity it gave them will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

If schools are interested in getting into a project like this, you will need a dedicated team of teachers who work closely together, are patient, support from staff and for it to be well organised.

At St Martin's the music department ensembles & choirs timetable feature a weekly schedule of 20 rehearsals per week which is over 10 hours of rehearsals alongside the individual music lesson timetable. This brings a challenge to the Music Administrator, Paru Pandya, who schedules groups either before school or in lunch time so the boys don't miss out on sport or any of the other activities that are part of the weekly activities program. The Music Department

and Sports Department work incredibly closely with each other to ensure that all the boys experience a rounded school life and are not forced to choose between either music or sport.

Music can be heard from 8am with the Senior Chamber Orchestra enjoying the challenge of sight reading the Monday morning hymn before they perform just 15 minutes later accompanying the whole school in rousing song for assembly. The whole school have weekly song practice and each Year 8 pupil experiences Djembe Drumming every Tuesday morning as part of their form activity. This helps build awareness and a sense of harmony to the forms and is enjoyed by all.

This sense of spirit and harmony is not unique to the boys



James Fussey

participating in the drum group, the skills the boys learn in the music department can be transferred into the form room or onto the sports field and vice versa.

The venture is a success ultimately if the boys have fun, collaborate well and start to demonstrate the basics of playing music. All the music staff here are proud of the department and want to work at a school where boys thrive playing music on any level.”



## National Youth Choir selection



King's College Taunton, Somerset pupil, Maisie O, has been selected for the National Youth Choir.

The senior choir of NYCCGB is a group of 18 to 22-year-olds who perform a unique year-

Pictured: Maisie O

round training and performance programme, referred to as the National Youth Choir Annual Programme. They work with and are inspired by world-class musicians and coaches, and record new work and perform

special commissions by up-and-coming young composers. The Choir is also part of major national and international events, concerts and festivals, performing at high profile venues including the Royal Albert Hall.



## Macbeth

Pupils from Gordonstoun, Moray, King Charles' former school, have staged a performance of Macbeth at Edinburgh's Fringe Festival, 61 years after its most famous pupil joined the school and went on to play the lead role.

Crafted by Gordonstoun's Dance and Drama department, the theatre rock adaptation presented a performance that integrated acting, movement and song, bringing the story to the stage as never seen before.

Amalgamating Shakespeare's prose with Biffy Clyro's lyrics and music, the audience were taken on an exploration of power, scrutinising how it might lead to downfall. Tracks included top hits 'Mountains' and 'Many of Horror', and the Scottish Rock band was chosen for this contemporary

Pictured: Gordonstoun pupil Theo MacGregor, who played Lady Macbeth

pairing as the songs touch upon many of the same topics explored throughout the play.

Principal of Gordonstoun Lisa Kerr said: "This is a production cloaked in passion and energy. The rock musical production of Macbeth is worlds apart from the one His Majesty will remember. Our drama department has reinterpreted the famous play using some of Biffy Clyro's best known songs and combined them with Shakespeare's prose. Performing at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival was such an exciting opportunity for the students."

A total of 15 students from Gordonstoun, aged from 16-18, took part in the performance. The last time Gordonstoun staged a theatre production at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival was in 2014.

## County Young Musician of the Year

Cellist, Alex Lockyer, from Brentwood School, Essex, has been crowned winner of the Essex Young Musician of the Year 2023.

The Lower Sixth student performed three programmes at the Final, which included many of the seminal works of the cello repertoire. In 2022, Brentwood School guitarist, Tom Hodgkinson, scooped the title.

School Director of Music and Performing Arts, Mr Florian Cooper, said: "This competition is open to young musicians living or working in Essex up to the age of 28 and the majority of finalists were either young professionals or conservatoire students and for the second year in a row, a current Brentwood pupil won the competition."

In addition to the prize of £1,000 and the Essex Young Musician of the Year trophy, Alex will also

Pictured: Alex Lockyer receiving his prize from Charles Bishop, High Sheriff of Essex



be offered various professional engagements. He was presented with his prize at Ongar Music Club by Charles Bishop, the High Sheriff of Essex.

Elsewhere, Year 8 student Rose Buggle, a Mezzo Soprano, won the U19 Burt Webster award and a £100 prize. Rose also went through to the finals of the 2023 Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod competing against 15 singers from around the world.



## Festival of Music and Dance

More than one hundred musicians and dancers, from Year 4 through to Year 13 at King's Ely, Cambridgeshire, have participated in a Glastonbury-esque extravaganza.

A huge concert Saddlespan stage was erected on The Paddock at King's Ely Prep for the festival, with Ely Cathedral as the backdrop. The event was organised by the school's Music, Dance and Drama Departments, and was free to attend. Parents

Pictured: The stage at the Festival of Music and Dance

and carers, grandparents, Old Eleans, teachers and support staff, Governors, and friends of the school all came together to support pupils and staff.

Just some of the bands and groups which performed were Samba Band, Wicked Choir, Saxophone Quartet, Concert Band, Jazz Band, King's Barbers, Flying Fiddles, King's Ely-Te, Rock Band, Open Dance Club, and not forgetting the 'StrictELY Come Dancing' competition!



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# The best residentials never end...

Even though school residentials are not compulsory, they are a key part of school life. Finding where to visit and a residential provider to support your goals can be tricky.

With four locations across Northwest and North Wales, Conway Centres has over 45 years of experience providing children, young people and schools with a life-changing residential experience. Conway Centres share 5 things to look for when finding your perfect trip.

## You don't need to travel far for adventure...

When schools think of a residential, many will think of going abroad. But you don't need to travel outside of the UK to offer young people a never-before-seen experience. With four locations across Cheshire and North Wales, Conway Centres has a different setting to support every school. From the smallest centre in Delamere nestled in the vast forest to the largest centre on the Isle of Anglesey, with stunning coastlines, world-renowned mountain ranges, and infamous glacial valleys – there is no need for a passport.

## The best residentials never end...

A residential is one of the biggest dates in the school social calendar with children and young people spending time away from the

classroom and out exploring the great outdoors. But at Conway Centres, they believe the best residentials never end... when planning your residential trip, this is a great chance for you to set goals, not only for what you want your students to achieve on the trip but also for them to take back to the classroom. Whether you want curriculum-linked goals or personal development goals – children and young people will take away far more than just fantastic memories. After they leave the centres, children and young people return to school with a zest for learning, ready to apply everything they have learnt to their work.

## Switch up when you visit

We know a residential has so many benefits for students, so why wait until the end of the year before the long six-week summer? By running your residential at the start of the academic year, you will foster deeper relationships with your students, prepare your students for their year of learning and children will create friendships that will last a lifetime. In tougher weather conditions,



children and young people will thrive, building resilience and confidence.

## Whole school visits or multiple year groups

With over 400 beds, Conway Centres, Anglesey is the largest centre making it perfect for whole school visits, partner school residentials or for multiple year groups. Children and young people will enjoy socialising, bonding and making life-long memories.

## Leaders in the outdoor education field

Conway Centres' staff are highly qualified in the outdoor education

field, with a combined 195 years of experience at the centres – you can be confident you are in the most dedicated, safest and qualified hands. Schools tell us that our staff are a significant highlight of their stay, being supportive, friendly, and professional, but don't just take our word for it...

*"Instructors were amazing – all went above and beyond. Children enjoyed all of the activities and staff seemed to really care about the quality and coverage of the experience. Everyone oozed kindness and it's the staff that make the trip worthwhile."*

The King's School, Chester

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# Celebrating sustainability at *We Are One* Event

The Girls' Day School Trust has held its inaugural *We are One* sustainability event for Year 6 students. The celebration was the culmination of an Eco

co-curriculum programme for Year 6 pupils across the GDST family of schools, as part of the trust's ongoing sustainability efforts. Nearly 800 junior students from 22 GDST schools were invited to complete a Changing Climates Curriculum, and then create a video encouraging sustainable behaviour in others. Throughout the project, pupils were supported by their teachers and mentors to explore how they felt about climate change and to build the skills they felt they needed to live and thrive in a world affected by it.

The *We are One* event, which was held on Wimbledon Common to celebrate the end of the Curriculum, was attended by over 100 students from 20 GDST schools. The theme for the morning session was 'creativity through nature', where

Pictured: Images from the *We Are One* Event

students created art pieces using foraged materials, wrote nature-inspired poems and practised their problem-solving skills whilst orienteering. The afternoon session involved workshops and a talk by author of *Bright New World* and environmentalist, Cindy Forde. She encouraged students and adults alike to come together to tackle climate change and work together to rebuild, restore and reconnect with nature.

The GDST is a carbon neutral organisation with aims to meet sustainability targets at every level of the organisation, including an aspiration to reach Carbon Net Zero by 2050. In 2022, the GDST's Green Steering Group identified three aspects that played a key role in helping to meet these targets: Educational, Operational



and Behavioural. *We are One* incorporates the educational and behavioural strands to provide pupils with an opportunity to feel a sense of empowerment.

*We Are One* was created to equip GDST junior students with the tools to engage constructively with environmental issues and opportunities. By embarking on this project as a group of schools, the GDST hopes to highlight that challenging climate change is not about having 'one winning idea', but about recognising that each person has a vital part to play and that together, our actions can make lasting change.



## Wildflower grant

Highfield and Brookham Schools, Hampshire has been helped in its ongoing quest to be fully carbon neutral by 2030 thanks to a £4,250 grant from the South Downs National Park Trust as part of its Bee Lines scheme, which aims to protect, nurture and support our busy pollinators.

The school will use the cash to extend its wildflower-planting project. The grant will cover the hire of a specialist rotavator for two weeks and 15 kilos of wildflower seed mix which can

cover more than 6,500 square metres of land.

The grounds manager at Highfield and Brookham, Jasper Marks, who made the grant application on behalf of the school, has already earmarked two areas of the school to plant with wildflowers.

The South Downs National Park Trust set up its Bee Lines scheme to establish or restore pollinator habitats, with grant applications open to any businesses within Britain's newest national park.



Pictured: More wildflower sites are planned at Highfield and Brookham

## Green Senior School of the Year

Leighton Park School, Reading, has been awarded joint winners of the Green Senior School Award 2023 by Citykids magazine.

So far this year students from Year 8 through to the Lower Sixth have joined the University of Reading for a Climate Change Action Planning Workshop. Leighton Park students created a sustainability game 'How Bad are Bananas' which kept primary schools present engaged with sustainability issues. Pupils recorded the experience of the day to make a follow up documentary.

In March 2023, two teams of Year 7 students from NEWTs (Nature, Environment and Wildlife Team) Club joined the President of COP26, Sir Alok Sharma, for a youth Climate Summit entitled 'There is Only One Earth'. The event united local schools and brought together climate experts from the University of Reading, and an energy consultant from Reduce Energy Ltd. The aim was to come up with pupil-led pledges in teams and for the delegates to collaboratively choose one pledge to commit to as schools for a year – with the



Pictured: Students on one of the 'green lungs of Reading' alongside the University

ambition to meet annually going forward. The Eco Schools student-led groups have achieved the coveted Green Flag Award, and the school has planted over 1,200 trees on the park this year, with the community also sponsoring a project to re-wild an area of the ancient Caledonian Forest in Scotland.

The School has a long-term commitment to sustainability and a strong interest in green issues.

The Green Senior School Award was awarded jointly to Leighton Park School and to Putney High School.

# Leading school health

The Medical Officers of Schools Association (MOSA) is the professional organisation for those concerned with providing medical care in schools.

MOSA was founded in 1884 in response to “the need for the general adoption of more definite rules for guarding our great educational establishments from the outbreak and spread of preventable infectious disease”. Today it is a professional organisation concerned with providing medical care for mainly but not exclusively, independent schools, boarding or day. In 2015, membership was opened to any healthcare professional currently or previously registered with an appropriate, professionally recognised organisation. This means that, for example, school nurses are eligible to join as full members.

The number of nurse members has steadily increased and four

nurses are now members of MOSA Council. As a result, the Association has gone from strength to strength with the nurses bringing a new breadth of knowledge and skill to the Association's activities. The membership now is a mix of general practitioners who are medical officers to schools in their practice areas and school nurses, as well as some non-clinicians working in a school setting such as members of the teaching profession who are eligible to join as associate members.

The business of the Association is conducted by the Council of MOSA which meets three times a year and is made up of current and retired school medical officers, and nurses. The day-to-day running of MOSA is the responsibility of the executive secretary together with one of the officers, the executive officer, who is a practicing healthcare professional.

Generally, two educational meetings a year are held for members, one in January or February which will have a strong clinical content and which will include MOSA's AGM, and a second, more relaxed and sociable meeting, in May or June, usually hosted by a member at his or her own school.



## Benefits & Costs:

**Current benefits of joining and plans for 2024 and beyond:**

Full access to all members' educational meetings with reduced registration fee. MOSA events and webinars that the nurse team have attended can be recorded as evidence to ISI inspections.

Access to a wide range of clinical and administrative guidelines on subjects relevant to school health for all members of the team.

A private forum for health professionals to seek advice and share good practice around specific school health issues. Peer support for school health teams.

A specialist consultancy service for any school that requires a review of their medical and nursing provision. With a pool of highly experienced school doctors and nurses, MOSA are able to offer support with nursing development reviews, nursing revalidation and assist schools with the employment for school nursing positions.

## How to join/costs of joining:

Clinical membership £185 per annum (reviewed annually).

However, if joining as part of a school group or GP surgery the first member is £185.00 and all additional members are half price at £92.50. [www.mosa.org.uk/become-a-member](http://www.mosa.org.uk/become-a-member)

## Recent feedback from delegates on educational days and the clinical forum

- Interesting, informative
- Clear and concise, interesting PEP programme and 'power up to play'
- Gave me more confidence with knees, good speaker – good slides
- Good tips, fantastic update, 'I learnt a lot'
- Fascinating, food for thought, interesting subject
- Great way to share ideas, raised my interest in other guidelines
- Brilliant, motivational, wide ranging, awesome
- I left with useful knowledge
- Passionate and engaging
- Not only was the study day incredibly informative with so much to digest and discuss it was a warm and welcoming atmosphere and a great opportunity to meet colleagues.
- I had high expectations of the study day and it certainly didn't disappoint!
- Really interesting speakers, great case presentation and such a useful small group session too. So much food for thought and some further reading on my to do list – always a good sign
- Thank you the study day was really useful, lots of ideas to influence how we work

## Who's who in MOSA

- Dr Stephen Haynes is the current President – School Medical Officer (SMO) of Bloxham School, Oxfordshire and GP outside Oxford. Stephen is stepping down as President in January 2024.
- Dr Rene Skule – MOSA Educational Lead – Part of Rene's busy schedule is SMO for three boarding/day schools in Dorset. Bryanston, Canford and Clayesmore.

### Council members include:

- Mrs Bev Gilbert, formerly Lead Nurse Wellington College, Berkshire
- Mrs Alice Lyons, formerly school nurse at St Mary's Shaftesbury, Dorset and Lead Nurse at Chafyn Grove Prep School, Wiltshire.
- Mrs Fiona Parry is the Lead Nurse at Cheltenham College, Gloucestershire.
- Mr Nate Kelly is the Lead Nurse at St Mary's Calne, Wiltshire.
- Dr Steve Brown is the SMO for Rugby School, Warwickshire.
- Dr Su Xavier is a Public Health Consultant and was a school governor at Ashdown House Prep School, East Sussex.
- Dr Jim Ropner GP partner and SMO of Cheltenham College, Gloucestershire is stepping into the Presidency.
- Mrs Liz Carey is the MOSA Executive Officer. She was the Lead nurse of Charterhouse, Surrey for eleven years before working at Wellington College, Berkshire and Frensham Heights, Surrey with short term contracts.
- Dr Neil Arnott – MOSA Trustee – Neil was the SMO for Sevenoaks School, Kent for 27 years before semi-retiring and remaining on MOSA Council as a Trustee.
- Dr Rebecca Pryse – MOSA Trustee – Becky was the SMO for Stowe School in Buckinghamshire from 2011 until she relocated to Kent. Having relocated she has moved into a new GP partnership and involvement in a local charity caring for people with profound disabilities.



# The Power of Weightlifting: Nurturing Young Minds and Bodies

Young people today are feeling the strain on their physical and mental health more than ever. UK Managing Director of Eleiko, Dale Beech discusses the benefits of weightlifting for young people.

NHS data revealed over 1.2 million children and young people sought help for mental health problems in 2022<sup>1</sup> and the National Child Measurement Programme found that 23.4% of 10- to 11-year-olds are overweight or obese.

It is well documented that physical activity is good for both physical health and mental health, but not everyone is aware of the benefits of weightlifting for young people.

It is common to see weightlifting form an important part of strength programmes for adults and there is no reason why this shouldn't be the case for young people too. The World Health Organisation recommends young people (5-17 years) should perform muscle-strengthening exercises at least 3 days a week for an average of 20 minutes, which includes lifting weights. This applies to children with disabilities too.

Young people should be

encouraged to have fun and enjoy training and they'll see a host of benefits.

## Building Physical Strength

Weightlifting plays a pivotal role in developing physical strength. It can enhance muscle mass, bolster bone density, and improve overall body composition. These improvements translate to better posture, increased joint stability, and enhanced coordination and balance. Importantly, weightlifting complements other sports activities, reducing the risk of injury while improving overall athletic performance.

## Fostering Confidence

As young people surpass previous accomplishments and push their limits, they experience a boost in confidence and self-esteem. The sense of achievement derived from mastering new techniques and witnessing physical improvements

can have a profound impact on their self-belief. This newfound confidence extends to various aspects of life, equipping young people to face challenges with resilience and determination.

## Cultivating Mental Resilience

Weightlifting requires focus, perseverance, and discipline. The process of setting goals and adhering to a consistent routine nurtures mental resilience and self-discipline in young people. As they embrace weightlifting, they learn the value of dedication, hard work, and patience, understanding that progress is gradual and sustained effort is required. These qualities extend beyond the gym, benefiting academic pursuits, relationships, and future career paths.

## Mental Well-being

Engaging in weightlifting helps young people alleviate stress and reduce anxiety. Exercise, including weightlifting, triggers the release of endorphins, natural mood-boosting chemicals in the body. Weightlifting sessions provide a healthy outlet for emotional and mental tension, fostering a sense of accomplishment.

## Promoting Healthy Habits

Weightlifting encourages the adoption of a healthy lifestyle from an early age. Regular exercise becomes ingrained as a habit, increasing the likelihood that



they will prioritise their physical well-being throughout their lives. Weightlifting, with its ability to strengthen bones, improve cardiovascular health, and increase metabolic rate, sets the foundation for overall good health.

Strength training is a powerful tool to support students in pursuing their health and wellness goals. Partnering with Eleiko to create free weight and functional training spaces that deliver the ultimate lifting experience, can help students achieve their personal best on and off the gym floor. Utilising innovative products and space-saving solutions, Eleiko helps to create inviting and inspiring training spaces that cater to the distinct needs of each school, built to any specification, and tailored to different styles.

To learn more visit: <https://eleiko.com/en-gb>



<sup>1</sup> NHS data analysis by Young Minds  
[www.youngminds.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/yearly-referrals-to-young-people-s-mental-health-services-have-risen-by-53-since-2019](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/yearly-referrals-to-young-people-s-mental-health-services-have-risen-by-53-since-2019)

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# Paul Davis Fencing Academy

## APPLY TO LIFE

Paul Davis Fencing Academy is renowned for its exceptional Fencing programme called the Shield of Endeavour. This innovative programme goes beyond teaching sword fighting skills; it instils valuable life lessons and cultivates personal growth in our students.

Through our engaging classes and unique opportunities, we create a fun and welcoming environment where children are inspired to excel.

At Paul Davis Fencing Academy we pride ourselves on providing unique opportunities for our students within our School Programme. The Academy has an established pathway scheme called 'Finding Your Edge' that takes Fencers from the first day to World Championship level, celebrating not just what they get but more so who they become along the way. These experiences not only inspire them but also broaden their horizons, leaving a lasting impact on their personal development.

The Academy offers a range of classes that cater to different age groups and skill levels. Whether a beginner or an advanced Fencer, each student is encouraged to push themselves to their full potential. The classes are carefully designed to be engaging, with expert instructors who create a supportive and motivating atmosphere. By fostering a sense of camaraderie and mutual support among students, the academy ensures that everyone feels a part of the community, thus enhancing the overall learning experience.

As part of the Shield of Endeavour programme, students have the opportunity to participate in gradings, where they can showcase

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their progress and receive recognition for their achievements. These gradings not only provide a sense of accomplishment but also encourage students to set goals and work towards continuous improvement. Through the grading system, children learn the importance of perseverance and effort, cultivating a growth mindset that will benefit them in all aspects of life.

In addition to gradings, the Academy also appoints captains and vice-captains from among the students. This fosters leadership qualities and gives children the chance to develop their communication and teamwork skills in a supportive environment. The captains and vice-captains play an integral role in the academy, helping to create a sense of responsibility and unity within the student body and select the Fencer of the Week each session.

One of the most exciting aspects of the Shield of Endeavour programme is the opportunity to compete for the school. The Academy actively participates in tournaments and competitions, providing students with a chance to test their skills against other Fencers. This not only enhances their technical abilities



but also teaches them the value of sportsmanship, resilience, and grace under pressure. Competing for the school creates a sense of pride and belonging, fostering a spirit of healthy competition and encouraging students to strive for excellence. The Academy always brings large squads from a range of schools to the IAPs Fencing Championships.

At Paul Davis Fencing Academy, the Shield of Endeavour is the cornerstone of our curriculum. Through the Olympic Sport of Sword Fighting, students learn discipline, focus, determination, and resilience—skills that can be applied to various aspects of life. The Academy believes in the power of sport as a tool for personal development, and they harness the intensity and precision of sword fighting to enhance these qualities in their students.

In conclusion, Paul Davis Fencing Academy's Shield of Endeavour programme is an exceptional platform that utilises the Olympic Sport of Sword Fighting to teach valuable life skills. By engaging, inspiring, and empowering students through sword fighting, the Academy creates an environment where children thrive. From gradings to competition and unique opportunities, the academy ensures that its students not only become skilled Fencers but also grow into confident and resilient individuals ready to face the challenges of life. Our aim is not to teach you how to make a living, but rather how to make a life!

As we continue to grow our school network we would love to work with more IAPS schools and welcome them to reach out to us.



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This new training space is going to make a massive difference to the school. It will give the boys much more opportunity to improve.

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HEAD OF SPORT SCIENCE  
ST PAUL'S



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# The No Bounce Sport bra

The No Bounce Sport team have over thirty years specialist expertise in the lingerie industry, supplying global brands within all bra categories.

Whilst watching her daughter horse riding, inventor and founder Jeanette Misseldine challenged herself to create a sports bra to stop the bust from banging with every trot!

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

The biggest issue with any sports activity is breast movement. While traditional sports bras look attractive, they are not necessarily as functional as required. There are so many styles and levels to choose from which is confusing for consumers.

The challenge was to create one bra for all sports, all sizes, all girls, and their mums!

The essential requirements were ‘no movement’ and easy to get the bra on and off with a regular back fastening.

The No Bounce Sport bra was scientifically tested at Loughborough University on a treadmill by three ladies with fuller bust sizes, and against other leading sports brands, the No Bounce Sport bra excelled in comparison. The results proved our bra achieves 44% less movement than other branded sports bras.

No Bounce Sport was born!

Being chosen by Premiership football clubs for its performance and comfort is a proud moment for us. There is nothing like watching the players, knowing your innovation is helping them perform their best.

No Bounce Sport has granted patents in the UK, US and throughout Europe for its inventive performance and construction which was awarded for its unique internal design.

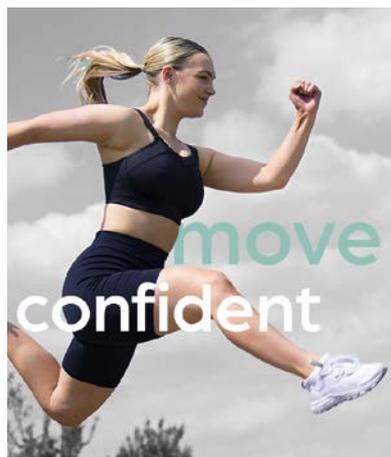
The No Bounce team have also successfully delivered their bra education programme to Trent College in Nottinghamshire. A focused presentation starts the day where the girls learn about correctly identifying their size and body shapes along with a discrete fitting. This ensures all girls are educated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

All senior years participated and the girls accurate sizing was identified... Solving a predicament many mums face!

Trent College Sports Director, Nicola Charsley states “We had the privilege of welcoming No Bounce Sport to our school. They displayed utmost professionalism and understood the diverse needs



Jeanette Misseldine  
Founder, No Bounce Sport

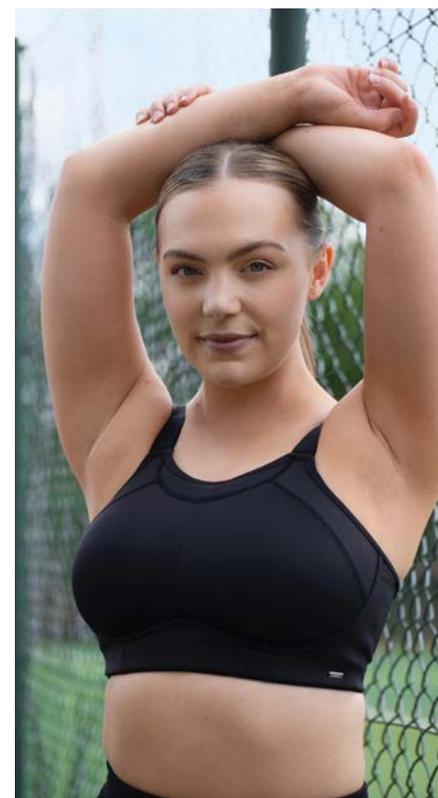


of our students. Effortlessly putting nervous girls at ease, and the happiness reflected on their faces after the fittings.

I had the opportunity to personally test the No Bounce Sports bra. I can genuinely say that I will never wear any other bra for sport. The support it provides is unparalleled, surpassing anything else I have come across in the market. I wholeheartedly recommend it to everyone without hesitation”.

As well as fitting the girls we allow time for staff and parents to have their own fitting.

No Bounce Sport travel throughout the country delivering this education experience. *If you would like us to visit your school, please contact [kelly@nobouncesport.com](mailto:kelly@nobouncesport.com)*



For more information email: [kelly@nobouncesport.com](mailto:kelly@nobouncesport.com) Call: 01582 834111

# NOBOUNCESPORT



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“

Got me and my daughter  
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“At 16 she's reached the  
age and size (34E) where  
girls seem to phase out  
physical activity. The new  
sports bra fits  
beautifully, she was literally  
jumping around the house!”

”

44%

Less Movement

Than Other Sports Bras

Scientifically Tested and Proven  
on a wide size range

“

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“Fit's perfectly, doesn't  
squeeze the life out of you  
but really makes sure you're  
help in place. Truly, there's  
no bounce no matter how  
hard you try!”

”

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With a No Bounce Sports Bra





## National and International Athletics Championships

RGS Worcester Upper Sixth student, Alex Houchin, has recently achieved success in multiple national and international athletics championships.

At the Nationals held over the summer, Alex reached the final of the U20s 400m event, securing a 4th place finish while setting a new personal best time of 47.69 seconds. This performance marked his fourth personal best in just five races, elevating him to 5th ranking in the country.

Building on his success at the Nationals, Alex then represented

*Pictured: Alex Houchin with the 4x400m GB relay team*

Great Britain in Mannheim, Germany, where he emerged victorious in his individual 400m event, achieving a new personal best time of 47.62 seconds. Furthermore, Alex led the 4x400m relay team to triumph, not only setting a new Meeting record but also achieving a World No.2 time of 3:07.69, achieving two first place finishes for Great Britain.

These achievements have earned Alex selection for the English Schools event, where he will represent RGS and Hereford and Worcestershire Schools.

## Ruth Strauss Foundation Cricket Week

Sherborne School, Dorset, have hosted a week of high-level cricket matches to raise funds and awareness for the Ruth Strauss Foundation.

With teams from Cheltenham College, Gloucestershire, Haileybury, Hertfordshire, Stowe, Buckinghamshire, Cerne Valley CC and a visiting team from Australia, St Peter's Adelaide, the week culminated in Sherborne School's 1st XI v the Marylebone Cricket Club, which ended in a draw. Former England bowler Richard Ellison was one of the umpires.

The Ruth Strauss Foundation was established in memory of Ruth



Strauss, the beloved wife of former England cricket captain Sir Andrew Strauss. The Foundation, since its inception in 2019, has raised huge amounts of money to fund research into non-smoking cancers and to support bereaved families. Sherborne School's event has already raised over £2,000 for the charity.

## International Karate Tournament



Five students from Burgess Hill Girls, West Sussex, represented Renshinkan England in an International Renshinkan Karate Tournament in Hiroshima, Japan.

Renshinkan Shorinjiryu is a traditional form of karate practiced in schools across the world. It was introduced to England in 1985. Every five years the International Federation of Renshinkan Shorinjiryu comes together to celebrate and promote world peace and understanding in their International Friendship Tournament.

The 2023 tournament took place in Hiroshima, Japan, where over 1500 participants were involved with teams from the US, Finland, England, and Japan. England fielded their largest ever team of fifty-two.

*Pictured: Zarah Bowles, Melissa Coleman, Catherine Imms, Ashiana Turney and Sanaya Mohandas with Kyoshi (Chief Instructor) of Renshinkan England Julia Turley (third from left)*

In the Junior England team were five students from Burgess Hill Girls; ten-year-olds Ashiana Turney and Sanaya Mohandas, eleven-year-old Zarah Bowles, fifteen-year-old Catherine Imms, and sixteen-year-old Melissa Coleman.

All the Junior competitors performed Kata, a choreographed pattern of martial arts movements, which is assessed on technique and form.

In addition to competing in the tournament the girls were invited to perform exclusively at the dojo of the Grand Master, Sandaime (third successor) Yuzo Tamotsu, in Kagoshima, the birthplace of Renshinkan Shorinjiryu. They also experienced 'onsen', hot spring bathing, in Shiroyama and learned about the devastation of Hiroshima caused by the atomic bomb.



## Breaststroke Champion

Sixth Former from Cranleigh School, Surrey, Sophie Moore has been crowned National 100m Breaststroke Champion.

Still in her first year of open age, the 18-year-old competed against university swimmers at both the English national summer championships and the British summer championships.

*Pictured: Sophie Moore with her gold medal*

At the English summer championships she won gold.

At the British summer championships, to qualify for which she had to be ranked in the top 24 in Britain, she finished the fifth fastest in the 200m breaststroke, placing her 11th overall in the 18 and over category.

## Gold at World Masters Hockey Championships

A sports coach from King's Ely, Cambridgeshire has helped the England Hockey Women's Over 45 team to success at the World Masters Hockey European Championships.

Chanrè Bond, who is Head of Hockey at the school, scored four goals during the international tournament making her the joint second highest goal-scorer in the tournament for the Over 45s age group.

The England Over 45s won all six of their matches in the tournament, including against Germany in the semi-finals, and against Spain in the finals, when they won 4-0; two goals of which were scored by Miss



Bond. The squad also recently won the Four Nations Tournament in Swansea, meaning that they have won two gold medals this year.

Miss Bond, who was born in Cape Town and has been teaching at King's Ely since 2005, will also be trialling for the 2024 Hockey World Cup in Auckland, New Zealand, later this year.

Pictured: Chanrè Bond with her gold medal and the Over 45s Team Trophy



## Rugby partnership

Christ College Brecon has announced a new partnership with Ebbw Vale RFC as it looks to strengthen ties with local rugby clubs.

The collaboration will see the school and the club work together to develop opportunity pathways for players across all age groups from senior, youth and junior rugby, and coincides with two pupils, Owen Conquer and Ewan McIntyre, being selected to play for Ebbw Vale next season.

The partnership is a chance for Ebbw Vale to support the development of aspiring youth rugby players and recruit those with potential, while the college will gain a presence at the Ciner Glass Community Stadium and support

Pictured (l-r): Christ College Brecon Director of Sport John Patterson, Upper Sixth pupils Ewan McIntyre, Owen Conquer, Ebbw Vale RFC Chairman Jon Jones, Christ College Brecon Director of Rugby Dan Parry, Ebbw Vale head coach Jason Strange

key events throughout the sporting calendar.

Christ College's approach of linking with local rugby to amplify the sport at a grassroots level aligns with WRU's vision of developing the game at a community level. It also supports the school's Elite Player Pathway programme that aspires pupils to excel in sport and enables them access to additional coaching, individual player development plans and one-to-one mentoring.

Director of Sport at Christ College Brecon, John Patterson, said: "Rugby has always been an important part of life at Christ College... Partnering with Ebbw Vale will open up further opportunities to our pupils who share this passion for rugby."



## International selections

Kirkham Grammar School, Lancashire, Sixth Form pupils, Ollie, Osian, Matthew and Darren have all been selected to play for their respective U18 rugby international squads.

Ollie formed part of the U18s England squad, Osian was part of the U18s Wales squad v Scotland, Matthew was selected for the U18s Ireland squad for a friendly v Italy, and Darren was selected for the U18s Italy squad.

In addition to a number of friendly matches, Ollie, Osian and Darren took part in the Six Nations event in the spring.

Lower Sixth pupil, Anya Jackson, is part of the U18 England Hockey Squad and has also been invited

Pictured: (top) Osian, Ollie, Darren and Matthew (right) Anya Jackson



to train with the Great Britain Elite Development Programme (EDP). Anya and the U18 squad are set to play a series of fixtures which they hope will lead to an U18 series win over in France and selection into the Euro's being held in Germany.



## Swimming clinic

Ipswich High School, Suffolk has hosted a swimming race clinic for children aged 8 - 17 years with Olympic swimmer Adam Peaty and the AP Race Clinics team.

AP Race Clinics were founded in 2019, with the aim of inspiring swimmers, parents, and coaches on their journey through the sport of swimming. In 2023 alone, the wider AP Race Team will interact with

Pictured: Adam Peaty and swimmers

over 10,000 swimmers, parents, and coaches.

The race clinic at Ipswich High School allowed aspiring swimmers to experience an interactive coaching session with Adam Peaty, where he shared insights into his training methods, race strategies, and the mental fortitude required to compete at the highest level.

# This is the future of school gyms: St. Paul's School's state-of-the-art training facility

St. Paul's School has embraced the future with open arms. Founded in 1509, this institution of learning has consistently evolved to meet the changing needs of its students. St. Paul's has now refreshed the landscape of school gyms with a visionary training facility that not only sets new standards but also shapes the future of athletic development.

The contemporary environment of independent schools has witnessed a surge in youth athlete development programs. St. Paul's, with its strong sporting heritage, recognised the need to refresh its approach to sports education. This realisation led to the conception of a progressive training space that would accommodate students of all ages and sporting disciplines.

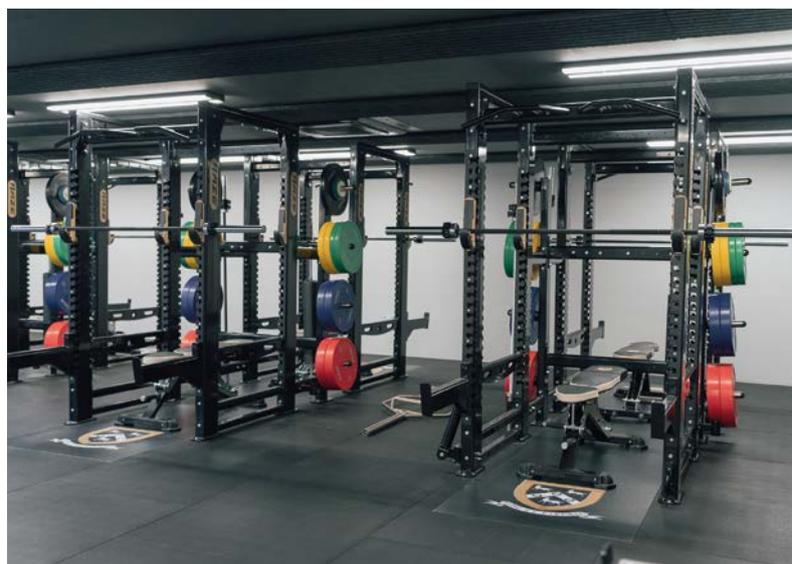
The project's vision was identified within a disused fencing room, which underwent a remarkable transformation. Collaborating closely with Ryan Blake, the head of sport science, IndigoFitness emerged as the chosen partner to bring this vision to life. IndigoFitness and Ryan used their gym design and elite sports experience, to infuse the space with a clear vision, ensuring both practicality and functionality.

Practicality was paramount in the design process. The training space needed to seamlessly transition from individual sessions to accommodating large groups

during lessons. A layout that offered visibility to coaches across the facility was crucial for effective instruction. The zonal approach adopted by IndigoFitness allowed for distinct training modalities to coexist harmoniously. This strategy optimised space and facilitated both individualised coaching and group lessons.

Functionality was another cornerstone. The layout and gym equipment selection had to align with the coaching philosophy, striking a balance between fundamental training and specialised exercises. The choice of gym equipment, including back-to-back racks, free weights, and functional movement areas, played a pivotal role in achieving this balance.

Ergonomics played a vital role in ensuring a seamless training experience. The positioning of equipment was meticulously planned, preventing unnecessary disruptions during lessons. The design also emphasised fluidity



between different areas, ensuring smooth transitions between the free-weights zone and the open functional movement space.

The mezzanine, housed cardio, fixed machines, and physio/rehab areas. This spatial arrangement catered to diverse training needs, providing a comprehensive array of training modalities. St. Paul's brand identity was meticulously integrated into every facet of the facility, from custom upholstery to logo plates, ensuring a cohesive and branded atmosphere.

The result was nothing short of exceptional. IndigoFitness succeeded in not only creating a visually stunning environment but also one that exceeded the expectations set by St. Paul's School. The training facility has become a hub of athletic development, equipped with cutting-edge tools for both students and coaches. It empowers students to excel in their chosen sports, while also nurturing their overall physical literacy. The facility's multi-dimensional approach spans from strength and conditioning to physio/rehab and

sport science, creating a holistic training ecosystem.

The training facility is prepared to become a magnet for prospective students. As St. Paul's seeks to attract the next generation of bright minds and aspiring athletes, this state-of-the-art facility serves as a powerful unique selling proposition. It symbolises the school's unwavering commitment to nurturing excellence, not just in the classroom but on the field as well.

St. Paul's School's journey to elevate athletic potential through a world-class training facility stands as a shining example of educational innovation. The collaboration with IndigoFitness has created a space that sums up the essence of St. Paul's commitment to holistic development, echoing through its design, functionality, and impact on student athletes. As the school forges ahead into the future, this exceptional training facility will play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of its students' athletic journeys.



# Growing the workforce

School centred initial teacher training (ITT) in Lancashire is not only proving a success in itself but is also forging links between independent and maintained schools. Louise Stubbs reports on the initiative.

“This year has seen ITT recruitment fall with figures well below Government targets in all secondary subjects except PE and Classics, with ITT new entrants in Physics, DT, music, computing and MFL being particularly low (source: NFER). School’s Week reported in July that one in 5 undergraduate trainee teachers don’t qualify, which given the low intake numbers to begin with does not bode well for the future pool of teachers. This is compounded by research carried out by The Education Policy Institute which found that in 2019 only 1 in 5 early career teachers remain in the profession 5 years after joining. In addition, to this the DFE workforce survey for 2021-22 found that 40,000 teachers resigned from State schools and a further 4000 retired. Recruitment for schools is a challenge with The Guardian back in June reporting that Vic Goddard, principal of Passmores Secondary Academy school in Essex, saying: “If you’re looking for a maths, science, computer science or DT teacher, you might as well be advertising for a unicorn.” Anecdotal evidence from independent schools also shows that for some subjects hiring a unicorn would be easier!

All this makes for grim reading. And while there are conflicting arguments to explain this current crisis, with some politicians refusing to acknowledge that it is indeed a crisis, it is clear that something needs to be done.

Pennine Lancashire SCITT was founded in 2014, based in East Lancashire, it grew from a need to “grow its own workforce”. East Lancashire was a cold-spot for teacher training; with no University and a population that has fewer residents qualified to level 4+ than National averages, it did mean that young people often left the region to progress to University and did not return. A School Centred ITT programme was established to attract graduates back. But, what was needed was a programme

that did more than just offer a route to QTS – it also needed to prepare a future workforce to remain in teaching by building a programme that truly immersed its trainees into the profession by experiencing everything the region had to offer. The SCITT embraced experiences within secondary, primary and special schools, including time in the Pupil Referral Unit and also embraced the expertise of colleagues in the independent sector working with both Westholme in Blackburn and Stonyhurst College in the Ribble Valley. These independent schools are both operating within the same economic challenges as their state school counterparts and recognised that in the same way it takes a village to raise a child it takes every school to create a teacher.

PE trainees have benefitted from placements at Westholme and having the opportunity to teach in world-class facilities. Head of PE Lee Purdy has also undertaken the role of professional mentor to ensure trainees are prepared beyond the classroom and Lee has undertaken the TEP (Teacher Effectiveness Programme) in mentoring with PLSCITT to further develop as a mentor. Many state schools PLSCITT work with have PE departments without a sports hall. This means staff frequently have to work in all elements when the school hall is taken up with exams or performances. While this experience is vital to create a PE teacher able to have the resilience and experience to cope with these demands, a period of time spent at Westholme has allowed them to further develop their pedagogy and practice and exploit the opportunities available. An outstanding PE teacher should be able to thrive in both situations and have the skills to develop their pupils in a purpose-built tennis facility and on a windy hillside in Accrington!

Stonyhurst College have released their Head of Computing Laura

Rushworth for a number of days a year to lead the secondary computing programme providing mentoring and subject coaching and to deliver the subject expertise for primary trainees. During the Ofsted inspection in March Laura also led the Ofsted deep-dive into computing, an experience that also benefitted Laura as a subject leader and that she has been able to build on back at Stonyhurst. An Ofsted inspection is always a challenge (I would say it is the most brutal thing a teacher can experience) but for an independent school teacher it is a great preparation for an ISI visit.

Ofsted acknowledged the benefits of using expertise from all partners, including independent school staff, stating that: “Leaders successfully use staff in partner schools, and outside experts, to design, deliver and refine the content of the ITE curriculum. Leaders check carefully that trainers have the necessary experience, and relevant up-to-date knowledge, to deliver training programmes.” (PLSCITT Ofsted report March 2023).

Stonyhurst also provide experience days for secondary trainees to observe A’level classes to ensure that they all have opportunity to see the progression in their subjects.

Trainees experiences are not limited to the UK. In 2021 PLSCITT was selected from over 25 SCITTs to join a partnership with International schools called “Teaching together in Europe” a partnership with the English College in Prague, The British School in Brussels, St George’s in Rome and Nottingham Torch SCITT. This partnership gives trainees an opportunity to spend a placement in an International school. This was the brainchild of Tony Emmerson, Senior Deputy Head at English College Prague who started this from a moral obligation “to pass on the flame to the next generation” and felt that all International staff had at some point been a trainee teacher



in the UK and that they would not be where they were today without a great UK mentor. It was also a recognition that International schools often recruited British staff and really had a moral obligation to give back to the system. The experiences offer our trainees a real world-view of education and helps us to create a future workforce with different perspectives of what schools and education can be and that is surely the goal of every teacher training provider? The new academic year will extend that opportunity to PLSCITT mentors who can also visit the European schools to spend time in their classrooms and build their skills further.

Teacher Training is undergoing huge changes currently in England. The ITT market review has seen changes to ITT providers that will take effect in 2024. PLSCITT will be part of a new partnership with Embrace SCITT. But what remains unchanged is the importance of independent schools and the state sector working collaboratively to secure the future of our profession. All independent schools have a moral obligation to help grow the future unicorns. Teaching is challenging; it is challenging in a state comprehensive and in an Independent Grammar school. All pupils are entitled to high quality teaching whether they are paying for that or whether they are in a state school. But, no school will have that outstanding workforce unless they contribute to building it. Teacher training needs all types of school to be part of their partnerships to give trainees contrasting experiences, an opportunity to see the best of the best and to see different curriculum models, different contexts and different challenges. Teaching is not homogenous and teacher training should not be either. Are you part of building the new generation of teachers? If not, then you really should be.”

Louise Stubbs is Director of Pennine Lancashire SCITT and Assistant Headteacher at Academy Trust School

# Relationships ~ new resources

The burden on schools to provide comprehensive and impactful Relationships Education has increased exponentially in recent years, with a particular acceleration in demand and expectation since the Covid-19 pandemic and 'Everyone's Invited'. English teacher from Eltham College, London, Vicki Barsby, writes about how she's gone about creating a trio of resources collectively called 'Life Story' which use a project-based approach to empower students.

Our school wide 'Listening Project' in the summer of 2021 revealed that while our students felt well-informed about the physical aspects and consequences of sexual interactions, they lacked the same understanding of the emotional complexities of intimate relationships. With Eltham's move to co-education underway, I set out to reassess the way we approached Relationships Education.

At the core of any successful relationship – romantic or otherwise – is empathy. Studies examining patterns of empathy in teenagers have found that there are two types: cognitive, which is the ability to look at something from someone else's point of view, and affective, which is the ability to 'emotionally resonate' with someone else – to feel what they feel and respond accordingly. Cognitive empathy, the more logic-based 'skill', develops earlier in girls than it does in boys, but for both sexes it rises steadily throughout adolescence. Affective empathy, however, mostly remains high and stable for girls throughout their development and declines sharply in boys between the ages of 13 and 16.

While societal expectations and gender norms are hugely influential in this disparity, hormonal and cultural factors are at play too; higher testosterone levels are associated with reduced affective empathy in both sexes and research shows the rise of online 'socialising' consistently correlating negatively with empathy development. The well-documented decline of reading habits amongst teenagers has a similarly detrimental impact on the skill of 'perspective-taking'. Interestingly, in our Listening Project, students also reported a decreased interest in television; the pro-social benefits of the 80s' 'after school specials' and the 90s/00s' carousel of teen dramas have been replaced by much more fragmented viewing habits. The convergence of these desensitising influences poses a real challenge to our students and their relational skills.

Investigations by The Times Education Commission and relationship experts at Exeter University have stated that modern Relationships Education should provide "opportunities for young people to observe and rehearse skills during lessons". Constraints on

time and resources have led many schools to depend on videos and external speakers for their PSHE content, but these knowledge-based approaches do not facilitate the meaningful opportunities for social and emotional development that students need and want. Looking outside of traditional pedagogy seemed, to me, to be the way to handle the new territory.

The Exception Method is an innovative design process which looks at the 'exception' in any given creative problem-solving context: the profile of a person that would be deemed the most extreme to design for. The theory is that when you design for the most extreme you design better for everyone else that sits on that bell curve. Thinking along these lines, I asked myself what a Relationships Education programme that targeted the least empathetic student, the most disengaged, the most negatively influenced by social media, might look like. By creating a programme tailored to an individual in the greatest need, could all our students benefit?

With this hypothetical student – referred to as a 'persona' in the design world – in mind and working with the most critical feedback from The Listening Project, I set out to create lessons that showed (rather than told) students the significance of their actions and choices in shaping their personal narratives. The goal was to create a series of authentic 'teachable moments' that fostered relationship-building skills without making students feel patronised or pre-emptively reprimanded. The idea was to use a project-based approach to empower students to 'rehearse for reality' in a safe environment, and so was born a trio of resources collectively called 'Life Story'.

Each of the Life Story schemes is presented to students as a



participative 'game' which requires them to play out a life-like narrative over the course of 6-8 weeks. Students take on the roles and perspectives of Headteachers in School Story (Y7), parents in the eponymous Life Story (Y10/11) and romantic partners in Love Story (Y12/13). They complete a series of tasks and pick up 'Plot Twist' cards along the way, facing – with their playing partners – a set of highly realistic and plausible scenarios. Crucially, the teacher in these lessons acts as a facilitator rather than an expert; students must make and justify their own decisions – and manage the consequences – as they live out their 'stories'.

Life Story has been met with overwhelmingly positive feedback. Students across all year groups found the games to be "fun", "creative", "realistic" and "different". Many said they "loved" the Plot Twists and the way they were challenged to think independently and maturely about various situations.

The ability to create and sustain strong social bonds has consistently been shown to have a profound impact on the mental and physical well-being of individuals of all ages. In today's fast-paced and ever-evolving world, the task of establishing these bonds has become increasingly challenging, particularly for teenagers. However, as educators, we hold the key to shaping environments that foster authentic connections. By reassessing our approach to Relationships Education and placing a renewed emphasis on the active practice of relational skills, we can nurture positive social ties and empower our students to thrive.



Further information is available at [www.lifestoryeducation.com](http://www.lifestoryeducation.com)

## Moon rocks land

The children of Forres Sandle Manor, Hampshire, have enjoyed a Moon Week. They had the opportunity to handle and experience rocks from outer space, and even soil and rock samples taken from the moon itself, studying specimens such as orange soil, anorthosite, breccia and highland soil. These samples, collected on the Apollo Missions of the early 1970s, and the range of meteorites, including some from Mars, were used as a catalyst to learn more about space.

These samples were provided free of charge by the UK's Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), which provides educational packs in a bid to inspire young people to get involved in science and complement classroom studies.

The pack provided by STFC includes a 1.2-billion-year-old piece of Mars rock and a 4.3-billion-year-old nickel meteorite. It is unlikely that students will ever get the chance to hold an object older than this, as Earth itself was formed 4.6 billion years ago.

To further enhance their understanding and passion for



space, different year groups, from nursery all the way through to year 8, conducted scientific experiments into craters and impacts of meteorites, the geochemistry of the surface of the moon and the make-up of a range of Earth and space rocks.

Moon Week also provided an opportunity for interdisciplinary learning, blending science with history, geography, and even art with students getting the chance to delve into the historical context of the Apollo missions, understand the geological processes that shaped the moon's surface, and express their knowledge through artistic creations inspired by space.

## Physics Olympics Challenge

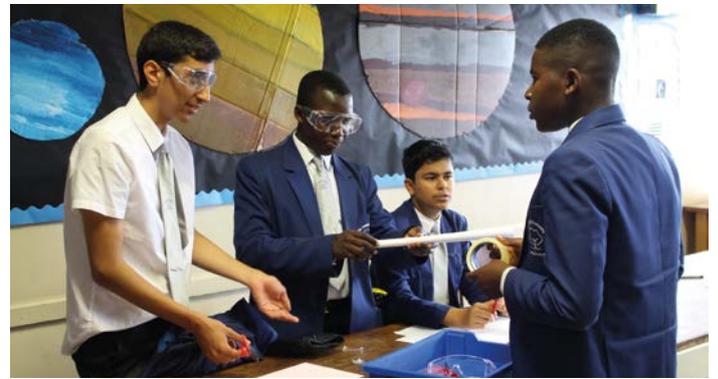
Eighteen teams from nine schools from across the North West took part in this year's Physics Olympics held at Bolton School, Lancashire. Each team, named after a famous physicist, comprised four Year 9 scientists who, during the course of the day took part in a series of challenges, quizzes and tests.

The day allowed pupils from Stockport Academy, Parklands Academy, University Collegiate School Bolton, King's Leadership Academy, North Halifax Grammar School, St Joseph's and The Lowry Academy, as well as pupils from both Divisions of Bolton School, to take part in a day of fun and stretching Physics activities that

their normal timetable might not allow for. The teams took part in six half-hour tasks: Delayed Timing, Rainbow Babies, Bullseye, Sink or Swim, Jelly Baby Towers and, the hardest of them all, Fermi Quiz.

Prizes were awarded to the six individual event winners and to the overall first, second and third placed teams. There was also a small memento of the day for all who were involved.

Team Feynman from the Lowry Academy of Salford were the overall winners, in second place was Team Joule from Bolton School Boys' Division and taking the bronze medal was Bernoulli, a second team from the Lowry Academy.



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Pictured: Pupils taking part in the Physics Olympics Challenge



Pictured: Students on Moon Week



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*The Independent Schools Magazine*

Vires per Verum – Strength through Truth

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

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# Children in care benefit from private education

Independent research, commissioned by Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation (RNCSF), led by Professor David Murphy, of Nottingham University has found that children in and on the 'edge of' care who have the opportunity to attend state boarding or independent schools enjoy greater stability and secure significantly improved educational outcomes.

The researchers from the School of Education developed a control group of children in care who shared the same, or similar, grades, care profiles, ethnic backgrounds and gender to those who were supported by the charity over a ten-year period.

The study showed that children in care are four times more likely to achieve 'good' passes in English and mathematics at GCSE if they attend a state boarding or independent school.

For children able to attend private schools, there were also proven financial benefits including lower social care costs and increased earning potential equating to around £2.75m for every 100 children able to attend.

The charity has also released data from its own analysis that shows care-experienced children supported attending a boarding school are five times more likely to take and secure A-levels, and thereafter to progress to higher education.

Professor David Murphy said of the study: "We have carried out the first research study using UK administrative data to build a matched control group to test the effectiveness of a boarding school intervention for children who are either in or at the edge of care. Our study suggests there is reason to be optimistic about the potential educational benefits for this group of children attending a state or independent boarding school.

"Findings indicate both positive

academic and potential economic benefits of the boarding intervention and, perhaps most importantly, interviews we conducted with young recipients of the scheme show that, in their view, such opportunities can be life changing."

Children's and Families Minister Clare Coutinho said: "The research demonstrates how effective good support can be in improving outcomes for care-experienced children and broadening their opportunities."

Further information can be found at: [www.nottingham.ac.uk/education/documents/news-events/boarding-schools.pdf](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/education/documents/news-events/boarding-schools.pdf)

## The Importance of a Good Estate Decarbonisation Plan (EDP)



Nigel Aylwin-Foster

Given that achieving net-zero carbon will eventually entail significant capital outlay – at a time when funds are inevitably short – the trick will be to derive a plan that enables progress in the short term without jeopardising the long-term objective.

EDP development starts with measuring the school's current

energy usage and carbon footprint, as the baseline, and understanding the operation and intended future development of the estate. The study then needs to consider:

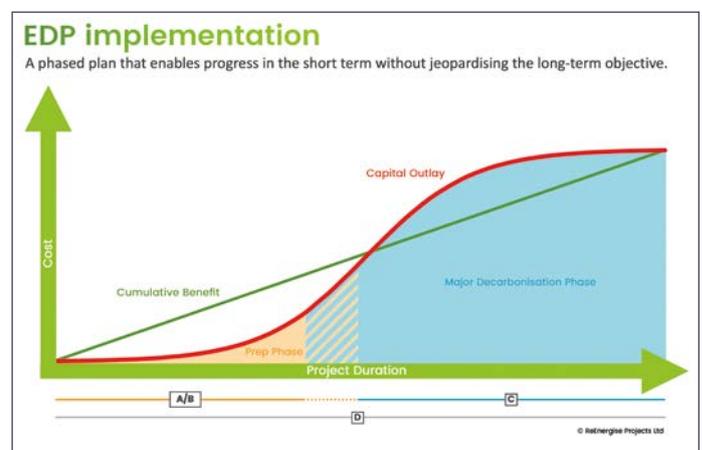
- Energy efficiency measures to reduce energy usage and prepare the estate for conversion to low-carbon systems.
- Options for the generation and storage of power on the estate, to reduce reliance on grid power.
- Options for the conversion of the heat, transport and power assets to low-carbon systems, i.e. getting rid of fossil fuel plant.
- The integration and control of A, B and C, such that they work together for optimum ease of use and impact on cost and carbon emissions.

From this analysis a pragmatic, affordable programme of projects is derived that achieves the intended endstate – the net-zero school estate. The diagram (right) encapsulates this.

The Prep phase is focused on implementing serials A and B, and those elements of D that need to be put in place early on. It should start promptly: there is nothing gained by waiting.

The Main Projects phase focuses on implementing serial C. Its timeframe will depend on a combination of regulatory pressure, the school's scale

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of ambition and priority afforded to net-zero, available funding, and engineering necessity.

EDP Benefits. An EDP crafted in such a way is the gateway to:

- Early operating costs savings.
- Reduced dependence on the national grid and improved estate resilience.
- Estate decarbonisation at an affordable pace.
- The avoidance of future costly errors by not stumbling into estate development mistakes that might not have been recognised without the benefit of a comprehensive plan.
- Budgeting clarity for the short, medium and longer-terms.
- Guidance for all the school community, based on credible, authentic detail.

# CHANGING FACES... CHANGING PLACES...



Brabyns Preparatory School, Cheshire, has announced the appointment of Cath Carrasco as its new Headteacher from this month (September).

Currently Deputy Headteacher at Forest Park Preparatory School in Sale, she has spent more than 24 years working in education.

Cath obtained a BSc (Hons) in Primary Education with QTS at

Liverpool John Moores University, before obtaining her NPQSL in 2011 and her NPQH with Alliance of Leading Learning in 2022. During her 16 years spent on the leadership team at Forest Park, Cath has enjoyed leading the sport, computing and mentoring trainee teachers. Prior to her move to the independent sector, she held teaching posts in a range of state schools across Greater Manchester, St Helen's and Derbyshire.



Alexandra Haydon has been appointed to succeed Lucy Elphinstone as the next Head of Francis Holland School, Sloane Square, London, in January 2024. Currently Deputy Head, Academic at Millfield, Somerset, Alexandra previously spent five years at St Mary's Calne, Wiltshire, where she was Head of Science and latterly Senior Teacher. Prior to that she worked in a variety of other schools having begun her career at Graveney School in South London.

Alexandra has a BSc from Durham University and a PGCE and Masters

in Teaching and Learning from Oxford University. She is currently working towards a Doctorate in Education at Bath. In 2019 she won the i25 award for innovation and influence in the independent sector and was shortlisted in 2016 for the National Joan Sjovoll Award for STEM leadership.

Lucy Elphinstone, who has been Headmistress since September 2012, will be leaving Francis Holland at the end of this academic year and Rob Cawley, Deputy Head Academic, has been appointed as Interim Head for the Autumn Term.



Mr James Watson has been appointed as the new Head of Milton Abbey School, Dorset.

He will take over the reins from Mrs Judith Fremont-Barnes, who is moving to St Paul's Cathedral School in London.

Mr Watson graduated with a First Class master's degree in Ancient History and Classical Archaeology from the University of Edinburgh, before qualifying as a Chartered Accountant with Deloitte. He later gained a PGCE from the University of Buckingham.

He moved into education after

a 13-year career in accountancy, stockbroking and finance, mainly working in Asia and the Middle East. His previous education roles have included Second Master at Bruern Abbey, Oxfordshire and Head of Learning Development and then Senior Deputy Head at Milton Abbey.

Mr Watson has many enthusiasms and has started numerous clubs such as the History Society, Commerce Society and the Piscatorial Society (fishing!). He also enjoys coaching rugby, hockey and cricket. He lives in Dorset with his wife Posy, their three young children and assorted dogs and ponies.



Simon Larter-Evans has been appointed the new Principal of Tring Park School for the Performing

Arts, from this month (September), following the retirement of Stefan Anderson.

Like his predecessor, Simon Larter-Evans comes from an arts

background, beginning his career as a dancer following his training at The Rambert Academy. His varied career path saw him work within both the PR and publishing industries, ultimately re-training as a teacher. His roles in education include Head of Boarding and English at Yehudi Menuhin School, Surrey and most recently as Head of St Paul's Cathedral School, London.



Cranleigh School, Surrey, have announced the appointment of Samantha Price as their next head.

Mrs Price, the current Headmistress of Benenden School, Kent, and

a former President of the Girls' Schools Association, will join Cranleigh in September 2024. This follows a decade at the helm of Benenden, where she led the introduction of the Benenden Diploma, and where places to day girls were offered for the first time.



Davina Bowers has been appointed the headteacher of The Forest at Merchiston (The Forest

Nursery and Forest Junior School of Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh).

With 18 years of experience in early years education, Davina Bowers was previously Head of

Nursery & Pre-Prep at Cargilfield School, Edinburgh, before moving to Edinburgh Academy in 2018.

A qualified Forest School practitioner and Founder of Cando Beach School, she was also responsible for establishing the outdoor learning provision for Edinburgh Academy.

The Forest at Merchiston is due to open September 2024.



Greenfield School, Surrey, has announced the appointment of Mr Matt Robinson,

current head at City of London Freeman's Junior School, as the new Head commencing from September 2024. This follows the planned retirement of current headmistress Mrs. Tania Botting.

Mr. Robinson has had a lengthy career in education with teaching roles at Cranleigh Preparatory School, Surrey and later King's College Junior School in Wimbledon, where he was Head of English. From there he became Deputy Head at Junior King's School in Canterbury before accepting Headship at City of London Freeman's Junior School in September 2014.



Tim Butcher has been appointed Headmaster at The Pilgrims' School Winchester, from

this month (September). Previously, Head of the Prep School and Deputy Head at Hallfield School Trust in Edgbaston, Tim attended Pilgrims' as a boy, before returning to teach at the School as Head of History early in his career.

Tim is a graduate of the University of Warwick and completed his teacher training at the University of York. He has gained both choir school and leadership experience throughout his career, having been Head of History and Assistant Housemaster at Pilgrims', then Head of Boarding at The Chorister School, Durham before next becoming Deputy Head at Winchester House School and then Head of Perrott Hill School, Somerset.



The Royal School, Haslemere, Surrey, has announced that Mr Matthew Close has been appointed Executive Headmaster, from this month (September).

Mr Close was previously Senior Vice Principal at Surbiton High School.

Having read geography at Durham University, Matthew studied his PGCE at Pembroke College, Oxford, followed more recently by an MSc in Educational Leadership from Leicester University. He has worked

in the independent sector for over twenty years. He began his career at Warwick School teaching geography, coaching hockey and cricket and as an assistant boarding housemaster. He moved from there to more local schools. He was head of geography at Reed's School and the City of London School before moving to the City of London Freeman's School as head of sixth form. He is also chair of governors at a prep school in Sunningdale and the welfare officer at his local hockey club.



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

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



Mrs Rose Hardy has been appointed as Head of the John Lyon School (incorporating Quinton Hall Prep School), London, from this month (September).

Mrs Hardy was most recently Headmistress at Haberdashers' Girls' School (Habs) in Hertfordshire. Before her time at Habs, Mrs Hardy spent five years as Head of St Margaret's School in

Bushey. She also served as the first female Head of the co-educational Sixth Form at St Albans School, before moving on to the post of Second Master, again the first female to hold this position.

Mrs Hardy read History at Somerville College, University of Oxford, then studied for a PGCE at London University. More recently, she completed an MEd in Educational Leadership. She is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.



Malvern St James Girls' School, Worcestershire, has announced the appointment of Dr Gareth Lloyd as the new Head of the school, taking up post as of January 1st 2024.

He comes from Stoke College in Suffolk and succeeds Mrs Olivera Raraty, who retires at Christmas having been Head since September 2016.

Dr Lloyd will be the first male Head in the history of Malvern St

James, which is the school formed from the merger of Malvern Girls' College and St James's School.

Dr Lloyd grew up in Bridgend, South Wales. He was educated at the universities of Exeter, Cambridge, London, Reading, Sheffield and Trinity Laban, in a range of academic disciplines including Music, Modern Foreign Languages, School Management and Philosophy.

MSJ will be Dr Lloyd's fifth headship in schools in England, Wales and China.



Devin Cassidy is the new Principal of Fulneck School, West Yorkshire. He was previously the Vice Principal of Bury Grammar School, Lancashire.

A fellow of the Royal College of Chemistry and Chartered College of Teaching, he is also a Team Inspector and Compliance Team Inspector for the Independent

Schools Inspectorate. Devin is married with two grown-up daughters and in his spare time enjoys mountaineering, international travel and is a Trustee at his local hospice.

Outgoing Principal, Francine Smith, has been appointed the new Head designate of Highclare School in Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands and will take up her role in January 2024.



St Martin's School in Bournemouth has begun the school year with a new headteacher

at the helm, ahead of its 110th anniversary next year.

Mrs Kerri Male, who has taught at the school since 2015 and served

as Deputy Head for five years, has taken over from Laura Richards, who was Headteacher for seven years.

Mrs Male has a 20-year career in education, working both as a class teacher and in school leadership roles.

# Heads Hunted

Among the upcoming head and principal appointments:

|                                    |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Benenden School                    | Kent           |
| Fulneck Primary                    | West Yorkshire |
| Kirkham Grammar School             | Lancashire     |
| Prior's Field                      | Surrey         |
| The Queen's School, Chester        | Cheshire       |
| Royal Hospital School              | Suffolk        |
| St George's School, Windsor Castle | Berkshire      |
| The Ursuline Prep School, Ilford   | Essex          |

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.

## Announcement of first shared Chief Master & Principal of KEHS and KES

The roles of Chief Master of King Edward's School, Birmingham and Principal of King Edward VI High School for Girls are to be fused into a single role, coming into effect from September 2024.

The Independent Schools Governing Body, which governs King Edward's School, Birmingham and King Edward VI High School for Girls has announced that Dr Katy Ricks, KES Chief Master, has decided to retire at the end of the 2023/24 school year after 22 years of headship and 39 years in education.

Mrs Kirsty von Malaisé, KEHS Principal, has been appointed Chief Master & Principal of KES and KEHS from September 2024. It will be the first time in the schools' histories – KES founded 471 years ago and KEHS 140 years ago – that a joint headship appointment has been made. The future of the schools will see a further harmonisation of pupil and staff experience which has begun this year under the existing integrated leadership team, which brings together senior leaders from each school and some who work across both schools, building on

Pictured: Mrs Kirsty von Malaisé (left) and Dr Katy Ricks (right)



the schools' core strengths to offer the best education, within and beyond the curriculum. There are no plans to merge the schools into a single institution.

In 2019, Dr Ricks became the first woman to hold the post of KES Chief Master since the school's founding in 1552, returning to where she had previously spent three years as an English teacher in the early part of her career.

Mrs von Malaisé joined KEHS as Principal in 2020, having been Head of Norwich High School, Deputy Head of Putney High School and at an earlier point holding a number of positions in co-educational state schools in London.

# Combining STEM with the Classics

The Nebula programme in Yorkshire offers students at independent and maintained schools new opportunities in STEM subjects, among them a surprising connection with Latin and Greek. Director of Outreach and Partnership at Sheffield High School for Girls, South Yorkshire, Susan Good reports...

"When The Sunday Times Parent Power School Guide 2023 was published, its findings came as no surprise to us at Sheffield High School for Girls. Highlighted was the fact that institutions that worked together in partnerships and collaborations have leapt up the national rankings.

In 2020 we partnered with Sheffield Springs Academy. Both schools already recognise the benefits of partnership working. Sheffield Girls' has existing partnerships with primary schools across the city and, as a part of United Learning, Sheffield Springs benefits from partnerships within the group of schools across both the state and independent sectors. Both schools have strong core values and a shared aim to improve the opportunities, aspiration and erudition of the young people they serve.

The overarching aim of Sheffield Girls' partnership with Sheffield Springs Academy is to provide unique learning opportunities for the students and staff in both schools, through collaboration and the sharing of expertise and resources.

One specific objective included working with Springs Academy's newly created Nebula programme. This new initiative focussed on providing exciting opportunities for the most able Year 7 students at Springs Academy to explore and excel in STEM subjects and

activities. Our new partnership activities would allow students to be exposed to learning beyond the confines of their normal curriculum, as well as helping to increase their cultural capital. In so doing, it helped to support our drive to provide more quality leadership and personal growth opportunities for our students.

To date, several collaborative activities have taken place between the two schools; one of which was the Nebula Classics Programme, delivered as an online experience introducing classics to the Year 7 Nebula cohort. The programme, planned and delivered by a group of Year 11 Sheffield Girls' students was designed to introduce the children to Latin and Greek, with a focus on STEM concepts maintained throughout. The Nebula pupils were taught about the Hippocratic Oath and Archimedes Principles. The programme ran weekly throughout the spring term and culminated with a visit from Springs Academy to take part in a Roman Feast and a Latin play at Sheffield Girls'.

Our approach to partnership development with Springs is simple in structure and delivery with agreed principles and objectives and student-led provision at its core, and is a model which could be easily replicated within other school partnerships. One teacher from Springs Academy commented that: "It was great to see the children



being challenged and challenging themselves, especially during the play and there was evident growth in the students' confidence." A Classics teacher at Sheffield Girls' added: "To see the Year 11's deliver Classics with such enthusiasm was heartening. It was also interesting to see the level at which the Y7 students worked. A useful tool to inform my own teaching."

The Y7 Nebula Students also had the chance to return to Sheffield Girls' later in the summer term to participate in a Geology Day. This involved an introduction to the science of earthquakes followed by a challenge to build an earthquake proof building. Other activities included dinosaur footprint exploration and analysis of minerals and metals. The Year 11 GCSE geologists who supported the delivery of the day said they enjoyed the opportunity to enthuse the students about a subject they

were so passionate about.

A final collaboration between Mathematics and Art focussed on the work of the artist MC Escher. The Nebula students spent the day exploring the relationship between Art and geometry, with the use of polygons and tessellation. They then worked with Year 9 students to explore the Fibonacci Sequence and its application in mathematics, art and poetry in an activity modelled on a previous event held by Springs the previous year.

Raising the attainment and aspirations of more able pupils is a great priority for many schools across South East Sheffield. More able children attain less well in this area than their peers across other areas of Sheffield and nationally, yet they are just as bright and talented. Programmes like Nebula can help to redress this and it is a privilege for Sheffield Girls' to be a part of it."

## Cheers! Pupils' bar plan scoops award

Plans for a sustainable community bar and restaurant to bring together students and local residents have won a team of geography pupils from Malvern College, Worcestershire, a prize.

The team won the 15-16-year-old category in the My Environment My Future competition.

My Environment My Future is a school programme which aims to embed knowledge, resources and

guidance on careers within the built environment into the GCSE and A Level Geography curriculum.

For their submission pupils – twins Max and Seb Wilson, Ethan Chan, and Henry Needham – put together a proposal to turn a former shop on the outskirts of Malvern town centre, which had a planning application to turn it into a house and garage rejected – into a vibrant community bar.

The plans included an outside performance area for pupils to take the stage, as well as a garden which would provide food to the restaurant's kitchen.

Other proposals included bike storage, a waste management program designed to minimise impact on the environment, the use of biodegradable and compostable products, on-site composting, smart lighting and solar panels.

The pupil's ideas also included teaming up with a local food bank to donate any excess food.

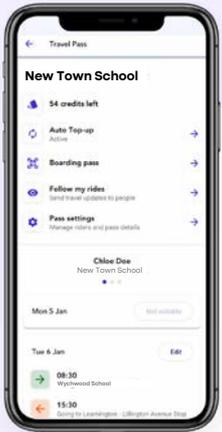


Pictured: (l to r): Max Wilson, Ethan Chan, Seb Wilson and Henry Needham



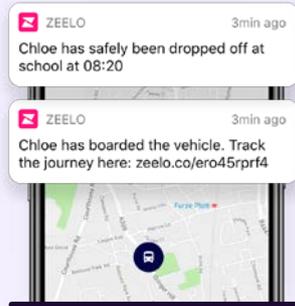
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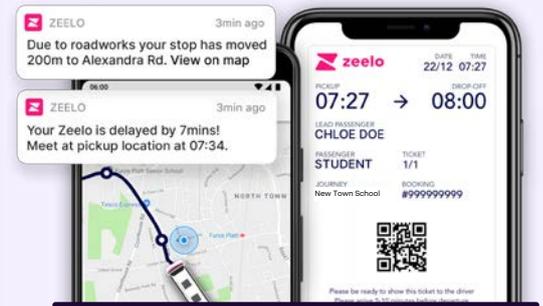
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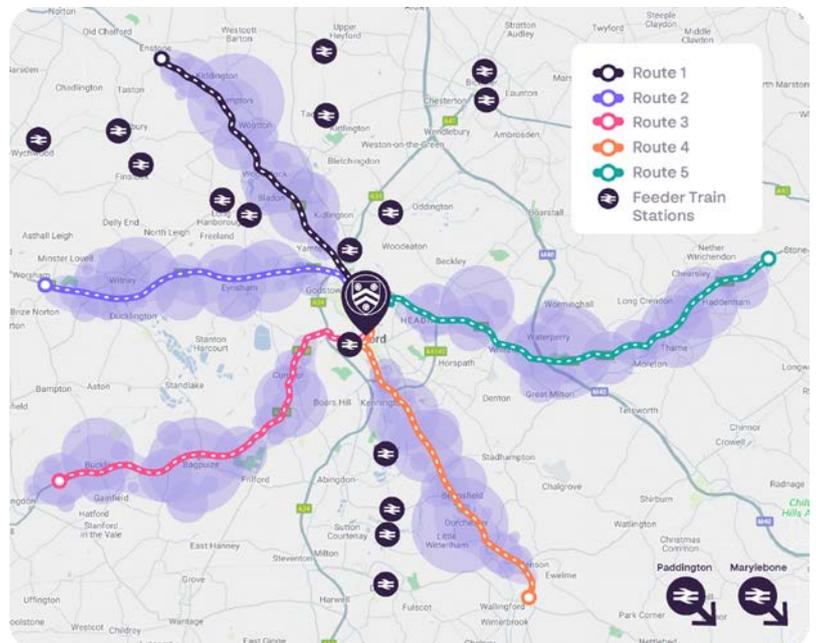
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